

**REINTEGRATION OF THE NEPALESE GIRLS  
TRAFFICKING RETURNEES INTO SOCIETY-**  
*An Empirical Study of Reconstruction of the Self Identity:  
“A Matter of Pride or Shame or Both?”*

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*For My Husband Pawan Adhikari and  
Son Shreyas Adhikari*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CNN	Cable News Network
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal
FM	Frequency Modulation
FPAN	Family Planning Association of Nepal
GWP	General Welfare Pratistan
HIV and AIDS	Human Immune-deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IIDS	Institute of Integrated Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
I/N/GOs	International/Non/ Government Organizations
MOWCSW	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
NHRCN	National Human Right Commission, Nepal
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
VAW	Violence against Women
WOREC	Women's Rehabilitation Centre

## ABSTRACT

*The study is meant to investigate the experiences of trafficked girls and women returnees in their reintegration in the society. In doing so, the study provides an understanding of girl trafficking in Nepal, i.e. causes of trafficking, life experience in trafficked cities and the rescuing experience. Moreover, the study brings forth in discussion how these experiences have affected the re - construction of self identity of the trafficked girls and women returnees.*

*The study draws on three different social theories namely self identity, social stigma and empowerment. The data of the study consists of in-depth interviews with eight trafficking returnees and two key persons representing NGOs working against girl trafficking and other women issues. Prior researches and studies on this topic including journal articles and published and unpublished reports of I/NGOs and donor agencies have been reviewed and analyzed throughout the study. Thematic approach has been employed in data analysis.*

*The findings of the study demonstrate that the trafficked returnees have in the reintegration process encountered a number of challenges. Domestic violence, sexual and verbal abuses, and inadequate sustainable income have made their reintegration in family and society rather problematic. Moreover, the negative attitude/stereotype of the community and enduring stigma have not only disempowered the trafficked returnees but also enunciated them a feeling of shame, humiliation and disgrace. Despite the challenges, the reintegration has been positive empowering experiences for the trafficked returnees. Through the support programs of the NGOs the trafficked returnees have managed to improve their economic condition, cope with discriminations and enhance their social status, thereby elevating their self esteem, self confidence and respect within their families and society.*

*The study suggests that public awareness on girl trafficking and the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons are prerequisite for the successful reintegration. The NGOs activities should enable the trafficked girls and women returnees to continuously feel empowered by assuring sustainable income.*

**Key words:** Nepalese girl trafficking returnees, reintegration, empowerment, stigma, discrimination, self- identity.

## **CHAPTER 1-: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Human trafficking has become an issue of great significance both at national and global level since the last decades. Studies have demonstrated that thousands of women and girls are being trafficked across borders and within countries (USAID, 2009; WOREC, 2009). According to IIDS & UNIFEM (2004), two million children are trafficked globally every year and almost half of them, under the age of seven, are forced to work in the sex industry. Moreover, human trafficking has been an integral component of the traditional economy and the cycle of movement of people in South Asia (Laczko and Gozdzia, 2005).

Human trafficking is regarded as a multifaceted and multi-dimensional phenomenon. In fact the term human trafficking is rather ambiguous comprising multiple issues ranging from prostitution to forced labour to slavery, just to name a few. According to the United Nations (UN) (2000:3), human trafficking is: “...*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs*”.

Although the UN (2000) has acknowledged multiple purposes of trafficking, sexual exploitation/trafficking involving migration either within nations or across national borders is apparently central to its definition of human trafficking. Hennink and Simkhada (2004) argues that the boundaries between migration and sex trafficking are however unclear because it is difficult to identify sex trafficking until the destination is reached and the deception is revealed (see chapter 2 for details). Trafficking of girls and women has been a serious social problem in Nepal since centuries. The media, policy makers, researchers, GOs, NGOs and INGOs have extensively covered and discussed this topic. More recently the chairperson of the oldest Nepalese NGO, i.e. Maiti Nepal<sup>1</sup>, involved in the prevention and rehabilitation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Maiti Nepal is a Non-Governmental Organization which is working to combat trafficking of girls and children. The organization works on rescue, repatriation, inception and reintegration of trafficked survivors. The ultimate goal of the organization is to help the girls become economically independent and reintegrated into society.  
[www.maitinepal.org](http://www.maitinepal.org)



survivors of girl trafficking, has been voted CNN hero of 2010<sup>2</sup>. This is also evident demonstrating the widespread acknowledgement and concern both within the country and globally.

There is seemingly a lack of uniformity in understanding the term trafficking in Nepal (Asian Foundation and Horizon Program, 2001). To illustrate this, the anti-trafficking law of 1986 is more focused on providing protection against ‘buying and selling’ of human beings for any purpose excluding other form of the deception such as bounded labour. However, the views of the Ministry of Women and Children Social Welfare (MOWCSW) on trafficking are to a large extent in line with the UN definition, as they entail both bounded labor and enslavement. Having acknowledged these understandings, this study has incorporated both prostitution and forced labor for foreign employment in defining girl trafficking in Nepal.

Implicit to the issue of girl trafficking reintegration and rehabilitation has in recent years been a central approach of NGOs and INGOs in Nepal. Chen and Marcovici (2003) imply the term reintegration to refer to the process of reunification of the trafficked returnees with family members. Reintegration also incorporates support to the trafficked returnees so as to make them economically viable and socially acceptable (Ibid). The successful reintegration therefore encompasses acceptance of the returnees by their respective family and society, without any discrimination. The reintegration of girls in the family and community is however challenging due to high levels of stigma and discrimination associated with them (Terre des hommes, 2003; Sahara Group, 2004). Accordingly, the trafficked returnees are often treated with hatred and considered as social evil hindering their reintegration in the society.

The study is meant to discuss and analyze the reintegration experience of the Nepalese girls trafficked returnees with their family and society. In doing so, the study attempts to give an understanding of the re - construction of self identity of the trafficked returnees. Given the increasing concern on girl trafficking both in national and international arena the study argues that it is important and meaningful to provide a more profound understanding of the girl trafficking in Nepal. The chapter proceeds as follows: the next section provides an overview of girls trafficking by covering historical context and contemporary trend in Nepal. This is followed by delineating the approaches and strategies adopted by organizations to combat

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<sup>2</sup> CNN Hero of 2010 award ‘Protecting the powerless category ’was given to Anuradha Koirala, chairperson of Maiti Nepal retrieved from : <http://www.maitinepal.org/ndetails.php?option=News&cid=154>

trafficking. The next section includes the motivation of the study. This is followed by addressing the purpose of the study and the research problem. The final section highlights the organization of the thesis.

## **1.2 Girl Trafficking in Nepal- An Overview**

According to the 2001 census, Nepal’s population is 23.15 million (CBS, 2001).The country shares a border with China and India. Geographically, the country is divided into three regions - the high Himalayan Mountains, the central highlands and the southern Tarai. Nepal’s economy is primarily based upon agriculture employing almost half of the total population. Tourism has been a major industry contributing to the majority of the foreign exchange. In recent years migration has increasingly predominant, with over 300,000 Nepalese migrating seasonally to India alone (O’dea, 1993).

The prevailing socio-cultural norms have made Nepal a male-dominated the so- called patriarchal country. Men are considered superior to women dominating the latter in every aspects of their personal, social and domestic life. The status of the Nepalese women is therefore linked to the social and economic positions of the men in their household mainly fathers and husbands. This also means that the women are largely confined to performing the traditional roles such as household chores, and raising children just to name a few. They have limited access to education and health care resulting in malnutrition, poverty and illiteracy.

The female literacy rate in Nepal is 42.8 percent where as male literacy rate is 65 percent, limiting the skills of women. Though the Nepalese women work much longer than the male counterparts, their economic contributions have largely been unnoticed. According to Aengst (2001), the employed women receive wages at least twenty-five percent less than those received by men. This perceived gap in the economy along with ingrained cultural beliefs regarding the gender roles is seen as the factor making young girls vulnerable to trafficking (Ibid).

The section consists of two parts. While the first subsection present the historical and contemporary trends of girl trafficking in Nepal, the other sub section highlights the strategies and approaches to addressing girl trafficking in Nepal.

## **1.2.1 Historical and Contemporary Trends**

Trafficking of young girls and women in Nepal is not a recent phenomenon as it can be traced back to the Rana regime<sup>3</sup>. The Rana rulers forced the young girls to serve them as maids thereby exploiting them sexually (Ghimire, 1994). Along with this, the tradition of Deuki and Badini<sup>4</sup> prevailing in the rural Nepal was another factor leading to prostitution of young girls. Similar to the tradition of offering animals, the young girls were also offered to the temples by their parents and rich people who purchased them from very poor and socially disadvantaged families. These girls grew up in the temple with the animals and eventually become prostitutes (Ibid).

In 1951, the country witnessed the first democratic movement making it free from the Rana family rule. The country abandoned the policy of isolation and became accessible to the outside world. This openness provided the traffickers of Nepalese women and girls with the opportunity to transport the women and girls to the red light areas<sup>5</sup> in large Indian cities and sell them for prostitution (Ghimire, 1994; Terre des homes, 2003). According to Sangroula (2001), trafficking of Nepalese girls and women to the brothels<sup>6</sup> became fully established by the 1960s, and increased tremendously in the following two decades. The problem of sex trafficking in Nepal and other developing countries has been gaining a wider attention both at national and international level since the 1980s (Ibid).

Despite Nepal today is a democratic country, this tradition of selling girls as sex workers still prevails. In the last four decades this trade has however crossed the barriers of ethnicity and geography. Moreover, unlike before trafficking is now no longer confined to specific ethnic communities for instance Tamang<sup>7</sup> community. Similarly, it has crossed the Kathmandu valley and now covers more than 30 districts. Increasing trend of migration from the village to the city along with rapid urbanization has encouraged the young girls to migrate to cities in

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<sup>3</sup> Between 1850 and 1950, Nepal was ruled by a feudal family-the Ranas who called themselves ‘the Kings’(Sangoura,2001)

<sup>4</sup> Deuki and Badini system are practices where girls are used as commodities. In Deuki system, girls are worshipped to the god and they are not supposed to get married. Badi women are engaged in prostitution from their early puberty(Ghimire, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Red light areas refers to those areas where prostitution takes place legally.

<sup>6</sup> Brothel is a place where prostitution takes place. Most of the trafficked women are placed in brothels in India.

<sup>7</sup> Tamang is an indigenous group of people mainly inhabiting in the northern mountain and hill region of Nepal. They are considered as the most vulnerable group to trafficking.

search of opportunities for better life. Sangroula (2001) states that many of these young girls employed in the low paid jobs in carpet industry, garment industry, restaurants and domestic service have become the victims of trafficking.

Indeed economic status and gender inequality are underlying factors of trafficking in Nepal (IIDS & UNIFEM: NHRCN, 2008). Gender inequality prevails in economic activities, education, patriarchal norms and domestic violence among others are also regarded as other predominant factors leading to girl trafficking in Nepal. Moreover, studies have also pointed out the lack of female empowerment and an acute absence of overall awareness the other causes of girl trafficking in Nepal (Aengst, 2001: Hennink and Simkhada, 2004: Terre des hommes, 2003). According to IIDS and UNIFEM (2004), trafficking in Nepal is to a large extent occurred through false employment and marriage by brokers and the direct selling of children for monetary support by their families including parents, uncles, husbands, nieces and sisters (for detail see Chapter 2). Indeed this problem of girl trafficking has adversely impacted the Nepalese socio- cultural life.

Although it is difficult to identify the accurate number of Nepalese girl trafficking, the ILO (2001) estimates that approximately 12,000 Nepalese children are trafficked to Indian brothels and the Gulf countries every year for the purpose of commercial sex work. Moreover, studies show that the number of trafficking to sex industry is increasing as the girls are being trafficked to new destinations Asia, Europe and the U.S.A (Ghimire, 1994: Sangroula, 2001: Terre des home, 2003).

### **1.2.2 Strategies and Approaches Applied to Address Trafficking**

The recognition that trafficking is a significant problem within Nepal has led to a number of initiatives to respond to the issues. Asmita (2006) states that the reintegration/rehabilitation strategy is intended to establish a direct link among the policy, program and structure of government and NGOs. At the governmental level in Nepal, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MWSCW) is primarily responsible for formulating anti trafficking polices and action plans and coordinating anti-trafficking programmes and activities. Other ministries mainly the Ministry of Home, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Agriculture are also involved in combating trafficking (IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004). It is estimated that more than 15 hundreds Nepalese women/girls have been a part of rehabilitation process since 1996 (Ibid). The same study shows that more than 57

NGOs are involved in anti-trafficking interventions. Among the NGOs rendering a key role in this field are Maiti Nepal, ABC Nepal, Shanti Rehabilitation Center, The Women Rehabilitation Center (WOREC), Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) and Shakti Samuha. Along with these NGOs almost nineteen UN agencies, INGOs and other international agencies are also involved in anti-trafficking initiatives by offering financial and technical support. Moreover, these organizations have launched a variety of rehabilitation and reintegration activities to the survivors of trafficking. These activities include provision of immediate shelter, health support, counseling and care, skill training, leadership training, education classes, income generating activities, economic support and legal assistance just to name a few. Some of these organizations have also emphasized social reintegration and restoration of human rights of trafficked persons. In fact, the promotion of human rights has become one of the most prominent features of addressing children and women trafficking in recent years (Murthy, 2010).

Broadly speaking, the activities of GOs/NGOs/INGOs have consisted of three main components- social, psychological and economical components within the rehabilitation and reintegration program. The social components of rehabilitation are intended to mainstream the disadvantaged children and marginalized or stigmatized women. The psychological components are meant to enhance the self-esteem of trafficked survivors or potential victims. Lastly, the economic components are focused on the economic empowerment of the survivors of trafficking (IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004).

### **1.3 Motivation of the Study**

There are limited academic studies drawing on sociological/anthropological theoretical framework to give an understanding of girl trafficking and other women’s related issues in Nepal (Pant, 2006). Among the available studies on this topic the majority of them are seemingly oriented to demonstrate the causes and consequences of the girl trafficking and the findings of policy implementation. To illustrate this, the report of Asian Foundation and the Horizon Program (2001) has striven to address the following questions on girl trafficking: “How effective are Nepal’s policies and program in shaping cohesive and effective national anti-trafficking strategy? “What are the underlying attitudes and values about trafficking and what effect do these assumptions have in practice?” “Are prevention, care, and support activities to the trafficked women and girls adequate to ensure their human rights? Similar

studies, attempting to analyze the impact of capacity buildings programs of GOs and NGOs have raised concerns about the best practices in the successful reintegration of the returnees, the policy issues and challenges in the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration strategies (Sahara Group, 2004). To be more precise, the findings of the aforementioned studies have clearly demonstrated that the girl trafficked returnees have encountered difficulties in adjusting themselves to ordinary life. They are emotionally and physically scared of their experience, lack self esteem, education and skills needed for independent living, and are often rejected by society. Moreover, the studies have also argued that the rehabilitation and reintegration programs offered by these organizations have not always been successful. (Sahara Group, 2004: Aengst, 2001).

It is striking that the main focus of these prior studies has been to demonstrate the efforts being placed on strengthening anti-trafficking interventions and providing effective care and support to trafficked girls/women returnees. To be more precise, the literature has ignored/sidelined the perspective of the survivors (self identity) as the latter is the one who is to be benefitted from the intervention programs. It is however important to understand the reintegration experience from the perspective of survivors not only to provide a comprehensive understanding of girl trafficking, but also to further support the development of effective and comprehensive strategies to combat trafficking. Having said this, the present study intends to shed light on the survivors’ perspective by bringing forth in discussion the experience of “trafficked girls and women returnees” in their reintegration in society. Along with this my personal background as a Nepalese and my previous work experience working in the NGO can arguably be another source of motivation for undertaking this study. This background and experience may be advantageous in helping to grasp a better picture on this topic and understanding the sensitivity of reintegration of the girl trafficked returnees in Nepal.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study and the Research Problem**

As stated earlier, the main purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of trafficked girls and women returnees in their reintegration in the society. In doing so, the study explores how these experiences have affected the re - construction of self identity of the trafficked women/girls returnees by taking into account the social and economic circumstances including of the returnees for instance their acceptance by family and society at large,

economic independence and their choice of profession and their life expectations among others. Chaulagai (2009) argues that the experiences of reintegration of the trafficked returnees cannot be understood comprehensively, without discussing their trafficked experiences. This is because the trafficked girls are likely to be exposed to physical and psycho-social abuses in the trafficked cities. Such experiences are may therefore lead to the loss of their self identity thereby hindering their reintegration in the community (Ibid). Having acknowledged this, the study at the outset attempts to give an understanding of girl trafficking, i.e. causes of trafficking, life experience in trafficked cites and the rescuing experience.

Several studies have demonstrated reintegration as problematic in the sense that the trafficked girls and women returnees encounter several challenges in the reintegration process (Chen and Marcovici, 2003: Mahendra et al., 2001: Terres de homes, 2003). According to these studies, the trafficked returnees are considered shameful and stigmatized by their families and communities. As mentioned earlier, the studies have demonstrated that the GOs/ NGOs/ INGOs have been attempting to incorporate social, economic and psychological component in their reintegration programs. These components are envisaged important to enable the trafficked returnees to enhance their self esteem and become more independent in all aspects of life by coping with the discriminations. (IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004: Sahara, 2004).

Infact reintegration is a process in which the trafficked returnees experience changes in the self’s position and self image that they have created for themselves (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008: Wickham, 2009). This also means that the trafficked women returnees in their reintegration with family and society attempt to re- define their self identity i.e. who they are and who they can become. Given this, the main research problem of the study is:

***How does the new life experience of the returnees of girl trafficking affect their sense of self and the impact on re-constructing the self- identity?***

The main research problem can be further categorized into following sub questions:

- How is the experience of girls who have been trafficked?
- How is the experience of trafficked girl returnees in the process of reintegration into society?
- How do the trafficked girl returnees perceive the social conflict and discrimination in society?

- Have they been accepted by their family and society? What are the major challenges they face in re integrating in society?

Summing up, this research endeavors to answer the aforementioned questions through the perspectives of Nepalese girls’ trafficked returnees. Plunging in depth into the inner world of the returnees’ life experience may provide a means of understanding the social problems caused by girl trafficking and their consequences in the Nepalese society.

## **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

The remaining part of the study on girl trafficking is structured in the following way: chapter 2 includes the review of literature on trafficking covering the definition of trafficking, purpose and factors for trafficking, impact of trafficking and reintegration attempts on trafficking as well as the contribution of the study. The theoretical framework comprising three lenses i.e. self identity, social stigma and empowerment, is then presented in chapter 3. Chapter 4 covers the methodology issues pertaining to the research as well as the explanation how this study has been conducted. In doing so the chapter sheds light on what methodology has been applied, how data has been collected and analyzed.

The empirical part of the study is presented in chapter 5, chapter 6 and chapter 7 respectively. Chapter 5 attempts to provide an understanding of girl trafficking in Nepal by discussing how and why trafficking happens, life experience in trafficked cities and the rescuing experience of the trafficked girl/women returnees. Chapter 6 is mainly about the reintegration experience of the trafficked returnees. It discusses family and social acceptance of the trafficked returnees, social stigma and discrimination towards them and the coping mechanism. Moreover, the chapter attempts to discuss the economic independence, the reintegration efforts of NGOs and the experience of empowerment or disempowerment. Chapter 7 is intended to provide an understanding of the self in the reintegration experience i.e. the new life experience and how this understanding have impacted on the reconstruction of self identity. The last chapter i.e. chapter 8 summarizes the main findings, presents the future of the trafficked returnees and provides suggestions to the NGOs for successful reintegration of the trafficked returnees.



## **CHAPTER-:2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter endeavors to give an understanding of the term trafficking and reviews the literature studying girl trafficking particularly in Nepal. The chapter proceeds by defining trafficking in Nepal and continues by discussing the purposes, factors leading the trafficking and the impact of trafficking. In the last section, attempts have been made to review the literature related to reintegration of trafficking returnees and to present the contribution of the study.

### **2.1 Defining Trafficking: A Conceptual Framework**

The term trafficking have been defined variedly in the literature. This has resulted in the heterogeneity of definitions ranging from migration to voluntary prostitution and forced prostitution to forced labour. To illustrate this, the study conducted by IIDS and UNIFEM (2004) has categorized the definition of trafficking into three schools of thoughts.

The first thought has envisaged trafficking as a means of moving, selling and buying women and children, especially for the purpose of prostitution. The second school of thought is based on the concept of trafficking as defined by the UN General Assembly in 1994. Trafficking is viewed as forced prostitution and coerced labour driven by the unviable economy. The third school of thought and perhaps the widely accepted definition of trafficking proposed by Coomaraswamy (2000) sees it as a threat or use of violence, abduction, force fraud, deception or coercion, or depth bondage. According to this view, the purpose of trafficking is to place some person in forced labour or slavery like practices in the community other than the one in which a person is inhabited (see IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004).

Studies have argued that the term trafficking and prostitution are interlinked and have therefore applied the terms interchangeably (IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004: Hennink and Simkhada, 2004: Piper, 2005). The relationship between trafficking and prostitution is however two-fold. On the one hand, prostitution has been a main reason for trafficking women and children. On the other hand, trafficking is also coercive and exploitative process in which prostitution is a part. However, trafficking can also be for other purposes than prostitution including bounded labour, domestic servitude, organ trade, etc.

Similarly studies have attempted to interconnect migration with trafficking. Migration is referred to as the movement of a person mainly from rural to urban areas as well as from one

country to other countries perceived to be better in terms of living conditions and opportunities. In contrast to trafficking which involves the movement of a person by deception or coercion into a situation of forced labour or slavery, migration is seen more as a voluntary act. However, since both trafficking and migration involve the movement of persons, the physical sites of trafficking and migration can therefore be the same (Evans & Bhattarai, 2000: IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004: Piper 2005). It is worth mentioning that, among the girl trafficked returnee selected for this study, one represents a trafficked returnee from foreign employment – the case of migration.

## **2.2 Purpose and Factors Leading to Trafficking**

The majority of available studies on trafficking are focused on the purpose and factors leading to trafficking. As stated previously, sex work/prostitution and migration have been the predominant purpose for girl trafficking in Nepal. However the study conducted by IIDS & UNIFEM (2004) has pointed out a number of other purposes promoting girl trafficking. Some of these purpose include, industry and factory works such as carpet, garment, farming, construction work, and mines, domestic labour in servitude-like conditions, entertainment industry, massage parlors, forced marriage, and circus among others.

Hennink and Simkhada (2004) identified four routes of trafficking - through brokers, independent migration to urban areas, deception and false marriage, and by force/abduction. Based on this study, trafficking is commonly conducted by familiar people including uncles, cousin brothers, and stepfathers and so on. Furthermore the similar study has identified that the trafficking happens not only in the village, but also occurs after migration to urban areas.

Similarly, studies have also demonstrated the socio-cultural and economic factors as the major causes for trafficking in Nepal (Mahendra et al., 2001: Hennink and Simkhada, 2004: Piper, 2005). In fact the study conducted by the IIDS & UNIFEM (2004) has categorized the main causes of trafficking into two groups- root causes and immediate causes. The immediate causes are seen in the form of illiteracy, family’s dysfunctionality and all forms of discrimination including violence, forced marriage and divorce. Similarly, the root causes are identified as gender discrimination, poverty, unemployment, impact of globalization, discriminatory cultural values and religious beliefs and practices (such as deuki pratha, i.e. offering young girls to gods/goddesses in the temple and so on(see Annex- iii).

Moreover, IIDS and UNIFEM (2004) have placed the aforementioned causes of trafficking into two dimensions, i.e. *push* and *pull* factors. The push/supply factors of trafficking, which operate at the place of its origin, involve both immediate and root causes. On the contrary, the pull/demand factor is to a large extent seen as a result of the international phenomena, including international migration policies, demand for cheap labour market and domestic workers, the booming sex industry, increasing use of children as entertainers, and globalization. In the context of Nepal, men’s patriarchal perception, attitude and beliefs towards the children and women have also been recognized as the major factors facilitating both the supply of and demand for trafficking. In fact the women and children are conceived of as commodities that could be sold and resold in the markets (IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004).

### **2.3 Impact of Trafficking**

The body of literature demonstrates how trafficked persons suffer from various psycho-socio and physical impact (IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004 Asmita, 2006: Ghimire, 1994: Sangroula, 2001: Aengst, 2001). The psycho-socio impact is linked to stigma. One example of the stigma particularly in Nepalese context is that the trafficked returnees are viewed as a threat corrupting other girls in the community. There is a conception that the trafficked returnees should be isolated and out of society. Similarly, physical impact refers to those activities leading to abuse and torture.

In the case of Nepal, such physical abuses and torture seemingly appear in the form of rape not only in brothels but also on the way to destination and at mukhiya’s (the chief of the village) home; hitting and burning of private parts with cigarettes; wage exploitation, forced to serve many (up to 20) clients every night etc. Some of them have also been victims of several life threatening diseases such as tuberculosis, STDs, HIV positive and AIDS. However, all trafficked women are viewed as infected with HIV and AIDS which has only increased stigmatization of trafficked persons. Trafficking is therefore an extreme form of violence against girls and women. The returnees from sex industries mainly suffer from various posttraumatic effects (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008).

## **2.4 Studies on Reintegration of Girls Trafficking Returnees**

Crawford and Kaufman (2008) state that reintegration program have positive impact upon Nepalese trafficked returnees. They argue that the main reason behind the success of the reintegration is the awareness programs launched by the NGOs to reduce the stigma associated with trafficking. It is claimed that without addressing the stigma of trafficking returnees, the latter would not be fully accepted in the community. However, the extreme stigma of trafficking returnees has seemingly hampered the NGOs’ reintegration efforts. Crawford and Kaufman (2008) further argue that the NGOs’ income generating programs is seen as another important strategy contributing to the reintegration.

Another study undertaken by Terre des homes (2003) explains that reintegration of Nepalese trafficked returnees is a challenging phenomenon. This study highlights that reintegration of girls within the family and community has not often been successful, particularly in the situation when the child is belonged to the broken or dysfunctional family. Though there is high level of stigma and discrimination attached with the trafficked returnees, the study however argues that there has been a significant change in the awareness level on girl trafficking issues in recent years. This can be seen as the results of the NGOs efforts in providing and advocating awareness programs in the community.

Chaulagai (2009) in his exploratory study of trafficked women’s experiences and perceptions towards their reintegration has presented a more or less similar view. The study states that the reintegration of trafficked returnees is a problematic phenomenon, as it is considered shameful and often stigmatized by families and communities. It is argued that there is a lot of self stigmatization among the trafficked returnees. The study however reveals that the trafficked returnees have perceived economic independency a key solution for their successful reintegration.

Similar to the findings of the aforementioned studies, Chen and Marcovivi (2003) exhibit how the fear of village and or/family stigma has hindered the reintegration of trafficked returnees in their families and communities. They further state that the trafficked returnees have been victims of name-calling (referring to prostitution) and gossips. The study therefore emphasizes that the reintegration programmes should enable the trafficked returnees to cope with stigma and other situation by providing them with appropriate tools.

The study conducted by Sahara (2004) is seemed to be more positive as it underscores the success of the rehabilitation centers in providing substantial support to Nepalese trafficked returnees. According to the study, rehabilitation/reintegration programs including health care facilities and counseling services have helped women to address their psychological trauma. Moreover, the skills development training programmes of the NGOs have enhanced the skills of the returnees to set up their own business, to work at various rehabilitation centers and to get an employment in the private sector for instance hotels and shops. Despite demonstrating the positive consequence the study has also showed that the trafficked returnees have not been fully accepted by their community. The trafficked returnees are therefore claimed as being not fully empowered in terms of improving their skills and capacity needed to compete in the real job market.

## **2.5 Contribution of the Study**

This study intends a contribution to the literature on girl trafficking by exploring the experiences of Nepalese girl trafficked returnees. In doing so, the study brings forth in discussion the purpose for trafficking, factors leading to trafficking including push and pull factors and the impact of trafficking in Nepal. As mentioned earlier, the majority of studies covering this issue are focused on demonstrating the causes of the girl trafficking and the policy implementation among others. This study therefore adds knowledge on this topic by covering the perception and experience of the trafficked women/girl returnees in reintegration – an area under represented in the literature. Moreover, the perception and experience of trafficked returnees are attempted to be studied by drawing on social theories so as to provide a better understanding of the new life experiences.

Along with this, the study also attempts to contribute to social work practice by discussing the importance of the role of actors including service providers, law enforcement agencies, donor agencies and NGOs among others involved in of combating trafficking. On this view it can be argued that the study would also be valuable in analyzing the effectiveness of different programmes and policy approaches of the GOs/ NGOs. All in all, this study may generate knowledge on the self identity reconstruction of Nepalese trafficked returnees and may contribute to the academicians, students, and researchers by providing additional information on reintegration of the trafficked returnees in the family and community.

## **CHAPTER- 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study of trafficked women and girls returnees in Nepal draws on three social theories namely self identity, social stigma and empowerment. The ‘self’ and ‘identity’ theory is based on symbolic interactionism, particularly Mead’s self (1933) and Goffman’s self Presentation (1959). In this study, the ideas of Mead and Goffman are further supplemented by the work of Burkitt (2008) on “Social Selves” and Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) “The Social Construction of Reality”. The application of the aforementioned concepts on self identity in the study is valuable in terms of providing an understanding of how trafficked women have defined and constructed their “self” in the trafficked cities and in the reintegration process.

The theory of stigma which is primarily drawn on the work of Goffman(1963) is intended to shed light on consequences of stigma and their impact on construction of ‘self’ ‘identity’ of the trafficked women/girls returnees. Moreover, the theory is extended by referring to the work of Link and Phelan (2001) and Heatherton et al. (2000) in order to provide an insight into how trafficked returnees cope with the stigmatizations.

Apart from providing the insights into ‘self’ ‘identity’, this study is also meant to address the empowerment approaches applied by the NGOs in combating girl trafficking and their effectiveness in the re integration. Understanding the concept of empowerment is crucial to analyze the experience of trafficked returnees in the process of reconstructing their identity. The approaches to empowerment applied in this study are based on the ideas of Dennis Saleebey (2006), Barbara Levy Simon (1994), Paulo Freire (1973), Tesoriero (2010), Karen Healy(2005) and Macome Payne(2005). Moreover, problem solving and strength perceptive, key perspectives within the empowerment approach have been applied to demonstrate how the work of the social workers agencies (NGOs) has helped the clients (girl trafficking returnee) to be empowered. The aforementioned theoretical approaches applied in this study are further elaborated on in the following subsections.

### **3.1 Theories on Self Identity-Main Concepts**

As stated previously, self identity is one key concept of this thesis reflecting on the new life experiences of the returnees. Berger and Luckman (1966:194) states that identity is central to subjective reality and concerns with the dialectical relationship with society. Accordingly, identity is created during the social processes. On this view, identity is also seen as a phenomenon emerging from a dialectic relationship between the individual and society.

Moreover, Giddens (1991) argues that self identity is a routinely created phenomenon which sustains through the reflexive activities of the individual. Self identity is often linked to the term self consciousness developed over time. This also means that individuals are expected to develop a self identity in response to their social context since their childhood (Mead, 1993). Social experiences and activities are seen as key elements in the process of developing self identity. As a result people are tended to look upon other people to see the image of the self identity which will be reflected back in terms of words, attitudes, expressions and actions (Burkitt, 2008). The idea of self identity implies that what the individuals becomes is to a large extend depend upon their reconstructive efforts.

The self identity helps individual to achieve an enduring conception of their aliveness. Moreover, it is also considered important to elevate the capacity of individual to keep a particular narrative going (Giddens, 1991:54). Self identity therefore helps to get to know oneself better and to build up a coherent sense of understanding.

In this thesis the concept of “self identity” is used to give an understanding of the self, i.e. “who I am”, “who are we”, “what we do”, “who do I want to be” or “what shall I become”. Moreover, this concept of self has helped develop an interpretation of the self’s position and role and the image the individuals have created for themselves (girls trafficked returnees).

As stated by Burkitt (2008) how people make sense of their self depends on how they contribute to the world and how they make a difference to the social life as well as to the lives of others with whom they interact. In my study self identify reconstruction of girl trafficking returnees can probably be better understood by exploring what they talk about in discovering themselves and what they refer to as meaningful activity, which can both make a difference to others and reveal the uniqueness of them.

### **3.1.1 Symbolic Interactionism**

The theory of symbolic interactionism has been central to this study. Charon (2001:229) defines symbolic interactionism as a perspective developed through interviews and observation of people in the real world. It is intended to determine how people perceive and reflect the situations they are in. Notably, symbolic interactionism is widely acknowledged and used by the academic community and within the domain of social sciences in recent years. According to the symbolic interactionist the self is an object of the actor's own actions and interaction in society (Ibid: 72). The individual sees himself or herself as a social object in the process of interaction with others. This also means that self becomes an object to the individual as a result of the actions of others toward themselves during social interactions Blumer(1969).

Mead (1993) has emphasized the importance of symbols, signs and language in mediating and directing the joint activities of the social group and formulating self-identities. These three elements act as the social objects to which an individual in social groups respond and develop interpersonal relationships. As argued by Mead (1993) such responses are very often governed by an individual interpretation along with the knowledge of own self based on past experience, beliefs and values.

Moreover, the work of Goffman (1959) has further contributed to conceptualizing the meaning and construction of self. Self is seen as a sense developed through interaction between social actors and audience. The underlying idea is that during the interaction process an individual attempts to present a certain sense of self which will be accepted by others. This approach to self the so called dramaturgical approach emphasize that self is accorded to performers and is also emanated from the performers. This idea of self is important in this study as it explores self identity of the trafficked returnees in the reintegration with the families and society.

### **3.1.2 Social Selves and the Social Construction of Reality**

The work of Burkitt (2008) is valuable in this study as it strives to explore how self is formed in social relations with others giving rise to the idea of social individuality. This also means that this approach helps to grasp the perception of the trafficked women/girls returnee about themselves i.e. ‘who they are’ and how do they define ‘self’.



Burkitt (2008:3) argues that the factors such as family, neighborhood, social contacts, social class, gender, ethnicity, and the beliefs and values influence the way individuals develop their self. To be more precise, individuals are continuously judged by the people around them. Individuals attempt to create their self image are guided by these judgments. Along with this the individuals also attempt to discover who they are and search for their hidden identity in a given social setting. The formation of self therefore depends both on what people do and how do they share ideas with others and perform joint activities. On this view, it can be argued that one way to construct self is through the mutual interaction with others. Such mutual interactions provide a means of judging one’s own conduct by the eyes of other people. As stated by Burkitt(2008) the society therefore is a mirror through which one identifies his/her own image. Moreover, it is also claimed that self is governed by moral values (Kant in Burkitt, 2008: 58). This view implies that the question such as ‘who am I’, involves moral evaluation and emotional judgments such as ‘a good boy’, ‘a bad girl’ and so on

Three aspects of ‘me’ have been identified in defining ‘self’ (Burkitt, 2008). The first one, i.e. ‘material me’, is rather external as it attempts to identify self by referring to the body. Both the individual and the other members around them relate identity of the individual through external appearance. The second aspect refers to as the ‘social me’, is the recognition the individual obtain from others. The underlying idea is the very existence of the individual depends upon the recognition by others, particularly by those they know. The third aspect which is also termed as ‘spiritual me’ involves the individuals traits such as capacities, talents, habits, through which individuals identifies their self and their position in the society. In fact this consciousness about the self and the ability to react emotionally upon it is the core of the ‘spiritual me’.

Burkitt (2008) has envisaged self as the reflection of the past experiences as well as a means of creating the future in the forms of plans, hopes and dreams. To be more precise, individual’s interaction with others articulated both in the form of words and images is seen as the sediment of past experience. However, on some occasions individuals strive to transcend the past experience and reconstruct the self through joint action and interaction in the community. As a result of this reconstruction of the self individuals can become someone different in the future. The future is seen as open and flexible providing individuals the opportunities to change and reconstruct themselves (ibid.,65). It is however, worth mentioning that in order to reconstruct the self identity and to be a part of the community, individuals

must be capable of playing a creative role through continuous dialogue rather than performing the routine tasks. These ideas on self are valuable in the study as it attempts to explore the past experience of women in the trafficked cities and the efforts of reconstructing self in their reintegration (interaction with the family and community).

Burkitt (2008) further states that self identity is in many aspects related to social class. The social class is the material constraints affecting the life chances of individuals for instance the access to education and social participation. It is also argued that self identities are influenced by the power relations within a given social structure. This implies that the self identity of individuals is largely relied on the accumulation of capitals including material, cultural, social and symbolic. The possession of these capitals provides a social recognition such as worth or unworthy and contributes to the way the individuals feel about themselves. This also means that the individuals' understandings on pride and shame or both are very much depended on these capitals. To achieve self-fulfillment the individuals therefore needs not only motives but also the material, cultural and social resources.

The seminal work of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) is valuable in further extending the understanding of 'self' and 'identity'. The work is focused on defining how routines and procedures prevailing in everyday life are taken for granted as reality. The main idea is that the reality of self is produced and reproduced by the social actors and is shared with each others in the everyday life. On this view, social identity is simply composed of typification (Ibid).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) have further envisaged self as an entity, reflecting the attitudes of others. This implies that the individual becomes what he or she is as perceived by others in the community. The individual identifies themselves not only by their objectivity but also by the generality of others. On this view, the construction of self is a dialectic process taking place between an individual and surroundings as well as between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity (ibid: 152). Along with the individuals' attempts, the social processes therefore equally contribute to the formation, modification, reshaping and maintenance of the identity.

The ideas of Berger and Luckmann(1966) therefore provide an additional frame to define how the self identity of girl trafficked returnees is produced and reproduced during the process of reintegration/rehabilitation. The aforementioned theoretical approaches are valuable in the

study as they help to better understand how people (girls trafficking returnees) define their world and that how definition shaped their action/behavior/attitudes. Moreover, the use of these perspectives is important to develop insight into the real world of the girls’ trafficked returnees by considering their personal situations such as relations with family, children and society at large. To sum up this theoretical framework are intended to provide an understanding on how the girl trafficked returnees have define their self during the process of reintegration through social interaction.

### **3.2 Social Stigma**

The term stigma generally refers to bodily signs designed reflecting something unusual and bad. Goffman(1963) states that an individual possessing the bodily attributes such as cut or burnt marks is avoided in public places. Based on this view, stigma is understood as an undesirable or discrediting attribute that an individual possess reducing his/her moral status in society. As a result, stigma leads to social exclusion, violence and discrimination. Stigmatized people are therefore seen as flawed and somehow less than fully human. Goffman (1963) further points to factors resulting in stigma including a particular characteristic, for example physical deformity and negative attitudes towards a group for example prostitutes and homosexuals.

According to Goffman (1963) there exist three different types of stigma reducing the life chances of the stigmatized. The first type of stigma concerns with the abominations of the body, i.e. the various physical deformities. Such deformities, for example deafness and blindness are regarded as a major barrier for social acceptance. The second one relates to individual character that is perceived as weak, for example mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism just to name a few. It is claimed that such individual characteristics devalue social identities relating to personality and behavior. The third type of stigma is the tribal stigma of race, nation, religion which can be transmitted through lineage and equally contaminate all member of the family to the same extent (Goffman, 1963:14). This stigma grows up within an individual affecting the other members of his/her family to be stigmatized. The aforementioned understanding on stigma is important in this study as the latter is meant to explore the stigma experienced by the trafficked women/girls returnees particularly in the reintegration process.

Heartherton et al. (2000) have envisaged stereotyping and prejudice central to stigmatizing others. They evolve from unconscious expectation and act as unseen arbiters in the social sphere. Link and Phelan (2001) have also given an emphasis on the stigmatized circumstances and processes including negative stereotype, emotional reaction such as pity, anger, anxiety or disgust, status loss, and discrimination affecting the multiple domains of people’s lives. To be more precise, stigmatization has a dramatic bearing on the distribution of life chances in such areas as earnings, housing, criminal involvement, health, and life itself. Link and Phelan (2001) further argue that the linking of labels to undesirable attributes leads to a perception that the negatively labeled persons are different from those who do not share the label-different types of people. In fact the belief that the labeled persons are distinctly different gives rise to forming stereotype. The label people are seen as less human allowing them to treat them in horrifying manner (Ibid: 370). Moreover they are claimed to be more exposed to status loss and discrimination.

The stigma is to a large extent dependant on socio-economic and cultural power (Link and Phelan, 2001: 376). According to Connell (2009) power has been an important dimension of gender and is related to the concept of patriarchy. This idea implies that men are a dominant sex class and violence is an exertion of power over women. Given the exiting patriarchal society in Nepal, it is therefore interesting to study its consequence in the reintegration experiences of trafficked women/girls returnees. Moreover, it is claimed that stigma and rejection devalue self-esteem, which is the feeling of self-worth, self-regard and self respect, and lead to loss of identity (Heatherton et al., 2000). Stigmatized people lose their confidence comparing themselves to others in society. However, on some occasion the individuals may also engage in a variety of coping effort to mitigate the impact of stigma.

Goffman (1963) has pointed out a range of strategies that the stigmatized people apply to respond to their situation. These coping strategies include, among others avoidance, denial, positive framing, acceptance, emotional support, active coping and search for social support. Heatherton et al. (2000) have mentioned another coping strategy in which the stigmatized person turns to other members of the stigmatized group for social support. As this study is meant to explore the reconstruction of self identity of trafficked women returnees, it is important to look upon the stigma these women have encountered and to analyze the consequences of the stigma in their self identity. Moreover, these coping strategies on stigma are important to analyze their impact on the self identity of the trafficked returnees.

### **3.3 Empowerment Approach**

As stated previously, this study is centered to the idea of “self identity”. Payne (2005) argues that self identity is closely connected with the concept of “empowerment” as the latter is meant to help people develop their identity. Empowerment is seen as a means of enabling people to overcome barriers, to achieve life objectives and to gain access to services (Ibid). Saleebey (2006) has defined empowerments as a process of assisting individuals, groups, families and communities to discover the resources and tools within and around them. This also means that empowerment is achieved by ensuring people with resources, opportunities, vocabulary, knowledge and skills needed to increase their capacity (Tesoriero, 2010). The enhanced capacity allows people to determine their own future and to participate actively in their community.

Barbara Levy Simon (1994) has pointed out five ways of empowering people including : collaborative partnerships with clients, the expansion of clients strengths and capacities, emphasis on individual or family environment, considering clients are active subjects and agents, and directing energies to the historically oppressed(see Saleebey,2006 : p. 12).Based on these views, the empowerment strategy is understood as a means of overcoming the barriers of people so as to enable them to exercise power. The empowerment strategy helps people achieve the social justice by challenging oppression and making it possible for them to take charge of matters affecting them the most.

Healy (2005) discusses five key social work theories applicable in social work practice including problem solving, system theories, the strengths perspectives, anti-oppressive practice and post modern, post structural and post colonial approaches. Although all these theories are implicitly linked to empowerment strategies, the problem-solving and strength perspectives are of interest in this study. These two approaches are valuable in exploring the effectiveness of rehabilitation/reintegration program directed at empowering the serviced users (trafficked women returnees). These two approaches are further discussed in the following sub sections:

### **3.3.1 Problem-Solving**

As stated by Healy (2005) problem-solving approaches are characterized by collaborative, highly structured, time-limited and problem-focused approaches to practice. The relevancy of problem solving approach in this study is that it provides a comprehensive framework through which to comprehend the reintegration programs provided to the trafficked returnees. Moreover, as stated by Healy (2005), the application of this perspective provides an insight into the ability of the social workers involved in anti trafficking programs to meet the growing demand from funding agencies for cost –efficient and accountable services.

Implicit in the problem solving is the concept of task –centered approach. The approach assists practitioners in their attempt to maximize clarity about the purpose and the process of intervention between social workers and service users. Moreover, the task-centered practice is focused on enabling clients to make small and meaningful changes in their lives by limiting the number of problems. In doing so, it strives to respond to client problems in the localized and practical terms. The use of task center approach in the study is expected to shed light on the reintegration programs by covering the perspective of both the girls’ trafficked returnees and the service providers.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the problem solving approach emphasizes the involvement of service users in determining practice goals, processes and outcomes. The approach is therefore consistent with core social work values of respect and self-determination (Healy, 2005). The underlying idea is to empower service users so as to address the problems they face in daily living without ongoing support from social service agencies. Given this the use of the problem solving approach in this study may not only contribute to exploring the social practices and their effectiveness but also to understanding the strategies for communicating the experiences of the social work practice with other stakeholders, particularly those using and funding services.

### **3.3.2 Strengths Perspective**

The application of problem solving approach in this study is further supplemented by the use of strengths perspective. The strength approach mainly focuses on the capacities and potentialities of service users (Saleebey, 2006). It is devoted to enabling individuals and communities to articulate, and work towards, their hopes for the future, rather than seeking to remedy the problems of the past (Saleebey, 2006; Healy, 2005). This approach therefore demands practitioners to consider an optimistic attitude towards the individuals and communities with whom they work.

To be more precise the strengths perspective is focused on the capabilities and assets of service users and their communities. An essence of this approach is perhaps its recognition of the power of optimism, on the part of both service worker and service user, for achieving significant improvements in the quality of service users' lives. As stated by Paulo Freire (1973) the dialogue between the service providers and users is central to this perspective. Through dialogue, both the groups overcome barriers of mistrust and attempt to heal the rift between self, other and institution. Saleebey (2006) states that strength perspective is strongly aligned with solution-focused and empowerment approaches. On this view the use of strength perspective is also important in the study to address how the trafficked women returnees are empowered and reintegrated into the society.

To sum up, the empowerment strategies comprising mainly problem solving and strength perspective are relevant in the analysis of how the interest and capability of the trafficked returnees are enhanced through interventions of social work agencies namely NGOs. Moreover, the use of these approaches may contribute to addressing the factors leading to the success of the reintegration and rehabilitation programs.

## **CHAPTER-4: METHODOLOGY**

Silverman (2006:15) defines ‘methodology’ as a means of planning and undertaking research by making choices on the cases to study, methods of data gathering and forms of data analysis. In other words, methodology can be understood as a set of strategic methods developed to gather evidence from the real world about specific social phenomena (Mason, 1996). Moreover, the methodology consists of a set of philosophical positions impacting upon the selection of the research design (Bryman, 2004: Merriam, 2009).

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the philosophical positions in social science research and continues by addressing the research method, research area, and data collection. Following this, the reliability and validity as well as the ethical issues related to the study is discussed. The final section elaborates the data analysis of the study.

### **4.1 Philosophical Positions of Methodology**

According to Merriam (2009) social science study can be categorized at least in two dimensions; the subjective and objective dimensions. The objective dimension mainly consisting of functionalistic theories is focused on the rationality of social actors and instrumentality of their actions. On the contrarily, the subjective dimension comprising interpretive theories such as phenomenology, ethnomethodology and hermeneutics, among others assumes that reality is socially constructed, meaning that there exist multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event (Ibid).

Since this study is meant to explore the reintegration experience and perception of “Nepalese girl trafficking returnees”, it can therefore be argued that the study is within the domain of interpretive paradigm. Interpretive studies attempt to demonstrate the expression of people and their actions in narrative or descriptive ways by presenting situations as closely as possible to the experience of people (Merriam, 2009). Based on the above mentioned, this study also strives to describe how the Nepalese girl trafficked returnees have experienced their reintegration by conducting interviews with them and other key persons. It is worth mentioning that the interviews of informants have been further supported by the review of documents, reports and previous studies on girl trafficking.



## **4.2 Research Method**

The selection of research method is based on the nature of the research question posed as well as the preferences of the researchers (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Among various research methods, qualitative research is aimed at gathering an in- depth understanding of human behavior and the reason that govern such behavior. The qualitative research methods have therefore the ability to investigate not just the questions of what, where and when but also why and how which are fundamental to understanding phenomena being investigated (Silverman, 2006). There are number of methods used by qualitative researchers – observation, analyzing texts and document, interviews, focus groups, and audio and video recording, among others. In practice these methods have often been combined while conducting qualitative researches.

As stated by Strauss & Corbin (2008:12) the qualitative research methods allows researchers to plunge in depth into the experiences of the informants. Given this, the present study can also be referred to as qualitative research as it is meant to explore how the trafficked girl returnees interpret their experiences and what meaning do they attach to their experiences. In doing so the study contributes to construct an understanding of how these girls trafficked returnees make sense of their lives and their experiences in the process of reintegration in the society.

## **4.3 Research Area and Field**

The field work for this study was mainly carried out in Makawanpur district 132 km from the capital Kathmandu. A number of GOs and NGOs including Maiti Nepal, Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN)<sup>8</sup>, ABC Nepal and Shakti Samuha( a group of trafficked

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<sup>8</sup> Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) is an Non Governmental Organization which is running a project for Nepalese women and girls who have been trafficked and are vulnerable to trafficking. The project also aims to empower these women by reducing stigma and discrimination and increase their economic opportunities. The project is implemented in close coordination with District Development Committee (DDCs), Village Development Committee(VDCs), Women Police Cell, District Health Office (DHO) and Women Development Office (WDO) , NGOs like Maiti Nepal, ABC Nepal and Shakti Samuha (A group of trafficked returnees). These NGOs have site offices and transit homes in many districts.

returnees) have been working with the girl trafficked returnees by providing safe home services, counseling services, and other reintegration programs in this district. Getting access to the trafficked returnees for the research purpose was indeed a challenging endeavor. The trafficked returnees are generally unwilling to expose themselves to others. Therefore the first contact, the so-called door opener, of the study was the project leader of one NGO i.e. FPAN closely working with them.

At the outset the door opener (project leader) was requested to help in the selection of the samples. The project leader made a recommendation to contact the field worker (the key person) at Makawanpur district. The key person has worked in the field of girl trafficking for many years possessing comprehensive knowledge and experience. The key person organized the venue and time for the interviews with the trafficked returnees. The interviews were organized in the second week of December. The interviews were mainly conducted in the houses of informant's friend and some were also taken in the local community office.

Given the complexity of the theme it was indeed challenging to create a climate of trust- a key criterion for being open and share feelings. Previous studies have also shown that the researchers have encountered problems in obtaining information from trafficked women (Aengst, 2001; Sahara, 2004). Moreover, rehabilitation centers are often reluctant to provide adequate information on persons in their protection (Laczko and Gozdzia, 2005). The appointment of key person has therefore become valuable as it helped establish a link between the informants and the interviewer (myself). The key person introduced the purpose of the study to the informants creating a favorable environment for conducting the interviews.

Along with this, contact was also made with another NGO providing rehabilitation services to the survivors of girl trafficking to recruit some additional informants. However, this was not successful as the women in the rehabilitation center did agree on being interviewed. There could be several reasons behind this. It could be that they were unwilling to dig into their past or to reveal their identity as a trafficked returnee because of social stigma and discrimination attached to it. As stated by Hennink & Simkhada (2004) young women and girls who have been trafficked for sex work are seen as hidden population who do not identify themselves. During the course of the field work it was realized that it is necessary to get additional information on the programs on anti-trafficking and rehabilitation. Having acknowledged this, two key persons, a field worker of FPAN and a staff at Maiti Nepal, were also interviewed.

#### **4. 4 My Role as a Researcher**

As stated previously, project leader of a NGO i.e. FPAN was contacted at the outset to appoint the samples for the study. The main reason for contacting the project leader was twofold: Firstly, I had worked in the same organization before and therefore knew the project leader. Secondly, the organization has strong networks and experience working with girl trafficking issues. While contacting the project leader and selecting the organization I was aware of my prejudices, for instance my prior understanding on the girl trafficking issues and the activities of the organizations. Indeed these prejudices have raised a doubt regarding the reliability and ethical issues related to the study. Merriam (2009) has however emphasized the importance of the interviewers’ knowledge on the topic in order to raise meaningful questions in a way the informants can understand easily. On this view, my prior involvement and knowledge in the field has been an advantage in understanding the informants’ context.

Given the sensitivity of the issue of trafficking it could also be difficult to begin the interview without the support of the key person. Since the key person has been in contact with the informants through various reintegration programs, they were comfortable and open towards her. The key person has therefore been helpful in establishing trust with the informants. Merriam (2009) argues that interaction between the interviewer and the informants is a complex phenomenon as both parties attempt to influence the interactions. In light of this view, attempts were therefore made to be non judgmental, sensitive and respectful to the informants.

Despite the attempts, most of the informants were however dubious about the purpose of the interview (at least in the beginning). The fact was that many of them were already interviewed several times by other researchers. Moreover, they were eager to know the benefit of participating in the interview. It was therefore important to elucidate the informants that the study is purely academic research attempting to give a broader understanding of the girl trafficking issues and the reintegration program of the NGOs.

## **4.5 Data Collection**

The study uses both primary and secondary data to explore the experience and perception of “Nepalese girls trafficking returnees”. While in depth interview has been the main source for primary data, the document search has provided secondary data for this study. The following sub section describes in-depth interviews, introduces briefly the presentation of informants and key persons and shed lights on the secondary sources applied respectively.

### **4.5.1 In- depth Interviews**

Interviews, particularly “unstructured” or “open-ended”, have been the most commonly used data collecting method in qualitative research (Silverman, 2006). Compared to other methods, interviews are relatively economical both in terms of time and resources (Rapley, 2004). It provide researchers the access to individuals’ attitudes, values, interpretation of events and understanding which cannot be necessarily obtained using other methods for instance a formal questionnaire and structured interview (Silverman, 2006). One of the essence of the in- depth interview is to combine structure with flexibility. In addition to this, the in-depth interview is both interactive and generative in nature. As a result the researchers have the opportunity to achieve a depth of answer and to produce new knowledge or thoughts by exploring the participants, feelings, opinions and beliefs (Ritchie and Lewis, 2004).

This study also relies on the in- depth interviews in order to gain an access to the inner world of the Nepalese girls trafficking and to explore their personal experience and feelings in the reconstruction of their self identity. In depth interview has also been valuable to comprehend the effectiveness of rehabilitation/reintegration programs provided by the NGOs. All together 8 girl trafficked returnees have been interviewed for the purpose of the study. Among these 8 informants, 7 were trafficked returnees from the brothels and 1 was a trafficked returnee from foreign employment. Though the age group of the study has ranged from 20-50 years, the majority of the informants are however in their 40s. The informants interviewed have been reintegrated in the society and are living with their respective families

Besides the interviews with the 8 informants, 2 key persons representing NGOs involved in combating trafficking namely FPAN and Maiti Nepal were also interviewed. The interviews with them were primarily focused on getting general information on girl trafficking. In addition the interviews were focused on the services, programs and support that the trafficked

returnees have received from the organization working against trafficking. Interview guides were prepared and followed for both the informants and the key persons (see Annex: i interviews guide).

All interviews were conducted in Nepalese language but some informants also used their local languages. The interviews with the informants lasted around one to two hours. At the outset the informants were asked to tell their past stories and experiences so as to plunge in depth into their inner world. Some informants however took much longer time as they were emotionally disturbed and crying when talking about their past. As one of the informants was the victim of trafficking of migration, she did not have much to tell about the questions on the reintegration and rehabilitation i.e. getting back from the trafficked cities like the other cases. Out of eight informants, one woman did not have clarity in her speech making it difficult to follow her explanations.

During the interview, the participants were also observed on how they talk, how they interact and how they dress up with a view to understanding their feelings and perceptions about themselves. In line with the arguments of Goffman( 1959) , some informants during the interview expressed emotions such as anger and fear helping to understand their perception towards themselves and the society. Furthermore, this observation also contributed to the operationalization of the different elements of social work theory in practice as well as to explore the missing elements in the practice. Tape recorder was used in all the interviews and the field notes were taken of significance. All interviews have been transcribed later in detail. In order to make the transcribing process more reliable, key persons were contacted again and asked to clarify some uncertain points.

#### **4.5.2 Brief Presentation of Informants and Key Persons**

As stated previously, 8 informants and 2 key persons were interviewed for the purpose of the study. Apart from providing the pseudonym to protect the informants’ identity, each informant is referred to as a case. Out of the 8 selected informants, 3 informants had attended primary education up until grade 4. While 4 informants had never attended school but could to some extent read and write, 1 informant could not even read and write. Similarly, 7 informants were trafficked for prostitution and 1 was for foreign employment. The main destinations of trafficking for prostitution were Indian cities- Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and

Banaras. The destination for foreign employment was Saudi Arabia. The informants were lured for better economy, fake love/marriage and false visits. Details on each case are as follows:

**Case 1,** Maya (42 years old) trafficked at the age of 16, was promised a job in a carpet factory in Kathmandu, by her cousin. She was however sold to a brothel in India. She stayed almost 4 years in two brothels, first in Calcutta and later moved to Banaras brothel from where she was rescued by the police. She returned to Nepal after being rescued. She got married at the age of 21. Presently, she has three children (two daughters and one son). She earns her own living by running a retail shop in her own house. She is a peer educator<sup>9</sup> in an NGO and also a member of survivor support group<sup>10</sup>.

**Case 2,** Kanchi (46 years old) was trafficked at the age of 22. She was falsely promised by a man that he would marry her. The man sold her to a brothel in Bombay. She stayed there for 7 years and moved to another brothel in Agra voluntarily to earn money. After staying one year in Agra she managed to escape from the brothel and returned to Nepal. She got married after returning from Agra. However, she is now divorced and works in the farm. She is a peer educator and is also a member of the survivor support group in an NGO.

**Case 3,** Sanu (47 years old) was trafficked at the age of 12 to Bombay in India. She was lured by the dalali(trafficker) who promised her step father to get her a job in the carpet factory. She spent 3 years in a brothel in Bombay before she escaped with the help of some Nepalese boys. However, she became a victim of another trafficker on the way back home. The trafficker promised to help her return home safely, and sold her to a brothel in Delhi. She stayed there 2 and half years. Yet again she managed to escape from the brothel and reached Nepal. She is now married. She has two children (one died). She is engaged in cattle herding. She is also a peer educator and a member of the survivor support group of an NGO.

**Case 4,** Kumari (38 years old) was trafficked at 12 yrs old to a brothel in Bombay in India. A man (trafficker) promised her that he would take her to meet her married sister (who was also sold in the brothel i.e. case 1 in the study). Instead she was sold to a brothel. She stayed in the

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<sup>9</sup> Peer educator is to support each other (trafficked returnees) and conduct awareness programs to young girls who are vulnerable to trafficking and so on.

<sup>10</sup> Survivor Support group is a group of girls/ women trafficked returnees ( see section 6.6 for detail)

brothel for 2 years. She was rescued by the Indian police and kept in a rehabilitation center in India for 6 months. She was then sent to Nepal. Once she was back, she got married. She now owns a tea shop in her village. She is also a peer educator and a member of the survivor support group of an NGO.

**Case 5**, Parvati (46 years old) was a 20 years old divorced woman with a son when trafficked. A man (trafficker) falsely promised her that he would marry her and sold her to a brothel in Bombay. She was sold for 30,000 Indian Rupees<sup>11</sup>. She spent three years in the brothel before she managed to run away to Nepal. She remarried after returning to Nepal. She is at present running her own business-a tea shop. She is also a peer educator and the member of the survivor support group.

**Case 6**, Radha (48 years old) was trafficked at the age of 12. Her uncle deceived her by promising her a better life and a job in the city. Instead, he sold her to the brothel in Bombay. She was sold for 40,000 Indian Rupees. She stayed in the brothel for three years. She managed to get rescued with the help of the security guard of the brothel. After returning to Nepal, she got married to her cousin at the age of 21. She has three daughters, one son and grandchildren. She and her husband work together in a farm. She is also a member of the survivor support group and a peer educator.

**Case 7**, Gita (41yrs old) was trafficked at the age of 12. One of her friends was falsely promised by a guy that he would marry her. She accompanied her friend with the guy who sold both of them in a brothel in Bombay. She stayed there for 8-9 months. She managed to escape with the help of clients visiting the brothel. After returning she got married at the age of 22. Her husband has three wives including her. She has 2 daughters (14 yrs and 12 yrs old) and 2 sons (11yrs and 7 yrs old). She is engaged in cattle herding. She is also a member of the survivor support group and is a peer educator.

**Case 8**, Samjhana (40 yrs old) a married women with three children, was trafficked at the age of 35. She was trafficked to Saudi Arabia for foreign employment. A local agent in her village promised her a job with good salary in a hospital in Saudi Arabia. However, she was not given the job she was promised and instead had to work as a domestic servitude. She stayed in Saudi Arabia for two and half years. She was rescued by the help of some Indian boys and the agent.

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<sup>11</sup> 44 Indian rupees is equivalent to 1 USD.

Along with the 8 informants, 2 key persons representing organization involved in combating girl trafficking were also interviewed. While the first key person (female) has been working with a NGO, i.e. FPAN, the second key person (male) is a staff of Maiti Nepal- a NGO working against trafficking.

### **4.5.3 Secondary Data**

The trip to Nepal in December 2010 has provided me a good opportunity to get access to rich materials ‘girl trafficking’. The literatures collected during the field visit have been valuable in analysing the factors leading to trafficking, the impact of trafficking, and approaches/ strategies applied to combat trafficking. Several published and unpublished documents and reports of various NGOs and UN organizations have been reviewed. These prior studies in trafficking have also been a means of ensuring reliability of the cases selected for the study. Moreover, the collected literature has also contributed to providing quantitative data beneficial for this study.

To illustrate this, the literature reviewed included among others the IIDS & UNIFEM’s *Status and Dimensions of Trafficking within Nepalese Context 2004*, *Red Light Traffic – The Trade in Nepali Girls* by Ghimire, Durga (1994), *Trafficking of Girls and Women in Nepal* by Sangroula Yubaraj (2001) , *Prevention of Trafficking and the Care and Support of Trafficked Persons: In the Context of an Emerging HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Nepal* (ed. Patricia Roberts, 2001), *USAID Anti Trafficking In persons Programs in Asia: A synthesis*(2009), *Sex trafficking in Nepal: Context and process*( Hennink, Monique and Simkhada Padam, 2004) ,*Child Trafficking in Nepal*( Terre des hommes, 2003), Crawford and Kaufman’s *Sex Trafficking in Nepal: Survivor Characteristics and Long-Term Outcomes* 2008 and *Exploring the Status of Reintegrated Girls: A Participatory Study* by Chen and Marcovivi (2003), *Trafficking Survivors in Nepal: An Exploratory Study of Trafficked Women’s Experiences and Perceptions of their Reintegration* by Chaulagai(2009) just to name a few. These studies have enhanced my understanding of the Nepalese girls’ trafficked returnees from various perspectives.



## **4.6 Other Issues of the Methodology of the Research**

This subsection consists of two issues: reliability and validity and ethical consideration.

### **4.6.1 Reliability and Validity of the Research**

Reliability and validity are central to social science research. Qualitative researchers are expected to accomplish satisfactory validity and reliability in one way or another. While, reliability concerns the extent to which evidence is independent from the researchers, validity concerns the extent to which the study provides a true picture of reality. What is worth mentioning is that the study should accurately represent the social phenomena in which it is based (Hammersley and Akinson 1995; Silverman, 2006).

Having said this emphasis has therefore been given to the research method and procedure so as to ensure the reliability of this study. This is to say that documents published by national agencies (including government and non-government), donors and international organizations such as the UN have been thoroughly examined. Moreover the triangulation of data collection procedure by means of interview further helped ensure validity and assure credibility of the data derived. Indeed it could be argued that whether and to what extent the findings of this study can be generalised. However, since the study is based on prior studies undertaken in the similar context it could be argued that the findings of the study would be transferred to provide an understanding of other similar context (see Zhao, 2007; Chaulagai, 2009).

### **4.6.2 Ethical Consideration**

The consideration of research ethics is important as it deals with the issues of research participants’ rights and welfare along with the researcher’s obligation to the subjects. It is crucial to be attentive about the knowledge of girls trafficking selected for the study and to preserve anonymity and safeguard confidentiality. In this study, an informed consent (see Annex ii) was therefore presented to and signed/stamped by each informant before the interview. Moreover, the informants were provided with the opportunity to decide whether to participate in the investigation by disseminating them the information and explanation of the benefits, rights, risks and dangers involved with their participation.

Similarly, consent was taken for using the tape recorder at the beginning of the interview. The ethical issues were also of concern in the process of interviewing as some questions might

have led to the feelings of helplessness, low self esteem, stigma and painful memories by revisiting and discussing their problems. It is also worth mentioning that the informants were provided with assurance that their answers about the reintegration programs provided to them would not put them at risk/fear of losing their involvement or support from the organization.

At the outset of the interview the informants were also clarified that the information provided by them will only be used for study purpose and will be completely confidential in order to avoid any negative impact on their daily life or in the future.

#### **4.7 Limitation of the Study**

This study is meant to reflect the socio-cultural perspectives of one district in Nepal i.e. Makawanpur district. Therefore, it does not represent the situation of the entire country, which is composed of more complex and diverse population groups, culture and socio-economic conditions. In this regard, the findings of this study might not correspond to the entire geo-political areas of Nepal. More importantly, the women interviewed in the study represents only a sub-set of the total population of trafficked women, for example those who have returned to Nepal for many years and hence bear particular characteristics( i.e. elderly women). Also, the data collected from the interviews had to be transcribed from the local language to English, an exercise which was very comprehensive and tedious especially as the informants were narrating in depth their life experiences.

#### **4.8 Data Analysis**

Merriam (2009) states that data analysis in a qualitative study are intended to provide an answer to the specific research question(s). This study has applied the data analysis approaches anchored in the qualitative paradigm. Broadly speaking, qualitative data analysis is a process of searching patterns and relationships in the data by comparing individuals' stories and experiences. In fact data analysis is the way of making sense out of data and involves consolidation, reduction and interpretation of what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. These meanings and understandings constitute the findings of the study.

As stated earlier, thematic analysis and interpretation are employed in this study. The data analysis has followed the bottom-up approach starting from raw data and then breaking them

into units of practical meaning that led to emerge of themes. Critical analysis and discussion of these categorized themes have helped to make comparisons and to identify contrast among the informants. In addition a set of theoretical ideas have also been used while analyzing the raw data.

To be more precise, the steps of analysis presented by Strauss and Corbin (2008) including ‘open coding’, ‘axial coding’ and ‘selective coding’ have been valuable in analyzing data for this study. Following the steps the interview transcripts, the field notes and the document collected were thoroughly studied. A form of summary was then prepared on the basis of the major themes from the interview guide, which helped in naming an early set of categories/themes. This process of generating indicators which is potentially relevant in answering the research question is called *coding* (Merriam, 2009).

As trafficking is understood as a complex phenomenon data were therefore investigated through interrelated processes. To be more precise, the processes emerging from the interview guide, were categorized into four broad topics for analysis: (i) Understanding girl trafficking in Nepal, (ii) Life experience in trafficked cities (iii) The rescued experience and (iv) Experience of reintegration/rehabilitation in society. This coding has helped to reduce the large amount of data contained in the transcripts, field notes and documents in groups and summarizing them under respective categories. The summaries of what every informants had said about the trafficking phenomenon and life experiences in the trafficked cities and the process of reintegration were read , re-read and compared to create familiarity and contradictory responses.

At this early stage, the analysis was open to all possible alternatives. Merriam(2009) has termed this stage as *open coding*. Open coding is meant to explore the thoughts, ideas and meanings of the participants to develop more sub categories by asking questions such as ‘what is going on here?’ or ‘what are they trying to say’ just to name a few. The categories/themes in the analysis are represented by providing the meaning that has embarked on in the context or by taking the words expressed by the informants themselves i.e. ‘*in vivo codes*’ (Stauss and Corbin, 1998). Some examples of the ‘in vivo codes’ developed during the coding of data in the study were ‘empowerment or disempowerment’ and ‘dilemma-Who am I and where do I go?’

Moreover, during the open coding, many different categories pertaining to a phenomenon of the study were identified. Comparisons were then made among the categories by asking questions why or how come, where, when, how, and with what reasons, with the purpose of seeing the relationships among categories (Ibid). By doing so, some categories became sub-categories reflecting conditions and actions/interactions of a broader phenomenon (category). Like for example, ‘life experiences in trafficked cities’ and ‘the rescue experience’ were placed in the subcategory. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), this process of relating categories to subcategories in line with their characteristics and dimensions is referred to as *axial coding* or *analytical coding*. Analytic coding goes beyond descriptive coding meaning that it arises from interpretation and reflection of the meaning (Richards, 2005 in Merriam, 2009). In addition, to this a memo was maintained by ideas, meanings and stories about the relationships and linkages among the categories.

The final stage in coding is *selective coding* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This coding involves identification of the core categories in which the analysis is focused. At the integrating stage the researcher often attempts to focus on the key components and identify the most significant categories for discussion and critical reflection of the phenomenon.’ The Impact of Self, ‘Impact in relationship with others’, ‘the Future-Forgetting the Unforgettable’ and ‘NGOs perceptions and reality’ are some of the examples of selective coding in this study.

## **Chapter- 5: UNDERSTANDING GIRL TRAFFICKING IN NEPAL**

This chapter is intended to give an understanding of the experiences of trafficked girls and women returnees. As stated previously, this study is meant to explore the new life experiences (rehabilitation/reintegration) of trafficked girls and women returnees. It is therefore important to examine the experience of trafficking at the outset. The chapter is organised in the following way: The first section will examine how and why trafficking happens and what factors have led girls into trafficking in Nepal. The next section describes the life experience in the trafficked cities. This is followed by the discussion of their rescuing experience and the dilemma in returning to Nepal.

### **5.1 Causes of Girl Trafficking- Why and How Trafficking Happens?**

To address the causes of girl trafficking in Nepal all informants were asked mainly two questions during the interview: What are the major causes that brought about trafficking? How were they trafficked? Aegnst (2001) has identified two types of trafficking in the Nepalese context- “soft trafficking”<sup>12</sup> and “hard trafficking”<sup>13</sup>. In their attempt to answer the aforementioned questions, the informants also revealed the existence of both types of trafficking. The victims of “soft” trafficking were mainly the migrant from rural villages to urban villages for cheap employment in factories mainly carpet factories, mining factories and so on. Many of the informants offered for such employment were deceived by promising false marriages and false visits demanding them to travel to other places outside their village. However they ended up being sex trafficked to India.

On many occasion the traffickers the so- called *Dalal*<sup>14</sup> often attempted to be potential boyfriends in order to gain trust of the young women. The following narration of Maya (Case 1) provides an example of how girls and women become subject to “soft” trafficking by the traffickers:

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<sup>12</sup> “Soft” trafficking is when a young girl goes to India under the pretense of finding employment or arranging a marriage.

<sup>13</sup> “Hard” trafficking is when a girl’s parents knowingly sell their daughter to a trafficker, garnering a price anywhere from US \$200 to \$600.

<sup>14</sup> The literal meaning of ‘Dalal’ is broker. The dalal are the traffickers who are involved in sex trafficking young women and girls in Nepal (Hennik and Simkhada, 2004).

**Reintegration of the Nepalese Girls Trafficking Returnees into Society- An Empirical Study of Reconstruction of the Self Identity: “A Matter of Pride or Shame or Both?”**

*I lived in India with my parents then. I was the oldest daughter among 6 siblings. We were from a poor family. I had to do all the housework. My mother used to beat me all the time.. Phupu ko chora (second cousin) saw me crying all the time. It was one day my cousin told me that he will find me a job somewhere in a carpet factory. But I did not know then that he was a trafficker. He sold me to a brothel.*

Multiple factors are involved in girl trafficking including poverty, illiteracy, domestic violence and lure of employment. This also indicates that trafficking is caused by a combination of a number of factors. The statement of Kanchi (Case 2) does provide an illustration:

*I was living with my poor parents. I did not go to school. I worked in the farm. One day I eloped with a guy (dalal) who said he is from Kathmandu...I didn't want to go but it was in my destiny so I said ok to him. He took me to the bus park and explained that we are going to Kathmandu. On the way he offered me a bottle of coca-cola. After drinking it I felt sleepy and when I woke I found myself in a brothel....where I was told that I was sold by him.*

The above mentioned two statements demonstrate that deceiving is central to trafficking. While the case1 was lured by offering employment the case 2 was the victim of false marriage. Such false promises are seemed to be a common phenomenon in trafficking girls. The statement of Kumari (Case 4) further reinforces this:

*At the age of 12, I met the man in my village who my sister had eloped with. He promised me to take me to visit my sister. Four girls along with me were taken Kathmandu. I did not know where I was going. He said it would take 2 hours and he gave me a tablet .After taking the tablet I do not remember anything where I was. I woke up in the brothel.*

Hennink and Simjkhada (2004) state that the same people are often involved in trafficking and approximately 44% of traffickers were familiar to the trafficked women and girls previously. The case of Kumari (Case 4) in fact reflects the similar phenomenon. She was sold to a brothel in Delhi by the same trafficker (dalal) who had falsely assured her sister (i.e. Case 2) that he would marry her. This person deceived her (Case 4) by offering a visit to her sister.

Throughout the interview it was noted that almost all informants were rather young, age ranging from 12 to 16 years and unmarried when trafficked. These young people were

vulnerable to trafficking as they were searching for better life. This has eventually made it easier for the *dalal* (traffickers) to convince and deceive them. Apart from poverty and lack of education, the statements of informants demonstrate that gender discrimination and mimicry (i.e. mostly influenced by friends) also the key reasons for trafficking. The statement of Gita (Case 7) provides an example:

*I was 12 years old. My family was very poor. I was not allowed to go to school because I was a girl. I was supposed to only stay and home and do housework. It was one day when my best friend was approached by a guy to marry her. We both were so innocent that we believed him. My friend asked me to accompany her. I was very happy to follow her with the hope to experience the new world. Life in big city...However, the guy had lied to us and we were sold to a brothel.*

Most of the cases mentioned above have exhibited that trafficking is higher among unmarried girls. However, there are some exceptions to this. During the in- depth interview one women conceded that she was previously married and had a child at the time she was trafficked. Parvati (Case 5) commented on this:

*I was married at the age of 18 and had a son. My parents were very poor. My husband left me for another woman. So I was living with my parents...I worked hard for living. I was 20 yrs then. It was one day when my sister in law's brother told me that I do not deserve to work hard like this. He convinced that I would have a better life if I would marry him. He took me to a restaurant. I ate something which made me dizzy and then do not remember anything. I woke up in a brothel in Bombay. The owner told me that my husband sold me at 30,000 Indian Rupees. They threatened me that they will kill me if I run away...*

This statement of case 5 is also an example of patriarchal society demonstrating how social acceptance of women is linked to her getting married. Moreover, the statement also provides evidence that causes for trafficking are not limited to the economic and age related factor but also to the prevailing socio-cultural structures.

The key persons also pointed to factors mainly socio-economic structure, domestic violence and human rights violence as the core reasons behind trafficking. Discussing the characteristics of the trafficked victims, the key person further stated that the trafficked victims are mostly among unmarried, doing household work, non-literate and school dropout. The majority of them are very young within the age range of 12 to 18 years when trafficked.

The trafficking destination includes large Indian cities such as Calcutta, Delhi, Mumbai, Meerat, Siliguri and Gorakhpur. However, in recent years Gulf countries and China are increasingly becoming a new destination for trafficking both for prostitution and foreign employment. Moreover, internal trafficking has become a growing phenomenon in Nepal in the last decades. Migration from villages to cities in search for better life and earnings has led many young girls/women to end up in various sex industries including massage parlours, dance clubs and so on.

It is also striking that many informants have been trafficked by their own relatives including uncle, cousins and in-laws who acted as *dalals*. In some cases the traffickers were women who were either former sex trafficked or were involved in sex work. Some of these women have even been working as the manager and owner of the brothels. Based on the in depth interviews, these women, who are referred to as *didi* or *phupu didi* (literally, parental aunt) or *saathi* (best friend), visit the villages during the time of local festivals and lure young women and girls by offering better life and opportunities in big cities. One informant (Case 3) stated that she was trafficked by such *phupu* (aunt) who promised her step father to find a job for her in the carpet factor. The informant explained the situation in the following way:

*Sanu (Case 3): I was 12 years old then. There was a lot of dalali that time which we didn't know about. One of them said to my step father that she will get a work for me.. She said that she will get me a work in a carpet factory, I was also happy that I will be away from home. I remember the lady (dalal) gave green green currencies to my step father. On the way to Kathmandu, the man offered me coke and I then feel asleep. I think I slept there and when I woke up in a beautiful house. I was told that I was in a brothel.*

In fact the statement of case 3 can be seen as an example of “hard trafficking”, as she was sold by her step father. This also exhibits that the main causes for ‘hard’ trafficking are similar to those of ‘soft trafficking’, which include poverty, innocence and ignorance of the real world and lure of employment, among others.

Prior studies exploring the causes of girls trafficking in Nepal, are mostly drawn on the “push<sup>15</sup> and pull theory”<sup>16</sup> (IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004). The statements of the informants have

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<sup>15</sup> Push factors involve both the immediate and root causes of trafficking and the pull factors involves the external causes leading to trafficking for instance international migration policies and international demand for cheap labour and domestic work.



also envisaged the presence of both the push and the pull factor corresponding to the prior studies. The push factors resulting from the immediate causes can be seen in the form of illiteracy, discrimination, family violence and divorce. Similarly, factors such as gender discrimination, poverty, unemployment and discriminatory cultural values can be identified as some of the examples of root causes in this study. Studies reveal that global trafficking of women and children have in recent years become one of the most lucrative businesses (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; IIDS and UNIFEM, 2004; Sangroula, 2001). The vulnerable groups particularly, young girls and marginalized women have become a commodity in the sex industry and international labour market. This has resulted in the existence of both factors in girls trafficking, i.e. the push and pull factors. The following statement of Samjhana (Case 8) is an example in this regard.

*I was 35 years old when I was trafficked to Saudi Arabia. It was very difficult to earn in the village. I had family to take care of. The agent in the village told me that I will get a good job. It was said that I will be given 800 Riyal<sup>17</sup> from work. I had thought if I work oversees I will have a better life and better salary. However, I did not get the money they promised. It was a hard life in Saudi Arabia. I had to do domestic worker. I worked from 8 am to 2 am next day.*

Samjhana (Case 8) is the only informant in this study who was trafficked overseas for the purpose of employment. Her statement clearly shows the presence of both factors i.e. “push” and “pull” factors leading to trafficking. In fact it is poverty, desire for better life, lure of employment which has pushed her to be trafficked. However, the demand of cheap labour abroad, one of the pull factors has equally contributed her to be trafficked. Based on her experience it can be argued that the push factor is influenced by pull factor and vice versa in the process of girls trafficking.

As stated previously, the prevailing men’s patriarchal perception, attitude and beliefs towards the children and women in Nepal can also be seen as one factor facilitating both the supply of and demand for trafficking. In fact, women and children are conceived of as objects that could be sold and resold in the markets. The case of Sanu (Case 3) is an illustration:

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<sup>16</sup> Pull factor involves the external causes leading to trafficking for instance international migration policies and international demand for cheap labour and domestic work.

<sup>17</sup> 36.4Riyal is equivalent to 1 USD.

*I was sold in Bombay brothel. After staying for 3 years, I managed to escape from the brothel. I was on the train to Delhi where I became a victim of another dalal. I shared him my story and he told me he would take me to his home. The next day he sold me to a brothel in Delhi.*

To sum up, the study has brought forth a number of causes including socio-cultural, personal and economic causes for trafficking. It is worth mentioning that the causes of trafficking as revealed by this study are to a large extent identical to the findings of other similar studies (Mahendra et al., 2001: Hennink and Simkhada, 2004: IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004: Piper, 2005). The socio-cultural causes incorporate mainly false marriage, patriarchal values and norms, false visits, gender and all other forms of discrimination, family violence, divorce and prevailing male attitudes. The economic causes are evolved due to extreme poverty, lure of employment, basic survival needs i.e. food, shelter, security and status, and growing demand of cheap labour both at the national and international level. Similarly, the personal causes are characterized by a desire for better living and exploring the new world, innocence and ignorant of the real world, illiteracy and tendency to follow friends and family.

## **5.2 Life Experience in Trafficked Cities**

Previous studies on this subject matter demonstrate that the women in trafficked cities suffer from varied social, psychological and physical impacts (IIDS & UNIFEM, 2004: Aengst, 2001: Ghimire, 1994: Asmita, 2006: Evans and Bhattarai, 2000). They face various types of violence, torture and humiliation from the very origin place of trafficking. As a result of this the trafficked women are likely to lose their self identity. It is therefore important to explore the life experience of trafficked women to provide an understanding of the construction of their “self” and their “identity” in their reintegration in the community.

Indeed the informants of this study have their own experiences of life in the trafficked cities. To bring about this experience, they were asked during the interview to reflect their sufferings, emotions and reactions, among others in the trafficked cities. To be more specific the following questions were raised to informants: How were they treated in the brothel? And do they remember any incidents which they can never forget? Although the majority of the informants have experienced similar physical and psychological abuses, the informants mainly focused on a particular type of torture which had affected them the most. For instance, Sanu (Case 3) described how she was beaten and starved in the brothel in the following way:

*Every day I was beaten. I was forced to sleep with 10 clients every night. I starved in the brothel as I was given very little food to eat. I was forced to drink rakshi (alcohol). The owner of the brothel (malikni) used to first pour hot water in my body and then cold water beat me to death with a bamboo stick. It was because there wouldn't be any scars in my body. I was suppose to take shower, wear pretty clothes and do what they tell me to do. By then there would be 4 to 6 clients waiting to get me. If I didn't agree the owner would threaten me that she would hang me to death in the fan. There were days when the owner hired gundas<sup>18</sup> to beat me.*

Apart from the physical torture such as beating, some informants also shared their experiences of getting pregnant and having abortion to name a few. Maya (Case 1) serves as an example:

*I became pregnant once in the brothel. I couldn't go for an abortion because it was too late when I found out that I was pregnant. I had to do what the clients and the owner told me to do even when I was pregnant. Later I delivered the baby in the brothel, but they didn't feed the baby well enough and the baby died.*

Based on the statements of informants, pregnancy seems to be a problematic issue in the brothel. The following quotation of Radha (Case 6) further reinforces this:

*The owner of the brothel used to give us pills so that we could not conceive. I used to get sick, feel weak and was also dizzy. I had heard that owner gave electric shocks in private areas so that the girls do not conceive.*

Indeed the statements of the informants demonstrate the presence of psycho-socio and mental tortures committed to trafficked women and girls. Kumari (Case 4) stated how these tortures made her humiliated in the following way:

*I remember an incident when very young girl around 7yrs old, she died in a brothel and was thrown in a sack from the roof. I was scared, sad and angry all at once. The clients used to select us as we all stand in a row. I used to feel humiliated. We were always kept in a locked room. We weren't supposed to go out.*

The informants were exposed to various kinds of physical tortures mainly rape, burning parts of body with cigarettes, beating with sticks and shoe heels, wage exploitation and forced to

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<sup>18</sup> Gundas refers to gangsters who do anything for money.

serve many clients every nights, among others. Some of the informants have also been infected by diseases such as STDs, tuberculosis and other severe health problems. Interestingly enough, the in- depth interviews revealed that the girls in the trafficked cities were continually intimidated by brothel owners to work and pay off their “debt”. This debt is actually the money paid by the brothel owner to the trafficker for selling the girls. In their attempt to recover the debt they repeatedly threaten the girls to work for them and to comply with all their orders. The informants stated that the failure to comply with such orders have led to threats and extended abuses. In fact the informants were not paid for their work and earned no money for themselves until their debts to the brothel owner were covered. Radha (Case 6) commented on this:

*The owner told me that my uncle sold me in IC 40,000. And later again he came back to claim some more money. The owner used to tell me that I had to be there for 10 yrs in order to clear my debt.*

Some informants claimed that they sometimes received tips in the form of money and gold ornaments from the clients. However, these tips were also taken away by the brothel owner. The key person of the study further mentioned that the ‘debt’ is never cleared as the trafficked girls are never paid for their work. He succinctly stated: “*Once sold it is forever*”. The interview with the key person also revealed that those girls who have been sex trafficked by relatives were expected to use their earnings to support their family in Nepal. The male relatives take trips to the trafficked cities to collect a girl’s earning. This is also reinforced by the above mentioned statement of Case 6 in which the uncle who sold her to the brothel, made number of visits in order to claim more money. This meant that many of the trafficked women and girls are not only under pressure to pay off their “debt” but also to support their family members through earning tips.

As stated previously, along with the sex work, trafficking has also happened for other purposes mainly foreign employment. One example is of Samjhana (Case 8), who was trafficked to the Gulf region for employment purpose. However, as in the case of sex trafficking, there has been similar form of socio-psychological and physical violence in case of trafficking for foreign employment. Samjhana (Case 8) shared her experience in the following way:

*The women of the house accused me that I was talking to their husband and sons. The men of the family tried sexually abusing me. The son of the family tried doing inappropriate things to me. I used to scream at him. He used to tell me “If you do what I say then I will give you more money than your monthly allowance”. I told him that I am here to work and not do such things. The situation is the same for girls who are sold in Bombay or Saudi.*

To sum up, the views expressed by the informants about their life in the trafficked cities demonstrate the presence of socio-psychological and physical violence. The interviews exhibit that violence such as sexual and verbal abuse, forced to work against will, forced prostitution, locked in room, forced to drink alcohol and use drugs and medicines and forced abortion are widespread in the brothels. The majority of the informants experienced various mental and psychological tortures such as humiliation, sadness, depression, shock, anger and fear resulting in the loss of their identity.

### **5.3 Rescuing Experience: A Blessing in Disguise?**

There is a growing concern on human rights of the trafficked Nepalese women and children. This implies that these exploited women and children must have a favorable environment so as to return to Nepal safely. A number of reports published by NGOs and INGOs have revealed that the most common attempts to rescue the trafficked women and girls have been occasional police raids in the brothel. Similarly, the data available from the rehabilitation centers in Nepal show that approximately 80% of trafficked women and girls have been rescued from brothels. It is worth mentioning that this high figure represents only the situation of the rescued women/girls who have been placed in the rehabilitation center (Hennink and Simkhada, 2004). In this study also the informants stated that they have been rescued by a number of means. While some of them were rescued through police raids in the brothels, the others escaped from the brothel by themselves or with the help of clients and security guards. This section is therefore meant to shed light on the rescuing experience of trafficked women/girls returnees. The section starts by discussing the journey to home and continues by dressing the dilemma faced by the trafficked returnees.

### **5.3.1 The Journey to Home -Rescuing Process**

Similar to the experience of trafficking, returning home from the trafficked cities is equally complex and challenging for the women and girls. Based on the reports of NGOs and INGOs, there are at least four major ways through which the trafficked women are rescued and returned home:

- return directly from brothels voluntarily or involuntarily,
- rescue and put into an Indian rehabilitation centre before returning to Nepal
- rescue from brothel and put into an Indian rehabilitation centre and then shifted to a Nepalese rehabilitation centre before returning to family,
- rescue and put into a Nepalese rehabilitation centre before returning to family.

Each informant of this study has a different story on how she was rescued. Throughout the interview process the informants were asked a number of questions related to their rescuing experience. Did you have any expectation of being rescued? How and who were involved in the rescuing process? How long did the rescue process take? How did it feel to be rescued?

Interestingly enough, almost all informants expressed that they had never hoped of being rescued. Maya (Case 1) commented on this:

*I had no hope of being rescued. We were kept in locked room, I couldn't think of being rescued. Even when we are with clients we are locked up... even food was provided at the rooms.*

The trafficked women and girls had also experienced sexual and verbal violence from rescuers, particularly the police and the other authorized persons. It is indeed the stigma of being trafficked (as a prostitute), which has made them vulnerable and exposed to similar violence even after they abandoned the brothel. She (Case 1) stated her returning experience in the following way:

*I and my friend were rescued by police raid in the brothel. I was taken to the prison. My parents did not come to get me. I stayed in jail for 5 months. Magistrate of the Indian court helped me get out of the jail. With the help of police I was sent to Nepal. However, I was again put in the prison in Nepal. I was harassed and verbally abused by calling names like*

*Randi<sup>19</sup> and so on. I felt maybe because of the fact that I was from the brothel, they could treat however they wanted to. The next day I was taken to my friend’s house. Thereafter I lived with my friend.*

Interesting enough, in some cases ( for example Case 1) the parents were reluctant to bring their rescued daughters back home due to the shame and fear associated with the stigma (see section 6.3). During the interview it was also revealed that some informants escaped from the brothel with the help of their friends and security guards and clients. Case 3 is an example of such escape:

*I was 16-17 yrs old I ran from the brothel. I collected the gold and money which I had earned and hidden safely. It was one of the days when I and my friend we planned to run away. We broke the window and I got a cut in my arm and was also bleeding. I still have scars in my arm. We asked help from a Nepali security guard who was working in another building next to our brothel. He arranged us train tickets to Nepal. We gave him 400 India Rupees and reached Raxual.<sup>20</sup>*

Similarly, the statement of Gita (Case 7) further demonstrates how clients were occasionally involved in the rescuing process:

*I was rescued by a boy who visited the brothel area. He took me to his place in Hyderabad in India and we got married in court hoping it would be safe for me to return to Nepal. But once his parents came to know that I was a trafficked returnee, I was put in prison. He took me out from the prison and we left for Nepal. Our marriage certificate was thrown away by the police and the boy was made to return to India and I was taken to my parent’s home.*

Hennink and Simkhada (2004) stated that on few occasions the brothel owner releases the women and girls who they feel that they feel can no longer attract sufficient clients or they are HIV infected. During the interview the key person further explicated this in the following way:

*Umm... They have come across some girls who have HIV and were sent back home. Once they have reached a certain age the owner tells her to leave the brothel. However, there are cases where women have opened their own brothel.*

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<sup>19</sup> Randi and Bombaywali are dirty words referring women to prostitutes and characterless women.

<sup>20</sup> Raxual is Nepal-India border.

Almost all women and girls who were interviewed stated that they did not pass through a transit home in India or a rehabilitation centre in Nepal. This means that they either lived in India for some time or returned directly to Nepal. However, Case 4 was an exception, as the former was rescued in police raid and placed in Indian rehabilitation center before sending her back to her family. The statement of case 4 provides a basis to argue that those women and girls who have come across the rehabilitation center or transit homes are less subjected to violence than the women and girls who have managed to escape by themselves. She (Case 4) shared this experience in the following way:

*There was a police raid in the brothel. I was taken first to a women organization. It is called Sivir<sup>21</sup>. I stayed there for 6 months. I was taken good care of in the center. The organization contacted the police and we were sent to Nepal.*

To sum up, the majority of the informants have expressed that they have experienced sexual and verbal abuse by police and other concerned authorities. Moreover, the trafficked women and girls have been perceived as objects and treated by the people inappropriately due to stigma inherited to them. As a result of this the trafficked women and girls have experienced uncertainty, and low self esteem among others. Indeed this has given rise to the questioning of their self identity i.e. who are they? Are they really prostitutes? Can they lead a normal life? In fact their attempt to find the answers of the aforementioned questions has contributed to shaping the way they see their ‘self’ and define their ‘identity’.

### **5.3.2 Dilemma- Who Am I? and Where do I go?**

As mentioned earlier almost all the trafficked returnees had not expected that they would be rescued. However, some informants stated that after several years of torture and abuse, they built up courage to seek help from others to escape. It is evident that these individuals during the rescuing process have developed a certain understandings of their self. As stated by Burkitt (2008) they were mainly concerned with giving an understanding of questions such as “where do they go”, “who they are”, “what to do” and “how to disclose themselves in the society” just to name a few. Moreover, this attempt to comprehend themselves has helped them develop an interpretation of the self’s position and define their role and the image, which they have created for themselves (trafficked returnees).

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<sup>21</sup> Sivir refers to Indian rehabilitation center where the trafficked women are places after being rescued.



During the interview process, the key person emphasized that almost all the girls/women in the trafficked cities have the willingness to be rescued. However, they are influenced by the brothel owner to undertake any attempts directed to their rescue. The brothel owners often discourage the girls by creating stories of violence, torture and abuse by the police and other NGO people that they are likely to encounter if they attempt to return. The trafficked women and girls are therefore always in a dilemma whether or not to return to their homes once being rescued.

In the interviews also many informants raised concern about the possible consequences of their return to their family. Along with the fear of rejection they were also worried that the shame and stigma attached to them might have a negative impact upon their family. In commenting on this dilemma Maya (Case 1) stated:

*I didn't want to go back to my family because I was thinking that my parents would be ashamed of the fact that I was a trafficked returnee. I was scared of the fact that my siblings would have to face problems because of me. Therefore, I did not go back to my parent's house. And, I decided to go to my friends place in Nepal.*

Similarly, the informants were also scared of disclosing their identity as a trafficked returnee both to their family members and the society. This is because disclosure of their identity might lead to humiliation and hatred. Sanu (Case 3) explained her feelings on this issue:

*I felt when reaching Nepal the dilemma of going back home because I thought it would be humiliating. I was scared that the community people would hate me after knowing from where I had come from. I also thought for a moment it would be better if I went back to the brothel.*

However, despite the fear and hesitance in returning home, some trafficked women and girls were also more relieved. They felt secure after reaching their destination. Radha (Case 6) commented on this:

*It was like a dream to me to be rescued... Upon arriving to Hetauda<sup>22</sup>. I remembered the pipla tree<sup>23</sup> and then I knew that I had reached my home. I was so happy when I recognized my place. It was a huge relief for me that I was safe now.*

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<sup>22</sup> Hetauda is a small town and municipality located in Makwanpur District of southern part of Nepal.

<sup>23</sup> Pipla tree is referred to a fig tree (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred\\_fig](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_fig))

The statements of trafficked returnees to a large extent correspond to the ideas of Mead (1993). The latter has emphasized the importance of symbols and signs in mediating and formulating self-identities. These symbols and signs also lead to development of interpersonal relationships. On this view, the *pipla tree* has also served as a symbol of identity, in the case of Radha (Case 6). This is to say that the *pipla tree* has helped her recognize her home, thereby contributing to identifying the place she belonged to.

During the interview it was also realized that the trafficked returnees had create their image based upon the utterance expressed to them by the authorities and other people. Kumari (Case 4) does provide one example in this regard:

*I did not have anyone come to get me from the police station. I could not tell me my address and my parents did not know that I had returned. So I was taken to Kathmandu and stayed there for 4 days. The police accused me saying Randi (referring to prostitute) etc...I at times used to think am I actually what they accuse me of...*

To sum up, trafficked women and girls are found to be concerned about the impact of their return on their family reputation. They are scared of the rejection as well as of being an extra burden to their family. This has resulted in creating a dilemma among them in returning home. Chaterjee et al. (2006) states that the trafficked returnees find it difficult in formulating their identity apart from being a sexual object. Moreover, they often cannot remember the person they used to be prior to them being trafficked nor can they perceive a life away from their occupation. Therefore, the trafficked returnees are in the search for self identity. This study shows that they attempt to associate themselves with the symbols around them, words and expressions of others –family and the community people -in understanding themselves and creating their self image in the process of returning home.

## **5.4 Discussion and Conclusion**

The study has demonstrated three primary causes of girl trafficking i.e. socio-cultural, economic and personal causes. The socio-cultural causes incorporates mainly false marriage and visit, prevailing patriarchal values and male attitudes , gender and all other forms of discrimination and family violence, among others. The economic causes have evolved due to extreme poverty, lure of employment, lack of basic survival needs such as food, shelter, security and status, and growing demand of cheap labour both at the national and international

level. Similarly, the personal causes are characterized by a desire of having better living, innocence and ignorance to the real world, illiteracy, tendency to follow friends and family and a desire to explore the new world. All these causes have led to the women and girls vulnerable and victims of trafficking, both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ trafficking.

The study also exhibits that all informants, during the stay in the trafficked cities, have experienced various types of socio-psychological and physical violence, torture and humiliation. This experience of violence has significantly impacted upon their ‘self’ and ‘identity’. Moreover, the informants have experienced verbal abuses, for instance *Randi* (referring to prostitute), and other forms of physical abuses such as beating and torturing. These abuses have further weakened them both physically and psychologically resulting in the loss of their identity and low self esteem.

Giddens (1991) states that self identity is a reflection of the individual ongoing activities and experiences. In line with this view the girls trafficking returnees were in search of their identity by looking upon the activities they perform i.e. sex work and the circumstances they were in i.e. the brothel. To be more precise, the trafficked returnees have developed their self consciousness regarding who they are based on the experience in the trafficked cities.

Furthermore, Burkitt (2008) mentions that people are often tended to look upon other people to perceive their self image. Words, attitudes, expressions and actions of others are therefore important in the development of self identity. Taking this view into account, it can also be argued that the trafficked returnees have constructed their image based upon the utterance expressed to them by the owner of the brothel, the authorities and other people.

It is evident in the study that the trafficked women have managed to be rescued from the trafficked cities in a number of ways. While some trafficked women escaped with the help of friends, others were rescued by the help of clients and in some cases through police raids in the brothel. The study has also shown that informants have encountered similar form of discrimination and violence, even on their way back home. These discriminations include sexual and verbal abuse by police and other concerned authorities, reluctance of parents to accept them and being a victim of re-trafficking just to name few.

The trafficked women and girls were perceived as objects and treated by the people inappropriately. Goffman (1963) states that the stigmatized people are regarded as flawed,

compromised, and somehow valued less than fully human. It is indeed the stigma inherited to them as a trafficked women (as a prostitute), which has made them vulnerable and exposed to violence and abuse even after they abandoned the brothel. However, it is evident in the study that those trafficked women and girls who have come across the rehabilitation center or transit homes are seemingly less subjected to violence.

It is this experience of violence and abuse which has in fact created a dilemma among the trafficked women and girls in returning back home. Goffman (1963) has mentioned a type of stigma, the so called tribal stigma, attached to race, nation and religion that can be transmitted equally to all members of the family and contaminate. The informants concerns were to some extent aligned to this type of stigma, as they were scared of the impact of their return to their family. In addition, they were also scared of being rejected as well as of being an extra burden to their family. As a result of this the trafficked women and girls have experienced uncertainty, and low self esteem among others.

## **CHAPTER- 6. THE EXPERIENCE OF REINTEGRATION OF GIRL TRAFFICKED RETURNEES**

The previous chapter has underscored the causes of trafficking, the life experience of trafficking and the rescuing experiences of the women and girls. This chapter is intended to explore the experiences of the trafficked women/girls returnees in their reintegration in the family and society. Reintegration can be seen as a process through which the trafficked girls and women returnees attempt to re-unite with their former life, family, community, and even to create a new life in another place in society. Many organizations working to combat trafficking in Nepal have launched various activities to help trafficked returnees in their reintegration. These activities comprise immediate shelter, counseling and care, skill training, health support, income generating activities, economic support and legal assistance just to name a few.

Despite the efforts, the reintegration of trafficked women/girls has been a challenging endeavor. Rescued girls and women have faced difficulties in adjusting with the normal life, as they were emotionally and physically scared of their trafficked experience. They lack self esteem, education and skills which are crucial to live independently. Moreover, they are exposed to violence, discrimination and often rejected in the society due to the stigma.

This chapter attempts to discuss the role of family, community and other components such as economic component which are seen influential in reintegrating the trafficked returnees and constructing their self identities. The chapter continues by addressing the trafficked returnees’ perceptions towards stigma and discrimination and discussing how they have coped with such discriminations. Moreover, it brings forth in discussion the support of organizations to empower trafficked returnees and explains how the trafficked returnees have experienced disempowerment in the process of empowerment.

### **6.1 Role of Family- Family Acceptance and Adaptation**

In general, the term family is understood as a group of persons who are related through blood as well as by means of adoption and marriage (Sangroula, 2001). In the Nepalese context family is considered a key institution in the social structure. In the rural areas of Nepal, ‘family’ refers to a joint family system which includes parents, brothers and sisters. Based on

the prevailing social norm, a girl is supposed to move to her husband’s home. Once married she becomes a responsibility of her husband and his family.

The majority of the girls interviewed in this study were in between 18 to 20 years old when they returned from the trafficked cities. Many girls claimed that it was their family whom they encountered at the outset after returning from the trafficked cities. It is therefore interesting to explore their reintegration experience with their families i.e. parents, brother and sisters. Moreover, since the majority of the informants at present are married and have children, it is equally important to explore the role of marriage in the reintegration process. During the interviews the girls were therefore posed to a number of questions related to family reintegration including: What happened after they returned from the trafficked cities? Whom did they live with after the return? Are they married? and Have they been accepted by their family? This section is divided into two parts. While the first subsection attempts to study the factors affecting the family acceptance, i.e. financial and emotional factors, the next subsection demonstrates the role of marriage in the reintegration process of the trafficked returnees.

### **6.1.1 Is it Money or Emotion or Both?**

The in-depth interviews with the informants have revealed that there are at least two important elements, i.e. money and emotion significantly affecting the reintegration of trafficked returnees in their family. The girls/women have been often accepted if they are financially not a burden to their parents. This is to say that those who returned with money are more easily accepted into the family. Kanchi (Case 2) commented on this:

*My parents were supportive towards me because I used to give them money which I had saved in the brothel...*

On the contrary those girls/women who did not have any money have encountered more difficulties in their acceptance. The statement of Parvati (Case 5) serves an example:

*I lived with my family when I returned from the brothel. My parents used to scold me. They used to ask for money but I did not have any money. They used to tell me liar for not giving them money...*

Apart from the financial reason, some informant also pointed out to the emotional attachment with the family. Due to this emotional attachment the family members accepted them. However, despite the presence of emotional attachment with the family, some trafficked returnees experienced hindrances from the society in their reintegration with their families. Gita (Case 7) commented on this:

*I went to my parents home once I returned from the brothel. I have my parents, brothers and sisters everyone. I was missing for many years, therefore by parents were surprised and my family was happy to have me back. It was even difficult for them to recognize me...It was the community who did not accept me.*

Hennink & Simkhada (2004) argue that family of such girls is also subjected to stigmatization. The family members are therefore afraid of the adverse consequences in their social status that may arise by accepting them. It is worth mentioning the prevailing social norms in Nepal which associate sons with economic and social advantage and the daughters as burdens (WOREC,2009).The following quotation of Radha (Case 6) is one example demonstrating how the fear of being stigmatized by the community influences the parents in accepting their daughters.

*When I returned from the Bombay, my parents used to tell once the villagers come to know, they will not accept us. They were scared of the society. My parents even told me to go to the place where I came from. My parents did not realize how my bad my situation was in the brothel. They did not speak to me or even did not allow me to prepare food or do anything.*

All in all, the above mentioned statements of the informants exhibit the challenges in reintegration with the families. While some families are more concerned with the financial burden, others are influenced by the society although they have emotional attachment with their daughters. The informants have also experienced discrimination within families as they were not allowed to enter the home, prepare food and participate in the social events

### **6.1.2 Marriage Vs Gender Based Violence**

As stated earlier, marriage has been an important social institution creating different obligations for girls in Nepal. Daughters are considered as a liability by the parents and are

given *kanyadaan*<sup>24</sup> in the marriage. Being married is in a way getting accepted by the family and society at large. All the trafficked returnees interviewed in this study, got married in the later years through the help of both the family members and society. Maya (Case 1) stated her marriage in the following way:

*I got married at the age of 20. My husband knew that I was a trafficked returnee. He was a lonely man and did not have anyone in his family. So the village people told him to marry me. We both were alone so we got married to support each other.*

Despite the fact that marriage has helped the majority of the informants to be accepted in the family, the informants did not have pleasant experience to share. In commenting on the marriage experience Maya (case 1) stated:

*My husband tells me all the time to get out of the house. He beats me, sexually abuses me, and gives me torture like pouring water in my bed. I have been thinking of getting a divorce. But I have nowhere to go. I do not have a shelter. This is reason I cannot go for a divorce. My husband scolds me in front of children. My husband tells me that you go to the bus stop, sleep with a stranger and earn some money...*

Based on the above statement, the trafficked returnees are tended to face gender based violence in their married life. This can be further illustrated by the statement of Gita (Case 7):

*My husband knew that I am a trafficked returnee before we got married. Despite the fact, he convinced me to marry him. However, he does not treat me well. Women like us do face domestic violence. He abuses me by saying, *Randi* and *Bombaywali* (indicating prostitutes). He beats me in front of neighbors and all. I have to tolerate whatever he says or does. Where do I go? I can't go to my parent's house. I have a lot of children so I cannot leave my husband.*

Moreover, all informants are exposed to gender based violence such as beating, sexual abuse including rape and verbal abuse such as calling names like *Randi* and *Bombaywali*. However, it was also evident during the interview that they have no other alternatives than to continue living with their husbands. Since it is not a common and acceptable practice for a woman to live alone in Nepal, the women have no other option than to compromise by living with their

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<sup>24</sup> *kanyadaan*<sup>24</sup>, is a ritual in the Hindu marriage namely ‘the gift of a virgin’ symbolizes, the rights over girl being transferred to her husband (WOREC, 2010).



families particularly their husbands. The narrations of the informants are contradictory to the myth that women are safer in their own house with their husband and families but in fact exposed to violence. It is evident in the study that these trafficked returnees are perceived as sexual bodies due to their past trafficked experience. One reason giving rise to this violence against women (VAW) is probably the existence of patriarchal<sup>25</sup> society in Nepal maintaining full domination of men over women's position. For instance, the girls are taught to behave properly to their husbands since their childhood. They should be sexually faithful to their husband and perform all the household duties (Sangroula, 2001: WOREC, 2009). Parvati (Case 5) illustrated this:

*My husband is very well behaved as he helps me in the kitchen, prepares food etc. The only bad thing is that he abuses me and sexually assaults me. Otherwise he is a good man. Therefore, I cannot get a divorce.*

In Nepal, though the law provides equal rights both to the son and daughter to inherit the family property, the sons often inherits the property due to the existing socio-cultural norms. Indeed the daughters after their marriage are entitled to claim the property belonging to their husbands, the termination of the marriage however deprive them from this right too (Sangroula, 2001). This can be probably seen as another factor enforcing the trafficked returnees to tolerate such violence and secure a place to stay. However, it is not only the sex trafficked returnees who have experienced such violence but also the trafficked returnees from foreign employment, are in a more or less similar situation. Samjhana (Case 8) shared her experience:

*It is difficult being accepted by family. My husband accuses me at times. He verbally accuses me and tells me that I slept around with other men and returned to Nepal.*

To sum up, the majority of the trafficked returnees (informants in the study) have been accepted by their family of origin, they have got married and some of them have children. However, almost all of them have experienced gender based violence and discriminations even after their reintegration. Despite the physical and verbal abuse the trafficked women/girls returnees are not in a position to leave their husbands and have to tolerant such discriminations endured due to the prevailing patriarchal socio-cultural norms.

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<sup>25</sup> Patriarchy is referred to the male dominance over women, supported by social and political institutions and preserves by the threat of punishment that allows husbands to use violence to control their wives, and men to use violence against women so as to maintain male domination (WOREC, 2010).

## **6.2 Getting in the Community- Social Acceptance**

Along with the family acceptance as discussed earlier, it is equally important to explore the acceptance of the trafficked returnees with the community to understand the reintegration experience. To comprehend how far the girl trafficked returnees have been accepted in the society, three major questions were presented to the informants during the interview: Whether and to what extent have they been accepted in the community? Whether and what kind of discrimination did they meet and How difficult was the process of social acceptance?

The statements of the informants were to some extent similar in the sense that they all have experienced several difficulties in being accepted by the community. To be more precise, Seven out of eight informants clearly stated about the prevailing discrimination towards them. These women reported a high level of social stigma (which will be discussed in the preceding sub section) because of their involvement in sex work. The difficulty in getting acceptance in the community has even enforced some trafficked returnees to stay at home avoiding public gatherings and events. Sanu (Case 3) illustrated this in her narration:

*I did not go out of my house for two years after or even attend any event in my neighborhood when I returned from the brothel because people used to spit at me, humiliate me and so on...*

Mahendra et al. (2001) state that the communities often refuse to accept a woman or girl who is identified as a trafficked returnee. This is because of the stigma associated with the prostitution along with the possibility of them being HIV positive. Based on the statement of the informants it can be said that they are not only neglected but also mistreated by the society. They are perceived as highly immoral and characterless women and a bad influence to other girls/women in the society i.e. prospective traffickers in the community. This also means that the trafficked women are not supposed to expose themselves to the public. Moreover, they believe that the trafficked returnees are HIV infected and will transmit such deadly diseases to others in the community. Kanchi (Case 2) commented on this:

*The villagers did not want to touch me, they think I have HIV and if touch them they will be infected. They used to say that we are polluting the community. We should not be allowed to live in the village. They even accused me that I will take few girls to the trafficked city and sell them to brothels in India.*

During the interview it was also claimed that the community people often have inappropriate attitude towards the trafficked returnees. The statement of Gita (Case 7) is an example demonstrating how vulnerable they are to sexual violence even within the community.

*(in anger)...There was a man who was the head of the village (mukhiya), who had helped me get out of prison after returning back from the brothel. He took me to his place and kept me locked up. He used to threaten me that he will kill me and burn my face and so on. I was forced to do whatever he told me to. He used to sexually abuse me...*

However, at the same time, some informants revealed the changing attitude of the community towards them. It can be argued that more and more people in the community are increasingly aware on the issues of girl trafficking and HIV & AIDS and other related diseases. Moreover, the NGOs and INGOs have contributed significantly to altering the community's perception towards trafficked returnees in recent years (see section 6.6). The statement of Maya (Case1) illustrates this:

*Before they told me bad things but now may be they are aware and understand so they do not tell much. The attitudes of community are changing through community awareness programs.*

To sum up, the study shows that the trafficked returnees have been re-victimized due to the responses and attitudes of the communities towards them. The treatment of the family particularly the husbands and the community members is the main factor leading to humiliation. This has resulted in their stigmatization. Community is culturally and traditionally misguided that the trafficked returnees destroy their image and identity in society. This is in line with the findings of Mahendra et al. (2001). The latter states that the trafficked returnees are hated in the society on the assumption that they bring social evils from their working places i.e. the brothels. However, this study also demonstrates that there has been a change in the attitude of the community towards the trafficked returnees because of the increasing awareness on girl trafficking and other women rights related issues.

### **6.3 Social Stigma and Discrimination**

Social stigma and discrimination have been the major challenges in the reintegration of trafficked returnees within their families and communities. The body of literature has demonstrated that high levels of stigma and discrimination are associated with returned trafficked persons (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Terre des Hommes, 2003; Sahara Group, 2004). Chen & Marcovici (2003) state that the trafficked women are continued to be stigmatized from the family and community even after their reintegration in the society. According to the report of Terre des Homes (2003), almost 94 percent of the trafficked returnees have experienced hate by the community members. Having acknowledged this scenario of reintegration, a number of questions related to stigma/discrimination were asked to the informants during the interviews. What kind of stigma/ discrimination they have experienced in the reintegration? How do they perceive the stigma/discrimination they face? , among others.

The narrations of the majority of the informants illustrate that they have often been stigmatized of HIV & AIDS infected. To be more precise, the perception of the community towards them is that they are all HIV positive as they were previously engaged in sex work. Similarly, their poor financial conditions along with the deteriorating capacity of earning money further led them to be victim of discrimination in their reintegration. Maya’s (Case 1) statement is one example.

*Stigma from family and the community, that the girl trafficked returnee have HIV that’s the stigma. Family also thinks the girl is a burden. Because the trafficked returnee doesn’t earn like before.*

Based on the interviews, the trafficked returnees on many occasions have been seen as *potential traffickers*. There is a belief in the community that they will take other girls in the community and sell them to the brothel. The community members therefore view the trafficked returnees as a threat thereby excluding them in the society. As a result, these trafficked returnees are often the victims of gossiping in the community. In commenting on this gossiping Parvati (Case 5) stated:

*People say that I am working as a still working as a prostitute, such habits will never change. Villagers stigmatize women like us. The villagers do not accept us fetching water from the well. They say that we are HIV positive.*

During the interviews it was envisaged that stigma and discrimination have made it difficult for the trafficked returnee to manage their life. Apparently, there is a great deal of self stigmatization among the trafficked returnees. Apart from referring to the family and community some informants during the interview even blamed themselves for being stigmatized and discriminated. All these have resulted in experiencing the similar violence even after their return and reintegration. Sanu (Case 3) is one example in this regard:

*There is lot of discrimination ... (she cries)... The villagers call me Bombaywali and that I am HIV positive. My husband blames me that because of me the villagers call him too HIV positive. In fact, sometimes I blame myself too. Women like us do experience such discrimination because the place we come from.*

As stated by Heartherton et al. (2000), stereotyping and prejudice are central to stigmatizing others. The existing *stereotype* attitudes of the community people towards the trafficked returnees in the study can be seen as another reason for the stigmatization of the trafficked returnees. The informants revealed that they are always closely watched and their activities are scrutinized by the community people. It is due to the prevailing stereotype attitudes of the community, even wearing nice clothes and carrying fancy purses by the trafficked returnee have been associated with prostitution. In commenting on this stereotypical perception of the community people, Radha (Case 6) stated:

*When I carry my bag and wear nice clothes, the villagers say “Look at her she is now again going to the same place where she came from to earn some more money”. I get so mad hearing it.*

To sum up, even after the reintegration, the trafficked returnees are perceived as prostitutes and called by names *Randi and Bombaywali*. They are treated as untouchables due to the stigma attached to them. As stated by Link and Phelan (2001) the stigmatized circumstances including negative stereotype, emotional reaction such as pity, anger, anxiety or disgust, status loss and discrimination affect multiple domains of people’s lives. It is also evident in the study that the trafficked returnee have perceive such stereotypical negative attitudes of the community towards as one factor making them vulnerable to violence and social excluded. Moreover, such stereotyping attitude and stigma/discrimination have created additional anger, tension, sufferings and pain to the trafficked returnees.

## **6.4 Coping with Discrimination**

Goffman (1963) states a number of ways the stigmatized people cope with their situation. As discussed earlier, stigma/discrimination has been a major obstacle hindering the reintegration of trafficked women in the society. Apart from understanding how the trafficked returnees have experienced stigma and discrimination in the family and the community, it is therefore crucial to gain insight into how they cope with them.

During the interview, the informants expressed that they have experienced enduring stigma and discrimination humiliating in all aspects of social life. However, many of the informants have become seemingly used to with the situation. They have attempted to ignore such situation including gossiping towards them in order to avoid humiliation and confrontation with the community and to protect their children. Samjhana (Case 7) provides one example:

*I do not say anything to the people who say bad things to me. By saying anything will make the situation even worse. I will be more humiliated. I therefore just ignore what people have to say. I cannot stop anyone from saying anything. Moreover, I have to live for my children's sake. I do not want to get into any trouble by responding to them.*

However, not all informants have been able to cope with discrimination in similar way. One informant Radha (Case 6) has even consumed drugs in an attempt to commit suicide in order to cope with their situation. On commenting in this she claimed:

*At times I felt like committing suicide, I even tried gaza and dhaturu(drugs). I felt like going mad. But it was later the man who I married to, he met my father and I got married.*

Interestingly, many informants have envisaged marriage as an effective mechanism to deal with discrimination. Indeed this is not surprising given the fact that marriage is perceived as an important institution in Nepal providing both an identity and security to women. However, there are some cases in which trafficked returnees have striven to fight against the unfair treatment towards them. Sanu (Case 3) recalled a particular incident provoking her to retaliate in the following way:

*I remember one incident when the villagers called me “Bombaywali” and accused me that I would sell their daughters and sisters off to Bombay. I did not keep quite like others do. It was a big fight between me and the villagers.*

It is revealed in the interview that economic independence is a key factor strengthening their capacity to cope with the discrimination. Moreover, being a member in the survivor support group has enabled the informants to cope with discrimination. Sanu (Case 3) noted that:

*The most important thing is being economically independent. If one has a good job, then the villagers do not discriminate women like us. Moreover, being in the survivor support group, we share our experiences to each others. This also helps us cope with the situation.*

To sum up, despite the difficulties the majority of the informants have attempted to cope with the physical violence for instance, sexual and other forms of gender based violence, and verbal abuses towards them. Heatherton et al. (2000) argue that the stigmatized persons are tended to turn to other members of the stigmatized group for social support. This study also shows that the trafficked returnees’ involvement in support groups has helped them to cope with discriminations by sharing their experiences with other trafficked returnees. Furthermore, the informants pointed out to the fact that economic independence is an alternative to construct their new identity in the society.

## **6.5 Economic Independence: An Alternative**

Prior studies on trafficked women/girls show that economic opportunities are a means of avoiding re-trafficking (Wickham, 2009: Crawford and Kaufman, 2008: Chatterjee et al., 2006). As discussed earlier in the Section (6.1.1), informants are acceptable in the society as long as they are not a financial burden to their family. Moreover economic independence has been identified as a key component both for the reintegration in family and society and coping with the stigma and discrimination. On this view, it is important for trafficked girls and women returnees to develop skills that could help them earn an adequate income. Equally important is to provide them with skills training programs that cater the need of the local job markets. A number of NGOs working on this particular area have introduced income generating programmes in order to help trafficked returnees establish in society. Given this, it is crucial to understand how do the informants maintain their livelihood and to what kind of difficulties do they encounter in achieving economic independency.

The majority of the informants revealed that they are involved in farming, cattle herding and operating small business since their reintegration. Nearly all of them have received seed money<sup>26</sup> by various NGOs to generate income. Parvati (Case 5) commented on this:

*I received money in the form of loan to set up my own tea shop. I am doing fine. This has helped me earn my own living and become economic independent.*

Although the informants claimed that they are engaged in economic activities, some informants particularly those who are involved in farm work have seemingly encountered substantial financial problems leading them to poverty. The statement of Sanu’s (Case 3) provides an example:

*I have taken loan from the organization and I do cattle (sheep) herding for living. My husband is a rickshaw rider. We do not have any land. However, it is difficult to sustain life through herding. I have no other skills. We (I and my husband) have a hard life.*

During the interview the majority of the informants conceded that the loan received from organizations has enabled them to sustain their living. However, the lack of skills means that they have no other alternatives than to undertake unskilled work. Indeed this has hindered their opportunity to generate adequate income for independent living. Gita (Case 7) commented on this:

*I look after cattle’s (cow and goat). I have a wooden hut to live. I have no education and do not possess any skills therefore I have difficulty in doing skilled work. The loan I received has helped me to survive.*

Moreover, during the interview the informants also claimed that such economic opportunities provided by organization have eased them in reintegrating in the society and developing a new identity (details on identity in the Chapter 7). Sanu (Case 1) stated:

*I have received loan from FPAN to set up my own business. I have small shop and therefore I am economically independent. This has helped me be strong and more have confidence to live my life. People in the community and my family respect me because I am earning my own living.*

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<sup>26</sup> Seed money is referred to the start up loan given my organizations.



All in all, the study shows that the trafficked returnees have encountered difficulties in achieving economic independence because of the lack of skills and education along with the growing age. However, the study also reveals that the support of NGOs particularly the money provided in the form of loan has enabled the trafficked returnees to become economically independent. This has also contributed women to developing self esteem and self confidence. Indeed this has resulted in gaining respect in the family and community. Taking this into account, it is therefore important to study the role and involvement of organization providing economic and other kinds of support provided to the trafficked returnees.

## **6.6 Support from the Organizations for Reintegration**

A number of organizations are involved in combating girl trafficking in Nepal by facilitating various anti-trafficking activities. Rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked returnees are central to the activities of these organizations. This section is intended to bring forth in discussion some of the activities undertaken to reintegrate the trafficked returnees into the society. In addition to this, this sub section also strives to discuss the perception of the beneficiaries (trafficked returnees) towards these NGOs, especially their efforts and the effectiveness of their support services.

Some of the major NGOs working in this area are Maiti Nepal, ABC Nepal, WOREC, Shakti Samuha, CWIN and FPAN. These NGOs have emphasized the social reintegration of the trafficked women/girls returnees and are very much focused on the restoration of their human rights. They have been conducting various rehabilitation programmes incorporating social, psychological and economic components. The social component is devoted to mainstreaming the disadvantaged groups, particularly children and women who are marginalized or stigmatized. The psychological component is intended to enhance self-esteem of the trafficked returnees or potential victims. The economic component is focused on the economic empowerment of trafficked women/girls returnees. Despite of the difficulties inherent in reintegration namely stigma attached to trafficking returnee, many NGOs claims that their successful strategies include skills training, seed money to established a small business and legal support(Wickham, 2009).

During the interview, the key person of the study (a representative of Maiti Nepal), revealed that the NGOs have given priority to health service and counseling to the trafficked

women/girls returnees, as part of the rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Their counseling service is meant to provide the trafficked returnees social care and psychological support so as to help them overcome their trauma. Along with counseling, the key person informed that many NGOs are also involved in providing skills training to elevate the economic independency of trafficked women/girls returnees.

Another key person of the study, a representative of FPAN, illustrated the major activities of organization provided to the trafficked girls/women returnees in the following way:

*Once the girls are identified the groups are formed the so called Survivor Support Groups. One group consists of 5-6 returnees. The identified returnees are appointed as a peer educator within the group. The group organizes monthly meetings. The meetings bring forth discussions on Sexual reproductive right (SRH) rights, women rights, understanding girl trafficking and so on. Through these meetings the need of different skill training appropriate in their local area is identified. For example some identified needs are opening a restaurant, tea shop, herding and so on. Micro-credit loan is provided to these women. The individual loan is up to Rs. 7000 and group loan is up to Rs. 35,000<sup>27</sup>.*

In fact, the NGOs have in recent years extended the scope of their support beyond the trafficked women/girls returnees by including their families particularly their children. The key person further stated:

*The organization also provides free regular health check up to the returnees including psycho-social counseling to the returnees who have just returned. Legal counseling, scholarship to returnees' children and also scholarship to the young school drop outs and vulnerable groups (they can be victim of girls trafficking) are part of their anti trafficking programmes.*

In the interviews, the informants also commented on the support and effectiveness of the programs provided by the organizations. The statement of Parvati (Case 5) is one illustration:

*It's been 5 yrs I have been identified and supported by the organization. Now I am member of Survivor support group and work as a Peer Educator. It is however voluntarily, they support with transportation allowance and other expenses. As a peer educator, we are supposed to identify other women trafficked returnees like us. We also provide information on safe*

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<sup>27</sup> 71 NPR is equivalent to 1 USD.

*abortion, girls trafficking, HIV and AIDS, reproductive health issues among the youth who are vulnerable to trafficking.*

Moreover, the NGOs, as a part of reintegration strategies, have also attempted to form survivor support group by involving the trafficked returnees. The trafficked returnees are appointed in the group as a peer educator so as to promote awareness on girl trafficking, HIV and AIDS to the vulnerable population. However, the trafficked returnees have also expressed some challenges indicating that some of them and their families are losing confidence on the support of the NGOs. The informants mentioned that they are reluctant to be associated with the organizations and to receive support. The main reason was that the family members of some informants perceived that such involvement with the organization would disclose their identity in the public leading to more harmful consequences. Gita (Case 7) is one example in this regard:

*My family did not allow me to get involved or receive any kind of support from any organizations. It is more humiliating. They think that by getting associated is remembering the forgotten things.*

Moreover, few informants have also perceived that the skill training program provided to them were inadequate in terms of enhancing their skills and improving their financial condition. Their main idea was that the training programs should not be confined to provide training that the participants cannot be benefited but should focus on making them financially independent and sustainable. Sanu (Case3) commented on this:

*I was given 6months sewing training which was of no use. I wish they search some small jobs for us. I am not young to work hard. My current work does not help me provide regular income.*

All in all, despite some concerns regarding the support offered by NGOs including the income generating program and skill promotion program, the majority of informants have appreciated their efforts. The income generating program of the NGOs has been an important activity creating economic opportunities and enhancing the informants' morale. The trafficked returnees have perceived that the engagement with such organizations, for instance participation in the Survivor Support group, has provided the informants with the opportunities to share their stories with each other (trafficked women) and to develop strength in coping with their situations.

## **6.7 Empowerment Vs Disempowerment**

Payne (2005) states empowerment as a means of enabling people to overcome barriers, achieving life objectives and gaining access to services. Despite the enduring social discrimination and gender based violence, the reintegration, as explained in the earlier sections, has also contributed to empowering the trafficked women/girls returnees. Studies argue that self- empowerment is the most important element in the recovery of violence and exploitation, especially sexual abuse (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Wickham, 2009). The informants have also expressed that they have experienced a new life far better than the life when they returned from the trafficked cities. This new life experience has indeed helped them disclose their identity and be more open to receive the services of the NGOs. Moreover, these activities have contributed to their personal growth and gaining social recognition. Sanu (Case 3) commented on this:

*I feel empowered being associated to organizations like FPAN and GWP. Before we could not disclose our identity as a trafficked returnee and was scared of the fact that people might know. I couldn't see straight on the eyes of people. I have got an opportunity as a peer educator to share experiences with each other and feel better. Now if I do not hesitate to tell people about my experiences and my past experience.*

As stated earlier the trafficked returnees have experienced severe physical and psychological trauma as a result of the violence, rape, threats in the trafficked cities. Psycho-social support and counseling, provided by the NGOs, have helped the informants to cope with anxiety and depression and to start rebuilding their self confidence. Moreover, the income generating programme has boosted their self confidence. Despite the lack of skills the informants have become economically empowered. Along with this, the informants have to some extent become socially empowered as they are increasingly recognized by the family and community. The statement of Radha (Case 6) serves as an example:

*Since I am started working as a peer educator, things have changed. The village people know that I am associated with such organization. They have the perception that if they tell me something then they would get into trouble. People around are very much aware than before.*

Sahara (2004) states that empowerment can be achieved through two fundamental developments -personal development and socio-political recognition (see Annex- iv). In the

interviews it was revealed that the informants have experienced both personal growth such as courage, sense of control, confidence and achieved social recognition within the community. Parvati (Case 5) commented on this on the following way:

*I feel more independent and can work on my own. I think people’s attitude have changed. The villagers tell us “Neitini” (politician). They are aware that we are associated with organization. So maybe they are scared so they do not tell us directly.*

However, what is striking is that the majority of informants have also encountered challenges and abuses in the reintegration with their families and societies thereby leading to disempowerment. Taking the benefit of their vulnerability, the community members have on many occasions discriminated the trafficked returnees even after their reintegration in the society. Most of the informants in such situation have feared to speak and remained silent. This implicitly demonstrates how ‘helpless’ and ‘hopeless’ the informants are even after their reintegration, thereby reflecting their vulnerability and disempowerment.

Based on the statements of the informants, it seems that many of them have in fact experienced both empowerment and disempowerment simultaneously. To be more precise, the existing stereotypical attitudes of the community perceiving them as prostitutes have been a factor leading to disempowerment. However, at the same time, the involvement of trafficked returnees in anti trafficking programs in the community has contributed to their empowerment. The contrary statements of Parvati (Case 5) shed light on this. In her direct confrontation with the people, she is called as *Neitini* (politician) providing her social recognition and feeling of empowerment. However, the community people have continued gossiping behind her back by calling her a prostitute (see section 6.3). Such gossips/indirect statements by the community have made her feel not only sad but also disempowered.

To sum up, the supports from organizations have empowered the trafficked women returnees to strengthen their capacities. On the one hand, these supports have empowered the informants by providing an opportunity for their personal growth and social recognition. On the other hand, the stigma attached to them has led to discrimination, particularly gender based violence such as physical and verbal abuses and made them feel disempowered in the reintegration with the families and societies.

## **6.8 Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study shows that how the trafficked women/girls returnees (informants) have been accepted and reintegrated in the family and community. They are married and running small business for living. However, the trafficked returnees have encountered a number of challenges in the reintegration in the families and society. The most visible challenge is related to economic as some families considered the returnees as a financial burden. At the same time some family members were afraid of the adverse consequences in their social status that may arise by accepting them. Goffman (1963) states that stigma may very often grow up within the individuals and affect the other members of their family leading them to be stigmatized. The study to some extent underpins this statement, as it points to the consequences of stigma to the trafficked returnees and their families.

It is evident from the study that marriage has been an important institution in the reintegration process. It has helped the majority of the informants to be accepted in the family. However, at the same time, the study reveals that those trafficked returnees married have in fact experienced gender based violence including beating and other sexual and verbal abuses. Link and Phelan (2001) have emphasized the role of socio-economic and cultural power to stigmatize people. Power is seen as an important dimension of gender and is related to the concept of patriarchy (Connell, 2009). This also implies that men in a patriarchal society possess power over women through verbal or sexual violence. The prevailing patriarchal society in Nepal also reflects the existence of such socio-cultural power. The study is evident that the informants have often been perceived as sexual bodies and exposed to gender based violence by their husbands due to their past experiences.

Goffman (1963) has envisaged social stigma a result of negative attitudes of community member towards the behaviors of a certain group, for instance prostitutes. The study has also identified social stigma and discrimination, as the major challenges in the reintegration of trafficked returnee. The informants have been perceived as highly immoral and characterless women and a bad influence to other girls/women in the society, i.e. prospective traffickers in the community. Moreover, the community members believed that the trafficked returnees were HIV infected and would transmit such deadly diseases to others in the community. However, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the informants have managed to cope with such discriminations in the reintegration process. As stated by Goffman (1963) the informants have

applied a variety of strategies to cope with their situation. They have attempted to ignore the verbal abuses and to seek emotional and social support by engaging themselves in the Survivor Support Group. As stated earlier, economic independence has been central to the reintegration of the trafficked women returnees. Moreover, economic viability achieved through the income generating programs of the NGOs has resulted in developing their self esteem, self confidence and gain social respect.

Tesoriero (2010) highlights the importance of resources, skill development and knowledge, among others to empower the vulnerable people. By incorporating the social, psychological and economic components, for instance income generating and skill promotion programs, the NGOs have increased the capacity of the informants to determine their own future. Moreover, there seems to be a changing attitude among the community members towards the trafficked returnees. Increasing number of community members are now aware of the vulnerability of girl trafficking and has acquired knowledge on HIV & AIDs and other related diseases. However, despite the attempts by NGOs, the study demonstrates the stigma and discrimination are still prevalent in the community. The majority of the informants are abused and discriminated in the community, thereby leading to disempowerment. Heatherton, et al. (2000) have attempted to link stigmatization with the existing stereotype and prejudice in the community. On this view the existing stereotypical attitudes of the community perceiving the trafficked returnees as prostitutes can also be seen as a factor leading to disempowerment.

To sum up, the study has sought to demonstrate opportunities and challenges in the reintegration of trafficked women/girls in the society. This reintegration experience has indeed contributed to the change in self image of the informants and impacted on the reconstruction of their self identity. Burkitt (2008) has mentioned that self image is filled up with pride, shame and mix of both. On this view, the above discussions on reintegration experience have raised questions as to how the trafficked returnees have understood their self in the reintegration experiences, i.e. new life experience, and how this understanding have impacted on the reconstruction of self identity. The preceding chapter strives to address these questions.

## **CHAPTER- 7. UNDERSTANDING SELF IN THE NEW LIFE EXPERIENCE**

Giddens (1991) states the importance of understanding ‘self identity’, as it helps the individuals achieve an enduring conception of their aliveness. ‘Self identity’ elevates the capacity of individuals to know themselves better and build up a coherent sense of understanding. The previous chapters, i.e. chapter 5 and 6 of the study have striven to demonstrate how the trafficked returnees have experienced their life in the trafficked cities, as well as the new life i.e. the life after being reintegrated with the family and community. Indeed these experiences have impacted on their self identity, leading the latter to the process of reconstruction.

This chapter is primarily intended to study how the trafficked returnees have understood their self in their new life. The concept of self identity implied in this chapter is therefore meant to develop an interpretation of the self’s position and the self image that the individuals (girls trafficked returnees) have created for themselves. Moreover, attempts have also been made to discuss the impact of new life experiences in the reconstruction of their self identity. The chapter is divided into two sections. While the first section discusses the impact of self, the second section brings forth in discussion the impact of self in relation to others.

### **7.1 Impact on Self**

The trafficked returnees have certainly experienced some changes towards the “self” and “identity” in their new life. The new life experience has been positive for the trafficked returnees in many aspects. They have experienced a sense of pride making them strong and independent individual. At the same time the enduring stigma and discrimination towards them has indeed brought about a feeling of shame degrading them even after their reintegration. The sense of *pride, shame and/or both* which they have witnessed in the new life have impacted upon their understanding and defining of their “self”.



## **Is it Pride or Shame or Both?**

As stated earlier the trafficked women/girls returnees have experienced a new life upon returning back from the brothel. They are married and have children. Husband and children are essential to the identity of Nepalese women. As a result the informants have secured their identities such as a ‘wife’ and a ‘mother’ in the society. These developments which the trafficked returnees have witnessed in the reintegration have been a matter of pride for them. This reintegration experience is perceived by the women trafficked returnees as a new life experience impacting on their sense of self. Maya (Case 1) commented on her positive experience in the following way:

*As a peer educator, we try to identify girl who have returned from trafficked cities like us. We talk about safe abortion, girl trafficking, HIV and AIDS reproductive health issues etc to them. I have a positive experience towards my new life. I have become open, I can say my name proudly, go out speak to people and socialize in the society.*

Many of the informants have also built up self confidence and self esteem by being involved in the Survivor support group. The informants expressed that they feel worthy and proud as they have contributed to the community. The narration of Sanu (Case 3) provides an illustration:

*Before we could not disclose our identity as a trafficked returnee and was scared of the fact that people might know. We couldn’t see straight on the eyes of people .But I feel more open about who am I. I have got an opportunity as a peer educator to share experiences with each other and feel better. With this opportunity I feel I have become someone i.e. I now am earning for myself and can write few things in Nepali. Now I can tell that in an open platform I can tell people about my experiences and where I have returned from.*

The above mentioned statements also provide evidence to argue that the trafficked returnees have become open educating community or vulnerable groups on girl trafficking issues rather than hiding their identity. According to the dominant cultural tradition, having a name is important for social recognition in Nepal (Kristvik, 2002). The informants also expressed that they no longer refuse to hide their original names signaling the process of developing self in the new life. The NGOs has in fact played a significant role in this process by empowering

them both socially and economically. In commenting on the feeling a sense of pride Parvati (Case 5) stated:

*I owe a tea shop. I feel more independent as I can work on my own. The villagers know that I can be of help. Now that I am earning money the villagers feel they need me. They can ask loan from me now and then. I feel so proud of the fact that I can be of help to someone.*

Their involvement in social process has rendered a significant role in the formation of self image in the new life. Moreover, it is seen that the skills and knowledge which the trafficked returnees have acquired in the new life have also enabled them to develop an identity of ‘self’ and their position in the society. More importantly, economic empowerment has been central to the re construction of self identity of the trafficked returnees.

However, at the same time, the informants claim that along with the sense of pride they have also experienced a feeling of shame in their new life. In the interviews, the informants mentioned that the stereotypical attitudes of the community have adversely impacted upon their self image. The image of the trafficked returnees was reflected as characterless women and they were referred to as *beijet and laaj*- the words representing degradation and shame in the society. Indeed this shame has affected their self image and self representation in the society. The responses of the community, also made the informants feel ashamed and reminded them of their past experience. Kanchi (Case 2) commented on this:

*I am perceived as prostitutes still today. The villagers call me by names like Randi and Bombaywali, this makes me ashamed of myself because I have returned from Bombay.*

In summing up, despite enduring hate and stigma, the trafficked returnees have achieved economic independency and social status in the new life. The ability to generate income for oneself and support the family in the daily struggle for economic survival is an important source of prestige in Nepal (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). The trafficked returnees have also to some extent managed to alter the negative image which they had in the society and to create a new identity. As stated by Burkitt (2008), the contributions made by the informants to their family and community at large have led them to develop a feeling of pride. However, it is worth mentioning that the trafficked returnees have continued experiencing a feeling of shame due to stigma and discrimination. All in all they have experienced both pride and a feeling of shame impacting upon the re construction of self image.

## **7.2 Impact on Self in Relationship with the other Women**

Link and Phelan (2001) state that the stigmatized circumstances lead to perceive the negatively labeled person as different from those who do not share the undesirable attributes. As mentioned earlier the trafficked returnees have encountered various stigma/discrimination in the reintegration experience. These experiences have embarked on a kind of inferior feeling about themselves, especially when comparing them with other women, the so-called respectable women, in the community impacting upon the reconstruction of self identity. Given this the informants the informants were asked: How do they perceive themselves when compared with the other women in the community?

The majority of the informants expressed themselves different as compared to other women, presumably respectable women, in terms of both position and status. Moreover, the feeling of humiliation and shame is seen as one fundamental factor differentiating the informants from the other women in the community. Kumari (Case 4) commented on this:

*I feel humiliated, and feel weaker than other women. I am a trafficked returnee, so it can never be the same. I think I and them are not the same. I feel I am different because of the experience of shame and disgrace from the community people.*

Interesting enough, the informants pointed to the difference in economic status, as another factor differentiating them from the other members of their communities. However, at the same time, the informants perceived that if they could overcome the economic gap, they could eventually also reduce the differences. Sanu (Case 3) commented on this:

*I feel weaker. They gossip about us so we are not in the same status. They are rich ones. They earn a lot. They earn ten times more than we do. So it is incomparable in terms of economic or social status. Being economic independent help the women equate themselves with others.*

Despite the economic gap, some informants however addressed that their involvement in the social sphere, mainly as a peer educator contributed them to elevating their status making them feel equal to the other women in the community. Similarly, one informant also claimed

that the recognition she received from other women made her feel equal. This can be related to the ‘social me’.<sup>28</sup> The statement of Radha (Case 6) can be taken as an example:

*I feel strong enough to the other women. Then girls trafficked returnee see me as an example that we all can survive. We can share it with others which make us feel better. The women in the villages ask for our help and we bring them for health check up etc.*

Albeit some informants perceived a similar status in some circumstances when comparing to the other women, the majority of the informants however envisaged a distinction between the group the trafficked returnee belonged to and the other the so- called respectable women in the community. The experience of the trafficked returnees is in fact in line with the ideas of Goffman (1963). The latter has argued that stigmatized people are tended to lose their self-assurance when they are compared to others in society. In the interviews the informants used the terms like *Naramro bato* and *Dukha thau*, which is bad/wrong path and painful/sorrowful place, to refer to the trafficked cities. They expressed that as a returnee from such places they have developed a feeling of self image which is different from the other women who have not experienced this. This also characterizes the position of women who were in sex industries, and segregates them from the position of other women Maya (Case 1) is an example in this regard:

*The pain and torture experienced in brothel are engraved in us. It is a matter of shame that we were forced into prostitution. Working as a prostitute, is not the same as working in other profession. Because of the fact that I have returned from a bad path (naramro bato), I do not have pleasant experience even after coming back. I feel I am treated inappropriately because of the place I have come from.*

In summing up, the trafficked women have perceived both their self esteem and social status lower as compared to the other women in the community. Their experience in the trafficked cities, the stigma attached to them and the feelings of humiliation and shame could be argued seen as the reasons for this. The feeling of difference has hindered the trafficked returnees to gain access and control over resources as enjoyed by the other women in the community.

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Social me’ (Burkitt, 2008: see chapter 3)

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter has intended to provide an understanding of the reconstruction of self identity trafficked returnees in the new life. Attempts have been made in this chapter to explore what the trafficked returnees talk about in *discovering themselves* and what do they refer to as a *meaningful activity*, differentiating them from others. Berger and Luckmann (1966) state that the reality of self is produced and reproduced by the social actors and shared with each other in the everyday life. As stated in the previous chapters the informants have faced various types of socio-psychological and physical violence, torture and humiliation in the trafficked cities and even after their reintegration. This has created the image of the informants as objects. Moreover, the informants were treated by the people inappropriately due to stigma inherited to them. Indeed these experiences have adversely impacted upon their self image i.e. feeling of shame and humiliation.

As argued by Mead (1993) the way how individuals respond to others is very often governed by their interpretation and knowledge of their own self based on past experience, beliefs and values. The study also shows that the informants have tended to look upon other people i.e. their families, neighbors and community at large and their words, attitudes, expressions and actions in developing interpretation towards their self. Along with this the informants have also striven to discover who they are and search for their identity in a given social setting. While some identities such as a ‘wife’ and a ‘mother’ has been a matter of pride for them, the other identities such as ‘Bombaywali’, ‘Randi’ labeled by the community has been perceived as a symbol of shame and disgrace.

It is evident from the study that economic independence in the new life has contributed the trafficked returnees to securing a position and gaining respect in their community. The participation in the survivor support group has made them feel worthy and proud. In fact the informants have perceived such involvement as a meaningful activity contributing to the development of self in the new life. However, what is striking is that the majority of the informants in their new life have conceived of themselves inferior both socially and economically, as compared to other women, the so called respectable women. Indeed this segregation has impacted their economic status limiting their access to resources, opportunities and skills as compared to the other women in the community.

## **CHAPTER-8: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study has attempted to describe and analyze the experiences of the Nepalese trafficked girls and women returnees in their reintegration in the society. In doing so, the study has demonstrated the causes of trafficking, life experience in trafficked cities and the journey to home i.e. the rescuing experiences. The study identifies the three primary causes of girl trafficking, both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ trafficking, i.e. socio-cultural, economic and personal causes. The socio-psychological and physical violence and abuse that the informants have encountered in the trafficked cities have weakened them and resulted in the loss of their self identity.

The study further exhibits that the informants were rescued with the help of friend, clients and through police raids. What is striking is that the informants encountered similar form of discrimination and violence including sexual and verbal abuses, in the rescuing process. In fact the stigma attached to them, for instance as a prostitute, has led them to be exploited even after they were rescued from the trafficked cities. However, the study also provides evidence that those trafficked women and girls rescued through rehabilitation center or transit homes have experienced less violence. The majority of the informants have faced a dilemma i.e. ‘Who they are’ and ‘Where do they go’ because of the shame and fear.

The findings of the study show that the trafficked returnees (informants) upon returning from the trafficked cities have been accepted and reintegrated in the family and community. The informants have got married and established small business for living. At the same time, the trafficked returnees have encountered several challenges in their reintegration including gender based violence, sexual exploitation, verbal abuses and inadequate sustainable income, among others. Moreover, the negative attitude/stereotype of the community members towards the trafficked returnees has made the reintegration further problematic. As a consequence of this negative attitude, the trafficked returnees have been perceived as characterless women, a bad influence and the carriers of HIV, among others. This attitude/treatment of the family and the community has enunciated the feeling of shame, humiliation and disgrace among the trafficked girls and women returnees. However, it is evident in the study that trafficked returnees have attempted to cope with the discrimination, violence and abuses.

Despite the challenges in the reintegration, the study also demonstrates that the reintegration has been positive empowering experiences for the informants in many aspects. The support program of the NGOs has helped the trafficked returnees to improve their economic condition, cope with discriminations and enhance their social status, thereby elevating their self esteem, self confidence and respect within their families and society. In the process of reintegration the trafficked girls and women returnees have therefore been able to change their negative image and to re- construct a positive identity, for instance ‘mother’, ‘wife’, ‘peer educator’ or ‘a shop owner’ , just to name a few.

The study argues that the new life experience has contributed the informants to the reconstruction of their identity. They have become a part of the community (as a peer educator) providing awareness in the girl trafficking issues and enabled to develop a sense of self-worth and pride. Despite this transformation in the self identity, it is worth mentioning that the informants have continued experiencing a feeling of shame in their new life. The trafficked returnees have not been able to perceive themselves equal as compared to other women in the community. There is envisaged disempowerment, social discrimination and gender based violence in all spheres of their life including access to resources, education and work compared to other women.

Burkitt (2008) argues the importance of answering the questions such as “who do I want to be” and “what shall I become” in order to give an understanding of the reconstruction of self identity. On this view, it is important to shed light on the future of girl trafficking returnees so as to provide further understanding of the reconstruction of self identity. Having acknowledged this, the significance of this concluding chapter is twofold. Firstly, it discusses how the trafficked returnees have perceived their future. Next, it provides arguments on how the NGOs can improve and reinforce their rehabilitation/ reintegration efforts.

## **8.1 The Future: Forgetting the Unforgettable**

The trafficked experience is indeed an unforgettable past for the trafficked returnees. Albeit the majority of the informants have endeavored to overcome this experience, the consequence of this has been a part of their everyday life. Previous studies show that the trafficked returnees experience difficulty with sleeping or nightmare, lack of aspiration and vision for

the future, among others (Chatterjee et al., 2006: Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). The informants in the study have also encountered difficulties in forgetting their past experience. Moreover, they have also expressed skepticism about their future. The statement of Sanu (Case 3) provides an example:

*I get nightmares about the painful experience still today. I remember the horrible days, the beating revolves in my mind and I cannot still whole night. I see nothing good in future. I do not get support from my daughter and husband. They scold me and tell me to go away. I will continue working and live this way...*

Brunovski and Tyldum (2004) state that social exclusion and the lack of sustainable income generating activities often force the trafficked returnees to return to their previous profession. The key person of the study has also expressed a similar view underscoring how the socio-economic factors have led the trafficked women returnees to choose their previous profession. The importance of the rehabilitation/reintegration programs is emphasized by the key person so as to prevent re-trafficking. The key person commented:

*Once they are immediately sent to the society they can be trafficked and work in the same profession. They can be economically unstable and face stigma and discrimination in their community upon their return. That is the reason why we give them rehabilitation service and do follow up so that they are not re- victimized and re- trafficked.*

Although the stigma, discrimination and other social challenges have on several occasions enforced some informants to contemplate about returning to the trafficked cities, the new life experience particularly economic independency has however helped them sustain in the community. The case of Parvati (Case 5) is an example of this dilemma:

*I don't feel like going back to the brothel today. But when I had just returned and even after having two children I felt like going back. The verbal and the physical torture by my husband made me think it is better to go back. But now, I do not think to go back. I just ignore what people have to say as I am capable to earn for my living.*

The unwillingness of the informants to return to the trafficked cities can be understood in two aspects. Firstly, it is seen as the consequences of the painful and unforgettable past experience that the trafficked returnees have experienced. Next, the reintegration programs of NGOs have been an important factor discouraging women to choose the previous profession. The



new life has not only contributed to the economic independence of the informants but also provided them with an opportunity to live with families in their own country. The following statement of Radha (Case 6) justifies this:

*I am now living a new in Nepal and I am very happy. Whatever happened, I got an opportunity to live in Nepal. I just hope no other girls have to go to trafficked cities and I will never go back to the trafficked cities. If girls are economically independent then they are not victims of the traffickers.*

All in all the new life experience of the trafficked returnees is seemingly anchored on the reintegration efforts of the NGOs. The support of NGOs, including counseling services and the income generating activities, are important to motivate and encourage the informants to develop self identity and provide aspiration for a better future. Saleebey (2006) emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals and communities to articulate a hope for the future. Taking this view into account, the study therefore argues that it is imperative for NGOs to focus on the capacities and potentialities of the trafficked women returnees so as to develop their self image for a better future. The role of NGOs for successful and sustainable reintegration of the trafficked women/ girls returnees is further discussed in the preceding concluding subsection.

## **8.2 Perception of NGOs and Reality**

Along with families and surrounding communities of the trafficked returnees NGOs play a significant role in the successful reintegration of the trafficked returnees by providing awareness and support to survivors (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). This study has also demonstrated that the NGOs through their various activities, including counseling, legal aid, health check-ups, skill based training and income generating programmes, have substantially supported the trafficked returnee to reintegrate in their community (see chapter 6). Based on the study, the NGOs contemporary activities are mainly focused on task-centered approach<sup>29</sup>, i.e. counseling, providing traditional skills training and creating jobs opportunities. Moreover, they have also facilitated some empowerment-oriented programs aiming to provide a range of

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<sup>29</sup> Task centered approach (in Healy, 2005: see chapter 3)

skills and options essential for everyday living. Indeed these activities have impacted positively on the new life experience of the trafficked women returnees.

However, it is evident in the study that a particular challenge encountered in the reintegration is the development of sustainable income generating programs for the trafficked returnees. It is therefore important for NGOs to strengthen their strategies to facilitate in economically empowering and independent living of the trafficked women returnees. Saleebey (2006) mentions the importance of the strengths perspective in developing empowerment strategies. On this view, the study argues that it is important for NGOs to focus on the capabilities and assets of trafficked returnees by identifying their specific needs for future. This argument is further reinforced by the statement of Maya (Case 1):

*I think I do not need sewing skills. Learning skills is therefore of no value. I have no education. I think I want to continue my shop and get additional loan.*

The findings of the study have demonstrated that the status of the informants in the family and community is based on their economic independence. The economic independency provides the informants a means of contributing to their family’s well being and developing courage to fight against gender based violence. It is therefore important that the strategies of economic empowerment should benefit both the trafficked returnees and their family so as to avoid viewing them as burdensome. Moreover it can be argued that economic empowerment would provide trafficked returnees an extended opportunity to develop their self-esteem and self confidence. To be more precise, the reintegration efforts of the NGOs should provide the informants a better feeling about themselves and their future.

The study emphasizes that it is crucial for the trafficked returnees to understand their rights and to recognize that being trafficked were neither their choice nor their fault. It can therefore be argued that the efforts of NGOs should entail empowerment of girls and awareness of community members simultaneously for successful reintegration. Hemmati (2007) states that it is important to provide the trafficked returnees the opportunities, rights and services that are available to other members of the social mainstreaming for the successful reintegration. This study has also identified a distinction between the trafficked women returnees and the other women, the so called respectable women, in the community in terms of their access to

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resources (see chapter 7). Given this, the study emphasizes the importance of effective programs/strategies in order to improve the trafficked returnees’ accessibilities to resources.

The study shows that family and social acceptance is essential for supporting returnees (see chapter 6). It is therefore crucial for the NGOs to focus on strategic intervention addressing the stigma and discrimination so as to provide a favorable environment for the reintegration. The NGOs should encourage and motivate the trafficked returnees to understand their rights, and provide career options to raise their self-esteem and confidence for independent living. What is important is that the society and family should view trafficked returnees positively.

The study concludes by summarizing the above mentioned recommendations deemed essential for the successful reintegration of the Nepalese girl trafficked returnees in the following way:

- Firstly, it is important to raise awareness and understanding on the issue of trafficking and advocacy for trafficked returnee’s rights among the family/ community members and other stakeholders,
- Secondly, it is crucial to further empower trafficked returnees by providing a means of long term sustainable income,
- Thirdly, the NGOs should strengthen their strategies to educate the family members and to increase their involvement and support in the process of reintegration,
- Lastly, the NGOs need to strengthen coordination with GOs, INGOs, and donor agencies in their reintegration efforts.

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# ANNEXES

## Annex i Interview Guides

### I: In-depth Interview with Trafficking returnees

#### 1. Establishing Rapport

- Introducing myself and the objectives of the Interview

#### 2. Personal Background of returnees of Girl trafficking

- Name
- Age
- Marital status and children if there are
- Educational background
- Trafficked cities/areas
- Duration of stay in the trafficked cities

#### 3. Information before trafficking

- How old were they when they were trafficked?
- What were they doing before being trafficked, for instance studies, work, household work etc?

#### 4. Causes of trafficking

- The major cause that brought about trafficking
- How were they trafficked?

#### 5. Life experience in trafficked cities

- How was their situation in the trafficked cities?
- How long did they stay in the trafficked cities?
- Did they have the willingness to go back home?
- Did they have expectation of being rescued?

#### 6. Means of rescue

- How and who rescued them?
- How long did it take?
- How was it to be rescued?
- 

#### 7. Life experience in the rehabilitation centres/after being rescued?

- Process of reintegration/ settling down?( How was their state emotionally, physically through their trafficked experience)
- How much did the programs help in the process of reintegration ( in bringing up self esteem, education and skills they need to live independently)
- What kind of difficulties did they meet in the process of reintegration? Any discriminations? How to cope with them?
- Life experience in the rehab canterers

- Views the reintegration program, after these rehab experiences (How is their self esteem, skills now?)
- Do you have any suggestion to the programs in the rehab centres?

### **8. Impact of rescued experiences**

- Occupational preparation: Choice of profession? What kind of difficulties did they meet in the process of finding employment/ educational institute, (if they have one)? Any discrimination? How to cope with them?
- Social preparation: Have they been accepted by the family and community? What kind of discrimination did they meet and how difficult was it in the process of social acceptance (by family and community)?
- What kind of stigma discrimination they experience in reintegration in the society? How do they perceive the stigma/discrimination they face? How do they cope with them? Has the new life experience helped them in coping with the discrimination?
- Whether or not their earlier expectations are met? New expectations?
- Have they been accepted by their families and community? What were the most challenging and difficult part about living in the community for returnees of girls trafficking?
- How do they view themselves in relation to the other girls/women in their community? Are they of similar status to other female in their community?
- Future forecast–What will the future hold for them? Will they ever choose to their previous profession? If so why?

Thank you for your time.

## **II. Interviews with Key persons (NGO's Representatives)**

### **1. Establishing Rapport**

- Introducing myself and the objectives of the Interview

### **2. Personal Background of returnees of Girl trafficking**

- Name
- Age
- Organisation

### **3. General information on trafficking**

- How old are the girl/women when they were trafficked?
- What were they doing before being trafficked, for instance studies, work, household work etc?
- What are the major causes for trafficking?
- How are they trafficked?
- How is their situation in the trafficked cities?
- How long do they stay in the trafficked cities?
- What is the role of NGOs in the rescuing process?
- How long does it take?

### **4. Reintegration activities of the NGOs**

- Process of reintegration/ settling down?( How is their state emotionally, physically through their trafficked experience)
- Programmes/activities taken for reintegration and rehabilitation of trafficking returnees
- Success of reintegration- How much does the programs help in the process of reintegration ( in bringing up self esteem, education and skills they need to live independently)
- Problems/challenges occurred during reintegration and rehabilitation
- Occupational preparation: Choice of profession? What kind of difficulties do they meet in the process of finding employment/ educational institute, (if they have one)? Any discrimination?

Social preparation: Have they been accepted by the family and community? What kind of discrimination do they meet and how difficult is it in the process of social acceptance (by family and community)?

- What kind of stigma discrimination they experience in reintegration in the society?
- Future plans/programmes to deal with reintegration of trafficking

Do you want to add any more about anything?

Thank you for your time.

**Annex- ii: Informed Consent to the informants**

**Informed Consent for a Master Thesis in Comparative Social Work**

**Reintegration of the Nepalese girl trafficking returnees into society- An empirical study of the self identity reconstruction**

I am a Master student in comparative social work at the Department of Social Science, Bodø University College, Norway. I would like to invite you .....to participate in a Master thesis research about the experiences of reintegration and the reconstruction of self identity of the Nepalese girls’ trafficking returnees. This study is an academic one and will be shared amongst my supervisor and other appropriate members related to the Bodø University College. The master thesis that results from this work will be published in hard copy and will be housed at the Bodø University College, Norway. The project has been subject to review by The Ombudsman for Privacy in Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Your participation will be taken in the form of interviews. This research will be conducted with a guarantee of confidentiality and will maintain the anonymity of the participants. Pseudonyms instead of your real name will be used in the thesis in order to protect your identity. In terms of possible risks to participants, there are virtually none.

Your participation is voluntary and you also have the right to ask for more information about this study and to withdraw from the study any time during the interview without the need for providing any reasons and without any consequences.

The data will be destroyed after finishing my thesis i.e. on 15th May 2011.

The research will be conducted fully within NESH guidelines.

I appreciate your cooperation in this study.

Thank you!

Shovita Adhikari.....

Bodø University College, Department of Social Science

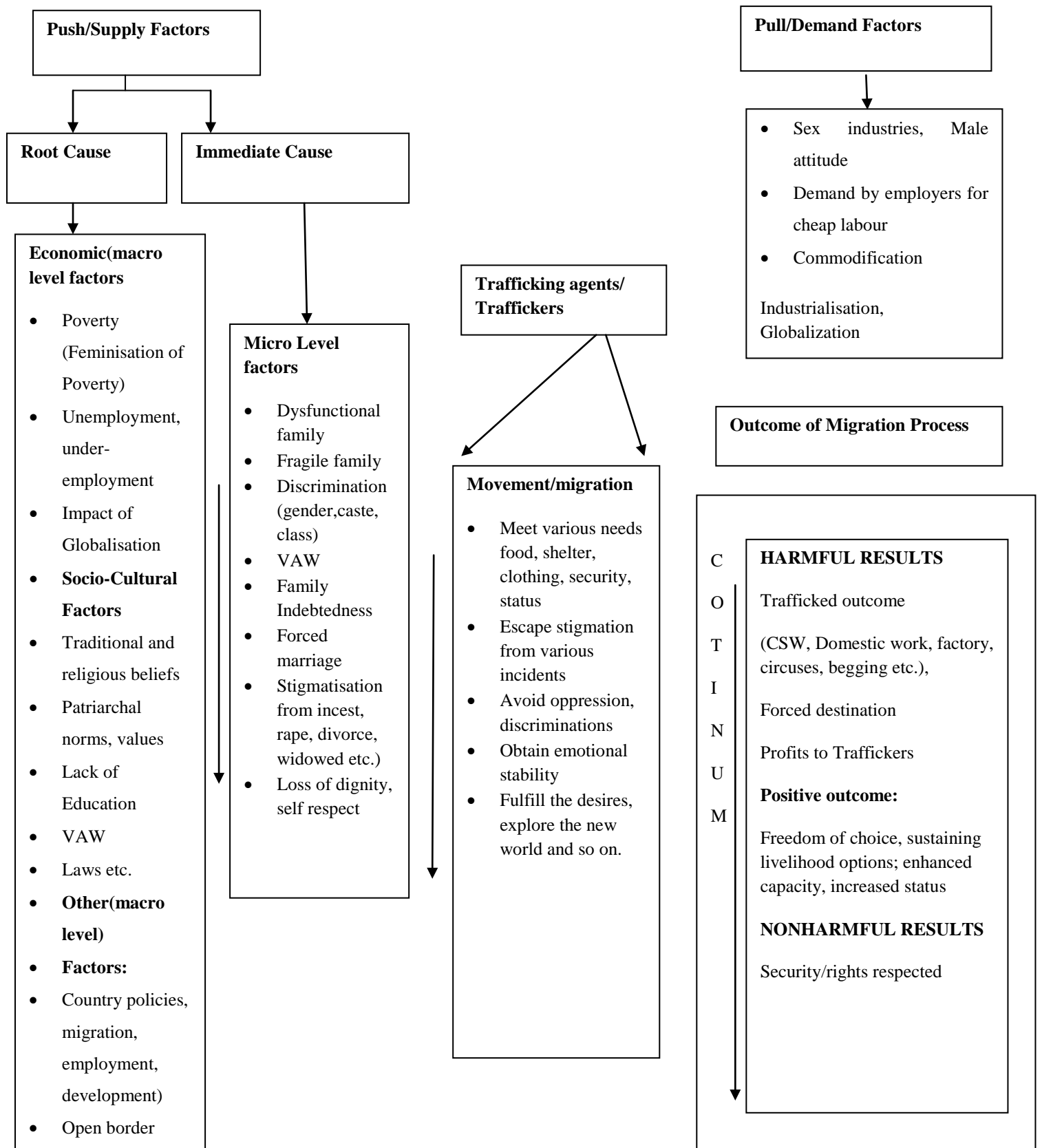
Name of Supervisor: Sveinung Horverak

Bodø University College, Department of Social Science, 8049, Bodø, Norway

(Please sign below if you are willing to participate in the interview process for the Master thesis research outlined above.)

Signature:  
Print Name:  
Date

## Annex-iii: Dynamics of Human trafficking: Conceptual Frame



Internal, Cross Border and International. Source: IIDS & UNIFEM (2004)

## Annex- iv: Model for empowering the girl trafficking survivors

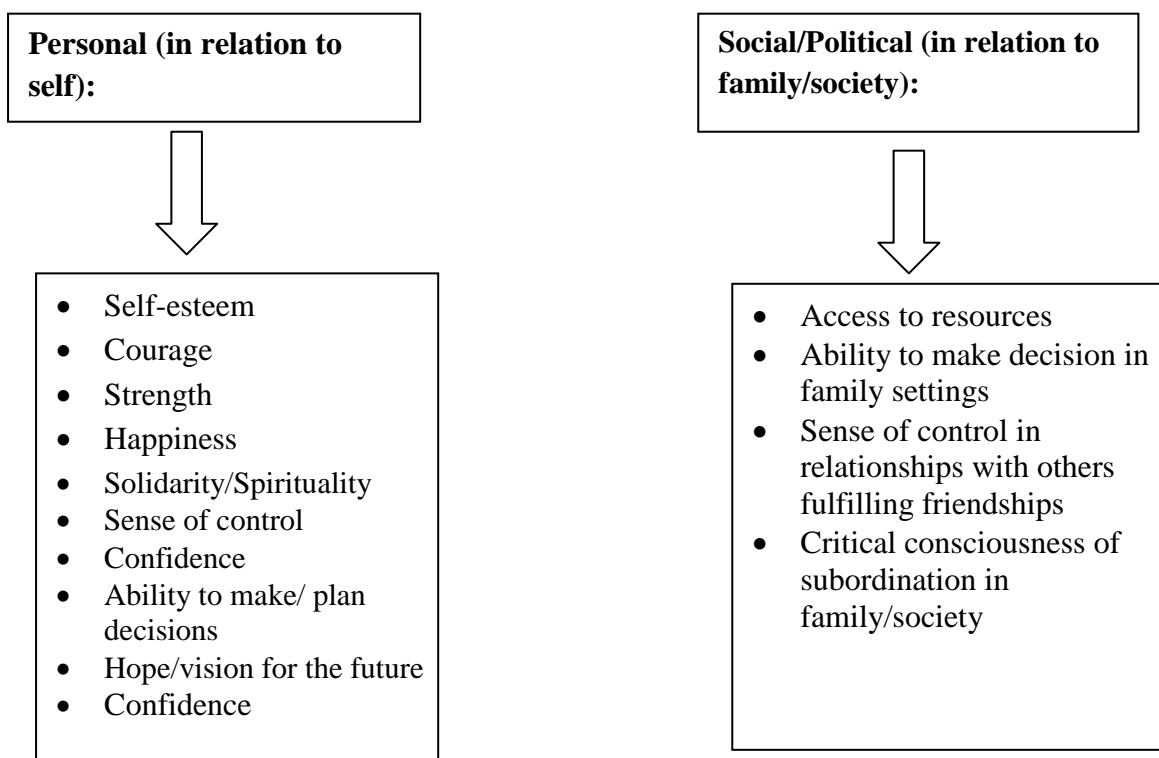


Figure: Source: Best Practices on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficked Women and Girls. Source: Sahara( 2004).