

## **CHAPTER - VIII**

### **RESULTS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The broad objective of this study is to ensure human rights to women in sex work through suggesting social work intervention programme. Restoring justice is the first step in the process of empowerment. An ideal social work intervention programme presumes active participation of the stake holders or beneficiaries. Scientific inquiry of ground realities, hence, becomes a pre-requisite for carving out any intervention strategies.

As stated earlier, despite clear directives from the Supreme Court, so far, the Government of Gujarat has not been able to fulfil its onus towards this socially deprived group possibly for want of systematic and comprehensive assessment of the problem. The present study is an humble attempt to fill this information gap. The researcher's focus of analysis of the collected data, therefore, has been mainly utilitarian.

Following are the major findings and results pertaining to different constituents of the lifestyle of brothel based sex workers of Surat. The discussion on result immediately follows the specific finding. The suggestions, however, are

presented in a separate section because a composite suggestion may have to take in to account more than one aspect of the results.

### **Results And Discussion :**

#### **Personal, Demographic and Social Profile :**

##### *Age :*

Majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 21 to 30 years. A significant number was also found in the age group of 31 to 40 years. Combining these two categories, more than 90% of respondents were found to be between 21 and 40 years of age. Less than 5% respondents were found to be below 20 years (their actual age ranged from 15 to 17 years) of age and also between 41 to 50 of age each.

Prostitution or sale of sex greatly depends on youth hood and lust and the above finding more or less supports this fact. While it is good to note that minor respondent's number was low, their very presence in flesh trade is a disturbing finding. Using minors for the purpose of prostitution is illegal. The plight of a minor sex worker is described in detail in one of the case studies. It shows failure of law implementing machinery to prevent sexual exploitation of minors.

### ***Education :***

86% of respondents were illiterate. Out of the rest 14%, more than 11% had studied only upto primary level.

This means that lack of education is an important factor in making a girl/women vulnerable to sex trade. Lack of education reduces the employment opportunities and leaves little choice for earning through a dignified occupation. Researcher's probing in to the reasons for low level of education revealed that lack of awareness, poor access to schools and low motivation of both - respondents as well as their parents - were responsible for low education status of respondents. This poses a question mark to our commitment to fulfil the constitutional mandate of giving 'equal opportunities for growth and development'.

The only heartening finding was that some respondents, on their own, were making an effort to gain knowledge (please see the case study of Reema Das).

### ***Marital Status :***

More than 50% of respondents were unmarried. Little more than 46% of them, however, were married or had widowed, separated, deserted or divorced.

This finding reveals that a girl or women's vulnerability to exploitation is more or less similar in their parental home as well as matrimonial home. The higher number of unmarried girls seems to be a constant trend since 1990 (Mehta, 1990). The reasons for this trend could be extreme economic crisis coupled with

temptations for better job, easy money or false job / marriage promises given by strangers and boy friends.

### ***Caste & Religion :***

70% of respondents were Hindus. Mainly Nepali respondents came from 'Tamang' community. Some even came from 'Sherpa' , 'Gurung', 'Kami' and 'Nevar' community. The Maharashtrian respondents belonged either to Maratha caste or from other scheduled class. Presence of two Brahmin respondents was also noted. Traces of some castes like Jogins or Kolatis - whose traditional occupation is prostitution - were also found, though they were small in number.

Muslim respondents were either 'Pathans' or 'Sheikhs'. The 'Bauddha' respondents consisted of Nepalese as well as some lower caste Maharashtrian converts who were followers of Dr. Aambedkar. There was only one Christian respondent.

As already stated earlier, Hindus form a larger proportion of the total population of India and the same proportion is reflected here too. Secondly, remarriage among Muslims is less tabooed, hence in cases of marital maladjustment or divorce, Muslim women have an easy option to remarry. Christians were seen less among respondents possibly because in case of social or economic crisis strong religious support system in the form of Missionary Welfare Institutions was accessible to them. Not a single respondent from Parsee

community was noted. Hindus and Bauddhas, thus, formed a majority possibly for want of socio-religious support systems.

***Native Place and Mother Tongue :***

More than half of the respondents hailed from Nepal and more than 60% of them spoke different versions of Nepali language. Some respondents were second generation migrants of Nepalese origin. They stated their native state as the one to which they had migrated but had stated their mother tongue as Nepali as they continued to speak the same at home even after migration. The second largest group was of respondents from Maharashtra, speaking Marathi at home. Muslim Maharashtrians spoke Hindi or Urdu where as some Maratha women hailing from the Maharashtra-Gujarat boarder stated Gujarati or Khandeshi as their mother tongue. Presence of Telugu speaking girls was also noted.

As already stated earlier, the inflow of Nepalese girls is alarming. Their number rose from 7.5% in 1990 to 57.9% in 1999. On the other hand, the number of Marathi respondents has considerably declined from 67.5% in 1990s to 21.5% now. The surveys of 1969 by Bhavnagari and of 1980 and 1990 by Mehta showed that Marathi girls and women were in high majority. Nepali girls seem to be overtaking them within a very short span of time. This clearly raises suspicion about a definite net work running in a very systematic and organized way to

import girls by hook or crook from across the Indo-Nepal border; having also their sound anchors in the Surat market.

The other implication of this fact is that the increasing number of Nepali girls has threatened the business survival of non-Nepalese-Indians, mainly Maharashtrian women. This has not only created a rift between the two groups but has also sent repercussions in the local politics including the underworld politics. The old time, well respected leading women brothel keepers had their own business morals. They ran their brothels with grace and hardly invited disputes in the neighbourhood. The new set up however gave a different impression. Researcher could see some new elements in the sex market having a very different culture. Some of the old time brothel keepers have actually moved out of this area and came only to supervise the work during business hours. Researcher strongly feels that if the present trend continues, the local community which has tolerated the flesh traders for over a century in their neighbourhood would cease to do so.

*Civil status of respondents :*

Ration card holding, registration on voters' list and Census Registration:

More than 90% of respondents said that they did not hold a ration card, nor were they registered on voter's list. Even if illegal/irregular migrants are excluded from these, majority of respondents' names were not entered in ration cards which

perhaps was the only proof of their being Indian domicile and the only proof through which they could have access to the welfare facilities. Ration cards entitles poor citizens to avail daily necessities at cheaper rates. The respondents, despite their lower economic status, are deprived of their basic civil right.

Voting right is important in democracy as it is the stepping stone in the process of empowerment. More than 88% of respondents did not recall having voted in their own name ! Ironically, while respondents were never registered on voter's list, it was noted that many of them were compelled to vote for a particular political party as bogus voters i.e. they voted on some one else's name ! They were guaranteed political shelter in return. This clearly indicates involvement of political leaders in perpetuating the existence of flesh market ! As one respondent narrated, 'we don't have our names registered but on the day of election our leaders take us to voting booths and tell us to vote for sign "XX" - in village (hometown) our community people prefer to vote for "YY", but here, it is different !!' Owing to their floating character, their inclusion in census also could not become possible. However through other sources researcher learnt that at least two survey attempts were made by government agencies to estimate their number. One brothelwise survey was conducted by the local police station (chowk bazaar police station) following a petition filed by the sex workers in Gujarat High Court. Another door to door survey was made by I.C.D.S. functionaries.

### **Family Background of Respondents :**

Exploring family background of respondents was considered essential so as to determine the extent to which the social and economic factors have contributed in driving the respondents to flesh trade. Researcher probed in to the type and size of parental family of respondents, their sibling order, family's economic status, respondent's age at marriage and so on.

### ***Family Type and Size :***

The results reveal that 81.3% of respondents came from nuclear family and 72.9% of respondents' family size was small - having four or less family members. Nearly 24% of respondents came from families having 5 to 8 members.

This means that majority of respondents came from small sized nuclear families. It is an established fact that caring for the weaker family members like a destitute child or widow becomes difficult in nuclear family system. In larger joint families, such dependent members are at least guaranteed their minimum survival needs. The vulnerability of dependent family members - especially the women - to social and economic exploitation seems to be higher among nuclear families.

### ***Sibling Order of Respondents :***

In Indian context, one's sibling order becomes an important factor in one's childhood experiences, educational achievements and one's responsibility towards



younger siblings and parents. In the same family, parents' expectations may vary from child to child. The eldest child is not only expected to help the parents in household chores but also is expected to shoulder the responsibility of caring for the younger siblings and aged parents, at times even at the cost of one's own interest. The results reveal that more than 70% of respondents happened to be the first child of their parents. This figure, of course, included the first and the only child in the family. There were 18.6% who were middle order sibling and 9.3% who were the last child in the family (excluding the single child). It clearly shows that the first female child in the family is more exposed to socio-economic exploitation.

#### ***Family's Property Holdings :***

Ownership of immovable property is one of the important indicators of the family's economic status. More than 47% of respondent's parental family did not hold any immovable property. 52% owned immovable property. Their property holdings, however, were small. Nearly half of the families who held some property had only a kachcha 'kholi' i.e. single room accommodation or hut. Very few of them owned a pucca house or a small piece of land or a small shop.

As already mentioned earlier, an average middle class person usually has some self acquired or inherited property. The finding that nearly half the respondent's families had no property and one fourth of them had only kachcha

house implies that majority of respondent's came from lower socio-economic class. This validates the hypothesis that poorer the socio-economic status of respondents, higher their vulnerability to flesh trade.

### ***Respondents' Age at Marriage :***

The fact that even married respondents were compelled to leave their home (inspite of their legal rights to maintenance as a wife, widow or divorcee) meant that their marriage did not work out or the respondents could not adjust in their matrimonial home. It was, therefore, felt necessary to probe in to the age when they got married 57 out of 107 respondents were never married and 3 of them could not respond to these questions. Out of the 47% who were married (including separated, divorcees & widows) 25 i.e. 23.4% were married at a very early age i.e. between the age of 11 and 15 years. 13% of respondents married between the age of 16 and 20 years and only 7.5% i.e. 8 of them married after the age of 21 years.

Marriage at an early age, when a girl is still immature both physically and mentally, may cause adjustment problems. Marital maladjustment coupled with lack of support from parent's family and lack of other social support system could compel a woman to take up any work for her survival.

It is also important to note the finding that 10.3% of respondents said that they did not give consent for the marriage and 16% of them said they did not like

their partner, but their liking or desire was ignored by their parents or guardians. Marital maladjustment rate is likely to be high in such cases.

***Relations with Husband/'In-laws' :***

None of the married respondents said her relations were 'cordial' or even 'fair' with husband or in-laws. Majority either said the relations were poor or preferred not to respond to this question indicating a clear hatred towards husband/in-laws. All the married respondents attributed the reason for their being in flesh trade to ill treatment by husband and/or in-laws.

***Relations with Parents and Siblings :***

About one fourth of respondents said their relations with parents and siblings were cordial, although 61.7% of respondents said their family members were not aware that respondents are earning through sex work. About 10% of respondents had strained relations with parents and siblings. 30.8% of respondents said their family members were aware about their nature of work.

Nearly 16% of respondents said their families depended on respondent's income. Respondent was the major earning member in these families. It is worth noting that while comparing the self esteem level of respondents who supported their families with those who did not, majority among the earlier category showed higher self esteem. This was probably because they had strong ground to justify

their having accepted sex work by sacrificing their own interest. Also, being the major earning member of the family, they were not only accepted, but also were respected in their own families.

***Family Contacts :***

While majority i.e. 57.9% said they hardly or never visited their families at their home towns. 42.1% of them had kept their family contacts alive by visiting their families occasionally. Those on whom the families were dependent said they regularly visited their families.

This fact not only implies that majority had lost touch with their families but also indicated their low or no acceptance by their own people. In other words psychologically, they were deprived of the breathing space which their counterparts had. Occasional visits away from their tedious work life could provide them some emotional relief.

While probing into their contacts through correspondence, a huge majority i.e. 85% said they do not write to their families. Further probing revealed that it was so not because they were illiterate and could not write. The reason for not writing to their families was more because they did not want their families to know/trace their whereabouts. Contacts through personal visits were preferred to postal correspondence because family members could easily trace back their address through the post office. Respondents who lied to their family saying that

they were engaged in decent jobs; did not want to reveal the fact that they were earning through sex work.

However, less than 10% of respondents were being visited at the red-light area by their family members. These were the ones on whom their family was fully dependent. These respondents also were regularly invited by their families for all important social and religious family functions. In other words, majority of respondents were deprived of participation in community life and celebrations, which not only provide opportunities to socialise but also provide a lot of mental relief and relaxation. This, according to researcher, is important for keeping up one's interest in life.

### **Children of Respondents :**

Section 21 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 defines 'Neglected Juvenile'. One of the categories of neglected Juvenile is of "Juvenile who lives in a brothel or with a prostitute or frequently goes to any place used for the purpose of prostitution or is found to associate with any prostitute or any other person who leads an immoral drunken or depraved life". While the state of Gujarat has established an advisory committee for child prostitutes and children of prostitutes, the government has little systematic data on the children of prostitutes. Researcher, therefore tried to explore information about children of respondents.

It was heartening to note that the Surat Municipal Corporation had started an aanganwadi under the I.C.D.S. project which caters to the developmental needs of children in the locality. The child beneficiaries include children of both - sex worker mothers as well as normal (non sex worker) mothers in the locality.

By and large, researcher's personal observation during the period of data collection revealed that during respondent's business hours, children hung around near by. While some respondents did send their children to a nearby school, others cared little about their health or educational needs.

#### *Children's Number and Gender :*

The quantitative data reveal following results. Out of 107 sex workers 31 had children and 76 did not have children. Though majority of these 76 said they did not want to have children, rest were keen to have at least one child in future. The number of children of each respondent varied from one to five. Out of total 50 children, 26 were male and 24 were female. These children included both legitimate children born to married respondents and illegitimate children of married and unmarried respondents. Over and above sex worker's children, presence of other children was also noted by the researcher. The researcher did not get satisfactory answers about them and was told that "the child was a nephew or niece and had come to Surat for a short stay to see city life!" or that "they were children of other parents in the neighbourhood !" This requires further probing.

### ***Immunization :***

Out of 31 sex worker mothers 28 had immunised their children whereas 3 respondents had not immunised their children as they were ignorant about the importance of vaccination.

### ***Education and Stay :***

13 respondents said their children attended school either in Surat or in their home town. Five respondents even had college going children. 13 respondent's children were either too small or had crossed school going age.

Children of 14 respondents stayed with them in the brothel. 14 respondents kept their children with their parents or other relatives in their home town. Rest of the 3 respondents had made other arrangements for their children's stay e.g. one respondent had rented a 'kholi' in a near by slum specially to keep her child away from the red-light area. She stayed with him at night and her neighbour looked after the child during the respondent's business hours. Another respondent had given away her child to foster parents in the neighbourhood. She however, visited the child frequently.

A middle aged Nepalese mother whose daughter stayed with her in the brothel was planning for her admission in a good English medium residential school - she even hired services of a tuition 'master' who regularly came and taught the child so as to successfully clear her admission interview !

### *Children's Activity During Respondents Work Hours :*

As mentioned earlier, children of 14 respondents did not live with them but were staying with respondent's relations and family members. 5 respondents sent their children either to a nearby school or with a neighbour or foster parent living nearby, but outside the red-light area. 8 respondent's children stayed in brothel even during their business hours - some of these were babies, and fellow sex worker in the brothel took care of them while the mother sex worker entertained customer. 4 respondents had little older children of school going age but they simply loitered on streets while the mother worked. These children did not attend school.

It is important to note that Surat sex market functioned during day time and children, therefore witnessed the immoral transactions. Use of filthy language was quite common. The teenage children, in presence of 'out sider' like the researcher, were seen quite uncomfortable and even angry possibly because it made them conscious of their inferior status. They ran errands for their mothers, other sex workers, or brothel keepers e.g. getting eatables, tea or soda/cold drinks from outside.

Researcher's probing revealed that teenage children understood the nature of their mother's work and also understood and accepted (though with resentment)



that their life is different from that of the other 'normal' children in the neighbourhood.

*People's Attitude Towards Respondents' Children :*

Children's socialization depends on the social environment and emotional security they get from people who form their social environment. Researcher, therefore, tried to know how were the children treated by people around them and what was people's attitude towards the children of sex workers. She depended on respondent's perception of other's attitude for this. The respondents not having children also were asked this question. It was found that more than 70% of respondents as well as equal number of fellow sex workers had positive attitude towards children. Though children were an economic liability, they were a great emotional support to the sex workers. Even the 'non-mothers' liked children's presence around as it broke the monotony of their routine life.

However majority of gharawalis (75.7%), Customers (86.9%) and Dalals (90.7%) were perceived to have negative attitude towards sex workers children. This was so because their relations with sex workers were only economic in nature and children meant an economic liability to the brothel keepers and pimps and their presence caused disturbance to the customers.

### ***Treatment by Significant Others :***

Over and above their immediate environment, children had to interact with people in the neighbourhood, their peers and classmates, teachers and government and NGO functionaries. Unlike the general belief, researcher found a positive picture. More than 61% of respondents said neighbourhood people accepted the children well, 31.8% of them believed that neighbourhood community was indifferent to their children and about 6% of them said children were rejected by the neighbourhood person. Similar pattern was found about treatment by school/balwadi teachers, government/NGO functionaries, classmates and peers of children. Teachers and government/NGO functionaries were found more open towards their children by respondents. However, those showing rejection or indifference towards sex workers' children were also noted, but they formed minority according to the respondents.

This finding suggests changing behaviour of society towards the children of respondents. It indeed raises a hope for better reintegration and rehabilitation of the children in the larger main stream of the society.

### ***Respondent's Willingness to Institutionalise Children :***

Out of the 107 respondents, the question of institutionalising the child did not apply to 79 as either they did not have any child or the children were now adult and socially settled - or were too small. 18 respondents showed readiness to

keep their children in good residential institutions, 8 said a clear 'no' and 2 respondents showed partial readiness to institutionalise their children. Almost all who were willing to institutionalise their children said they would do so only if the institutions were situated close by and if they were allowed to meet their children as and when they wanted.

Researcher's earlier visits to the red-light area indicated that there was a strong rumour that government is going to 'take away' their children. Researcher, therefore had to deal with this question very sensitively. It is felt that any agency whether government or non-government must handle this issue with a lot of care.

#### **Work Environment And Rehabilitation Potential :**

##### ***Occupational History :***

Socially, sex work is regarded as an immoral activity and the general assumption is that one does not take up prostitution as a means of livelihood by choice. There are, of course, some authors like K.Lakshmi Raghuramaiah (1991) who differ from this view. To re-evaluate this assumption researcher decided to explore why, when, where and how women get in to this socially shunned occupation.

### ***Respondents' Age at Entry into Flesh Trade :***

It was found that more than 80% of respondents entered flesh trade after acquiring adulthood. More than 19% i.e. about one fifth of the respondents, however, said they got in to flesh trade when they were minors. While it is good to note that majority entered flesh trade after becoming adult, the fact that one fifth of them accepted sex work at a young age is a disturbing finding. It suggests failure of both - of law implementing machinery as well as of society at large - where in minors are compelled to earn through an occupation which ruins their future for ever. Even those who demand or recommend decriminalization of prostitution agree that earning through minor's prostitution should be banned.

### ***Number of Years in Flesh Trade :***

Respondent's years in flesh trade can have a great bearing on their rehabilitation potential. Among the respondents, about 44% were in sex trade for 6 to 10 years. 22% said they were in prostitution from 1 to 5 years. 14% had spent 11 to 15 years in sex work. 11.2% of them were in business for years ranging from 16 to 20. 2.8% of them were in sex market for more than 20 years.

The findings reveal that in the first and the last category i.e. those who were in sex trade for less than one year and those working for more than 20 years were relatively small in number. As the age advances, respondents are thrown out of business.

It is a matter worth probing as to what happens to a sex worker after she crosses the age of fifty or sixty. Barring one or two elderly brothel keepers owning big brothel houses, researcher hardly came across any aged or retired prostitutes. More than one fifth of the respondents had spent more than 10 years in sex trade. It is obvious that having accepted sex work, respondents hardly thought of trying for alternative work.

Researcher tried to explore the association between respondent's years in sex trade with their desire to leave flesh trade. It was found that among the respondents who were in sex trade for up to 15 years, majority expressed lack of desire and readiness to leave flesh trade. Those who had spent 16 to 20 years were equally distributed among showing and denying desire to leave flesh trade.

It was only in the last category who spent more than 20 years in sex work that majority showed desire to leave the work.

Older respondents were perhaps compelled to leave flesh trade as due to their progressing age, their survival in trade became more and more difficult.

#### *Starting Place of Flesh Trade :*

Some respondents working in Surat had started sex work from Surat, where as others had begun their career as sex workers in other cities and then had migrated to the Surat sex market. Highest number of respondents - 38.3% had started their career from Bombay. Next was Surat which fetched fresh supply of

sex workers from the nearby Maharashtra Boarder. 31.8% of respondents were such who started working from Surat. 5.6% came from Calcutta. Though Calcutta had a bigger sex market, relatively fewer respondents came from there possibly because of long distance. 1.9% started from Nagpur and 5.6% started from Bhusawal. Other cities/towns accounted as initiating points for brothel based sex workers for 16.8% of respondents.

It is worth noting what some young Nepalese sex workers said - when researcher expressed surprise about how come they selected Surat for their work, since Surat's distance from Nepal is more than that of Calcutta, or Patna. Some Nepalese girls laughed and said, 'Surat is no more an unknown place for us. Even girls in remote hilly areas of Nepal know that Surat is a good place to earn !' This, according to researcher, was a clear indication proving a direct link between trafficking net work of Surat and Nepal. Researcher also noted that there were some Nepalese brothel keepers/manager women - not only competing with the leading brothel keepers of past decade but even having good control on the Surat sex market. It is obvious that without sound backing of traffickers and without political shelter they could not have survived in business. Surat, thus, now received direct supply of sex workers from Nepal.

16.8% of respondents started sex work from other cities like Delhi, Eluru etc.

### *Reasons for Accepting Sex Work :*

Highest number i.e. 43.9% of respondents said their reasons for accepting sex work was social as well as economic. Either extreme poverty coupled with lack of social support or social crisis/maladjustment coupled with economic dependence was the main reason for their having accepted sex work for livelihood.

The second large group consisting of 35.5% of respondents described poverty as the only main reason for their coming to sex trade. 6.5% of respondents said their reason for joining flesh trade was purely social. Those giving 'personal' reason said they joined their village friend working in the city out of curiosity and were partly aware about the risks of their being dragged in to sex work but were ready to 'take chances'.

Only one out of 107 respondents said she accepted sex work because she liked it. It is important to note that 10.3% of them refused to respond to this question or gave a very vague answer. It is possible that they were led to the sex market by some definite persons but they were either unwilling or were scared to disclose this fact.

### *Triggering Events :*

Poverty or social maladjustment do not occur overnight. One usually learns to live with one's realities, and tries one's best to cope with it. Abandoning home and family is a vital and difficult decision. One is prompted to leave home only

when one loses faith in his/her ability to manage a given situation or when a triggering event causes grave distress that compels one to give up hopes for ever.

About 13% of respondents could not pinpoint such events. 29% of them said extreme poverty and non-availability of food continuously for several days was the triggering event. About one fourth of them said ill-treatment by husband or in-laws which drove them to leave home. 3.7% of them said death of parent/spouse made them leave home. 20 respondents out of 107 that is 18.7% of them left home upon boy friends promise to marry or stranger's promise to get them good jobs. 3.7% of them said they were lured by village friend's who were already working in red-light areas.

Other triggering events included false accusation of theft of / damage to employer's property or quarrels with parents. Their inability to reimburse the debts coupled with threats of legal action by employers made them leave their home.

#### *Mode of Entry :*

A large majority i.e. 86% of them admitted having accepted sex work voluntarily but 14% of them said they were physically tortured or forced to accept sex work. This excludes gradual mental brainwashing and coaxing by pimps, brothel keepers and fellow sex workers. Restricting respondent's freedom by



locking them up in a room until they agreed to entertain a client was regarded as force and hence was included in physical as well as mental torture.

Some case studies reveal that though respondents were not treated cruelly, they were made to accept sex work under compulsion. They were promised good jobs, by deceit were sold to brothel keepers and brothel keepers insisted that they must pay back their 'price' to brothel keepers. They were not allowed to go out for work to pay off the price to brothel keepers against their release and hence had no option but to accept customers even to earn for their release. By the time they could earn enough for their release they were already labelled as 'bad women' and were brain washed in to accepting sex work. Resorting to 'black magic' in order to coax a person to accept sex work was also noted (Please see cases of Meena and Dipti).

#### **Business Related Information :**

The life style of prostitutes depends a lot on their mode of operating. The living and working conditions of call girls differ from that of street walking prostitutes or brothel based sex workers. For brothel prostitutes their home and work place is the same. Their family, their social circle and their business interactions are more or less restricted to their one or two room accommodation which is shared by several other colleagues. The description of the layout of the brothels of different type is made in the chapter on research setting.

Based on their mode of operation, the sex workers can be divided in to two:

- those hiring a place in the brothel and operating independently in business and
- those working through and under a gharawali.

About 27% of respondents fell in the first category and rest 73% fell in the second category. Those working independently, paid a fixed sum as rent to the building or chawl owner where as others had to pay a fixed portion (usually 50% of their day's earning) to the brothel keepers who are locally called 'gharawalis'. Researcher's observations and probing revealed that even those claiming to be working independently were affiliated to some big brothel owner and in times of crisis - like police raids etc. they were offered protection by the brothel owner/land lords. The 'extra' payment made to police/lawyers etc. were later recovered from the sex workers. The routine 'haptas' however, were included in their rent amount. The rent per month, in most cases was Rs. 500/- per person. Majority of respondents shared their room with two other partners. Those who could afford paying higher rents occupied the room independently. None of the independent units researcher saw had attached toilet, bath facilities. There were common toilet facilities to be shared by respondents living on the same floor of the building. Most of the respondents got tiffins from outside. Kerosene stoves were used to

make tea etc. For want of space and ventilation, usually stoves were kept in the common lobby or passage outside their rooms.

The living conditions in some big brothels were relatively better. Space and sanitation, too, were better. Unlike small units where rooms were divided only by a curtain, these units had walled cubicles with ceiling fans for customer's privacy and comforts. 45.8% of respondents lived in one room brothel, 17.8% lived in two room brothel. 3.7% lived in three room brothels and 1.9% each in four, five and six room brothels. Rest 27% living in rented room shared it with other colleagues.

The number of girls working directly or indirectly under a gharawali ranged from one to fifteen. Over and above these, some brothel premises were accommodating families of brothel keepers, children of sex workers, middle aged sex workers also working as aya or cook and some were even partly occupied by normal households.

On the whole, the places were crowded, unhygienic and poorly ventilated.

#### ***Rates Charged from Customers :***

The standard rate prevailing in the market was Rs. 20 per one transaction. However, the rates varied depending upon the bargaining capacity of the sex worker and the nature of services demanded by customers.

37.3% of respondents said they charged between Rs.20 and 29 per sexual act. 32.7% charged Rs. 10 to 19, 7.5% charged Rs. 30 to 39, 20.6% charged Rs.

40 to 49 and 1.9% i.e. 2 respondent's rates were Rs. 50 and above. One of these was a minor and happened to be most demanded worker in the sex market (please see the case study of Dipti). Thus 70% of respondents charged less than Rs. 30/- per 'normal' sexual act.

Researcher learnt through other sources that trusted sex workers were sent out with customers for longer duration and the minimum charges were around Rs.300/-. For spending full night with the customers outside, the charges ranged from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000/-. Once taken out, sex workers were even exploited by the customers. e.g. Though hired for serving only one customer, a Nepali girl was brutally gang raped by a group of friends of her customer.

#### ***Average Daily Income :***

Majority i.e. 58% of respondents reported that their average daily income ranged from Rs. 51 to 100. 19.6% earned Rs. 50 or less and 22.4% of them Rs. 101/- or more per day. This, of course, was their gross income from which they paid commission to gharawali or rent to the land lord.

37.4% of them said that even from their meagre earnings, they tried to save some amount for themselves or their dependants. Others however said they could not save any money despite trying hard.

The hypothesis that 'lower the age of respondents, higher her income' and vice versa is accepted because the bivariate table showing daily income and age

group of respondents reveals that all the respondents under the age of 20 earned more than Rs.100, where as none above the age of 30 years earned more than Rs.100/-.

### **Customers :**

#### ***Average Number of Customers Served Per Day :***

The number of customers received and entertained by the sex workers had two major implications - one, on her earning and another, on her health status.

About 77% of respondents used to receive two to three customers on an average. 10% of them received four customers per day. One and five customers were received each by 5.6% of them per day where as one minor sex worker received 12 or more customers daily. (please see case study of Dipti More) It was obvious that she frequently suffered from health problems like infection and swelling in private parts but she tolerated the same as she was paid handsomely.

#### ***Type of Customers :***

Majority of sex workers received both 'new' and 'bandhela' customers. 22.4% of them received only 'Bandhela' customers where as 29% of them received mainly new customers each time. Rest of them received both regular and new customers. Some middle aged Marathi sex workers said old customers preferred to come to them because they liked their behaviour. Younger girls

teased the aged customers who could not perform the sexual act where as they treated such customers with lot of understanding and patience and even returned their money in such cases. Inspite of their progressing age such sex workers could survive the business competition with their mature behaviour and sound professional ethics.

#### *Age Group of Customers :*

Customers of almost all age groups - youths, adults, middle aged as well as aged came to the sex workers. Sex workers and brothel keepers claimed that young boys from nearby schools, too, came to them but as a rule they did not entertain adolescent boys of tender age. Researcher once did observe young persons coming to the red-light area, accompanied by other boys of their age, though this was not too frequent.

#### *Socio-economic Status of Customers :*

While majority of customers came from lower middle or labourer class, customership cut across the class barrier. The only difference was that rich customers preferred to take sophisticated sex workers out of the red-light area usually to some hotel room in the city or to places like 'Dummas' or Ubharat' situated on seashore at a short distance from Surat.

### *Nature of Service Demanded :*

Majority i.e. 61.7% of respondents said their customers demanded only 'normal sex services' whereas 38.3% of them said that over and above vaginal intercourse customers also demanded other types of sex variations - mainly oral or anal sex. This supports a general belief that one of the reasons for men's coming to commercial sex workers is to avail partnership in experimenting with non-traditional type of sex variation which prevailed in the larger society.

However, 99.1% of respondents denied giving such type of services. Only one out of 107 respondents admitted of giving oral sex services if customers agreed to pay higher charges. It is possible that some of them might be unwilling to admit that they gave 'other' types of service. Whatever be the fact, it proved one thing that the sex industry is not free from the social stigma attached with 'other than conventional' type of sex variations.

The respondent's logical explanation in support of their response was that for other type of sex variations, they do not necessarily need female partners. Every customer coming to the red-light area wants full return of his money and hence mainly seeks female partnership - if at all he seeks other types of sex variations, it is always in addition to normal peno-vaginal intercourse and never as a substitute for it.

### *Average Time Spent by Customer :*

All the respondents said their customer spent ten to fifteen minutes. Older customers at times needed little more time and hence went to only those sex workers who served them with patience and understanding. The time for services rendered outside the red-light area varied from few hours to full day/night according to the terms and conditions negotiated by customers and sex worker/brothel keeper.

### *Behaviour of Customers :*

All the customers coming to the sex market are not necessarily sex hungry commoners; many are associated with vices like alcoholism and substance abuse or are closely linked with the world of crime. They tend to behave rudely and at times violently with the sex workers.

It was found that 23.4% of respondents came across rude/violent customers frequently, 44.9% experienced such behaviour of customers occasionally whereas 31.8% of them never had an unpleasant encounter with the customers. Those in the last category said they never accepted drunk customers and if at all customers misbehaved, they handled them tactfully.

By and large respondents tried to handle such violent customers on their own. If managing such customers became difficult, they sought help of the



gharawali or even the police. Mainly they had to call police when customers refused to pay them mutually agreed price or physically assaulted them.

### *Use of Condom :*

The data revealed that customers' resistance to use condom has decreased. While 87.9% of respondents said they always insisted for condom use, 72% said their customers always used condom.

5.6% of respondents said they sometimes insisted for condom use, 18.7% reported that their customers sometimes agreed to use condom. 6.5% of respondents said they never insisted customers to use condoms, because they could not afford to reject the customers. As against that 9.3% of respondents said that customers never agreed to use condom.

This implies that there is a gap between the level of awareness/attitude of sex workers and customers. More than 87% of respondents insisted always for use of condom. But only 72% of them were responded positively by customers.

The efforts of the NGOs and government in promoting safer sex practices seemed to have yielded some results. It indicates the need to now focus more on the sex service users for spreading HIV/AIDS awareness.

### ***Emotional Involvement with Respondents :***

Customers of sex workers are ultimately human beings and hence may tend to get emotionally attached to a particular sex worker. 42% of sex workers received marriage proposals from their customers at least once. About 58% of them however, said they never received such proposals suggesting client's emotional involvement with them. In most cases, customer's relationship was purely of economic nature.

It was equally important to know if respondents felt emotionally attached to a customer. 93.5% of them flatly denied of having any emotional attachment with any customer. 6.5% of them, however, said they did experience emotional bonding with a customers. They however, knew that they should not hope for 'marriage' or permanent bond as they had witnessed many sex workers-turned-housewives- being exploited by their spouses and ultimately landing back in to the sex market (please see the case study). It was as though most respondents had buried their 'emotional being' some where deep within by consciously creating an invisible shield of indifference towards their customers.

### **HEALTH :**

The health hazards involved in sex work are many. Over and above the routine health complaints, persons involved in sex work run high risk of HIV/AIDS and STD infections.

Compared to the past decades, better health facilities were available to the sex workers. Over and above private medical practitioners in the locality, services of civil hospital were available to them. In addition, the PSM department of the Surat Medical College had an outreach programme mainly focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention. During the course of researchers' data collection, a health centre was started in the midst of the red-light area. Pregnant and nursing sex worker - mothers were also helped through I.C.D.S. programme.

#### ***Major Sickness :***

Regarding respondents health status, it was found that 2 out of 107 suffered from Chronic Asthma, 7 out of 107 suffered from major sickness in past two years for which they had to be hospitalized. These included illnesses like Hepatitis B, Phalsipherum or Malaria. 12 out of 107 underwent major or minor surgery, 16 respondents said they suffered from STD, and were taking treatment from a private medical practitioner for the same.

#### ***General Health Problems :***

16.8% suffered from severe backache, 28% of respondents received frequent headache, 11.2% of them had skin infections, 6.5% of them had constant pain infect, 10.3% frequently suffered from stomach-ache. Apart from these, respondents in small numbers reported minor health complaints of varied nature.

It was difficult to pinpoint the real health problem as these were only symptomatic description.

‘Vicks Action 500’ was the most commonly used self medication. 21.5% of respondents attributed the cause of their health complaint to their nature of occupation, whereas majority of them said their occupation was in no way responsible for this problem.

***Preference for Place and Type of Treatment :***

More than 95% of respondents preferred to consult private practitioners as compared to government hospital, because they found it more convenient.

The researcher, however noted that the corporation run health centre was slowly gaining acceptance; especially after a lady medical officer took charge.

According to one key informant, the sex workers had a wrong notion that ‘higher the doctors fees, better his services’ and hence many of them preferred to go to private clinics.

Majority i.e. 96.3% of respondents opted for Allopathic medicines where as 3.7% of them preferred Ayurvedic medicines, as allopathic treatment did them no good in past.

### *STD/AIDS Awareness :*

63.6% of them did not know much about AIDS & STDs. Even for others, awareness was restricted to 'hearing about the disease' or 'disease that occurred while having sex with many persons'. By exception, two respondents were well aware about AIDS. According to them, they received information from 'doctors from Surat Hospital' and from newspapers etc.

It must be noted, however, that about 85% of them had 'functional awareness' i.e. they knew that they must insist for condom use by customers because 'doctors say so' or because 'gharawali insisted'.

### *Rehabilitation Potential :*

Any rehabilitation strategy which is not based on participation of beneficiaries is likely to yield poor results. In Gujarat, the government has made several efforts for rehabilitating families of sex workers in the village Wadia, where sex work is the traditional occupation of a particular community. All these efforts went in vain because the sex workers and their families did not respond positively to the rehabilitation programmes.

Willingness of the respondents to leave flesh trade is essential. Research findings show that 35.6% of respondents were willing to leave flesh trade where as majority i.e. 64.4% of them clearly expressed their unwillingness to leave sex work. Their reasons for not leaving flesh trade was that once having been labelled

as sex workers, they feared that society would not accept them with dignity and also because they had witnessed that whoever tried to give up sex trade failed miserably and had to ultimately return to flesh trade.

Those who expressed readiness to leave also put forward a condition that alternative occupation should ensure their economic security.

#### ***Choice of Work If Forced to Leave Flesh Trade :***

In case they were forced to leave flesh trade due to low demand or due to legal actions, majority i.e. 56% of them said they could take up work as 'Aya' or domestic servant. Some Nepalese girls who knew knitting said they would take up knitting work. 6.5% of them expected government jobs as it provided steady income and job security, whereas 31.8% of them did not want to work at all. They said they would beg on streets for survival.

Only 15.9% of them showed readiness to take up vocational training so as to be able to take up a skilled job. 84.1% respondents either did not want other work at all or preferred to engage in unskilled job. Some of them clearly said that now they were not habituated to do any hardwork and hence would rather stick to flesh trade or would become beggars.

### ***Choice of Alternate Place to Settle :***

Majority i.e. 58% of respondents said that if they were compelled to evacuate, they would choose to operate from other place in the same city i.e. Surat. 38.3% of them said they would go back to their home towns. 2.8% said they were uncertain about their decisions and one respondent said she would shift to other red-light area - to Rajkot or Bombay.

It is worth noting that none of the respondents was willing to live in any residential or custodial care institution - probably because it restricted their freedom.

### **Aspiration Of Respondents :**

Respondents aspiration about children and of self were as follows :

#### ***Children :***

53.2% of respondents i.e. majority did not want to have children at all. 13.1% of them said they would like to have at least one child in future. 4.7% of them said they did not think about future and hence had no aspirations. 4.7% respondents wanted a good job for their male child and 24.3% of respondents hoped for good and settled family life for their children.

It can be clearly seen that those who had children wanted social and economic security for them. Majority, however were tired of the bitter realities of

their life and hence did not want to add to their economic liabilities by giving birth to children.

***Self Aspiration :***

47.8% of respondents said they lived only in 'present' and never thought or planned about their future. Others, however clearly described their aspirations. 16.8% of them expressed their desire to go back to their home town. 15.9% said they wanted to own a 'kholi' or a house of their own. 9.3% said they would like to lead a settled family life in future and 11.2% of them wanted to progress in flesh trade by owning their own brothel so that after they retire from sex work, they can employ other young girls and earn through them. To become a 'gharawali' was their prime aspiration !

Economic and social security, thus, was the focal point of their future dreams.

**Psycho Social Aspects :**

The very nature of sex work necessitates that prostitutes alienate their minds from their bodies. It compels a woman to abandon herself and bury her self-identity deep within.



This section describes briefly researcher's findings regarding respondents' perception of self and of their socio-cultural environment surrounding them and also the behaviour patterns that resulted out of the interaction between the two.

#### **Attitude Towards Customers :**

Majority of respondents - 54.2% reflected negative attitude towards their customers. 45.8% of them however scored above the mean score suggesting overall positive attitude towards the customers. Those showing negative attitude mainly reasoned that it was the customer who objectified them and thus insulted their womanhood. Those having positive attitude however emphasized on the economic aspect more. According to them, they could survive in the business because of their customers and reasoned that customers can not be blamed for pushing the respondents into flesh trade.

Further, it was found that there was a strong association between the native place of respondents and their attitude towards customers. Majority of respondents hailing from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra and other states showed positive attitude towards customers. From those hailing from the East, North-East and Nepal, majority showed negative attitude towards customers.

The possible reason behind this could be that in Maharashtra, Southern India and other places, socio-religious prostitution existed which institutionalised the sex worker - customer relationship (e.g. Jogin/Devdasi-Zulwa) whereas

respondents from West Bengal and Nepal were driven to prostitution due to sheer economic compulsion. It is possible that they saw customers more as a party to their victimisation. Another reason for their negative attitude could be that their entry in to flesh trade was not as 'voluntary' as they claimed to be i.e. these women might have been victimised by the traffickers and now, they are unwilling to show that their's was a forced entry. It is obvious that they transferred their hatred towards traffickers on the customers.

The second important factor which seems to have a bearing on respondent's attitude towards customers is their years in flesh trade. Majority showed positive attitude towards customers in their initial phase in business and also towards the fag end of their career as sex workers, possibly because during these periods, respondents feel economically insecure realizing their dependence on customers. Majority in the mid phase of their career showed relatively negative attitude towards customers. This was a phase when they were more or less settled in business and sure of their survival in business. Also the realization that just as she is dependent on customers for money, customer is dependent on her for satisfying his sex hunger did not perhaps make them feel so obliged to customers.

Thus, respondent's years in flesh trade influenced her attitude towards customers.

**Attitude Towards Gharawali (Brothel Keeper) :**

51.4% of respondents showed negative attitude towards the brothel keeper and rest 48.6% showed positive attitude towards brothel keepers. The difference between the number of respondents having positive attitude and those having negative attitude is not very wide. It seems while the respondents resented restrictions put by brothel keepers on their freedom and also taking away a share of their income, they depended on gharawali's help and support in times of health related or legal crisis. Researcher even heard of cases where sex worker borrowed a big sum from the brothel keeper and suddenly vanished without returning the same !

This area actually requires further probing through empirical studies specially focused on sex worker - brothel keeper relationship.

**Attitude Towards Police and Judiciary :**

In India, having accepted abolitionist approach, government expects law implementing machinery to see prostitutes as victims rather than offenders. Law is stricter for traffickers and persons who earn through the prostitutes and make prostitution a commercially organised occupation by victimizing the vulnerable ones. However, the real sufferers in case of legal actions are always the sex workers. Sudden police raids, arrests and court cases deprive them of their day's earnings. Unofficial payments made to the police in the form of 'Hapta' or

protection money by the traffickers and brothel keepers are actually recovered from the sex workers. During arrests, cheap comments and filthy language used by police hurt their dignity.

On the other hand, police is their only shelter when customers cheat them, physically assault or harass them. Presence of police and judiciary is accepted as a necessary evil by those in flesh trade. It was as though an invisible boundary prevailed between sex workers and police. Deviations within permissible limits were tolerated by both. Researcher's quantitative data analysis showed a positive picture. This however did not match with the grounds on which sex workers filed a petition in the Gujarat High Court against police harassment (see news clipping in appendix).

Majority i.e. 55.1% of respondents showed positive attitude towards law implementing machinery i.e. police and judiciary. It must be remembered that researcher's data collection was done after the High Court's intervention.

### **Occupational Adjustment :**

Sex work is regarded as an immoral occupation. Findings of this study have already shown that except one, all the respondents had taken up prostitution because of compelling circumstances. Having accepted sex work as mode of earning, how far the respondents could adjust with their nature of work ? Findings show that the level of occupational adjustment was low among majority i.e. 53.8%

of respondents. Rest 46.2% of respondent's total score on occupational adjustment scale was noted to be higher than the mean level. It was also noted that their level of occupational adjustment to some extent depended on their mode of entry in to flesh trade. Among the respondents who were physically forced to accept flesh trade, a high majority showed low level of adjustment whereas among those who entered flesh trade on their own, majority showed high level of occupation adjustment. This validates the hypothesis stated in the methodology - that lower the willingness to enter flesh trade, lower the occupational adjustment.

#### **Occupational Stress :**

As already noted earlier, role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload and role shrinkage cause stress. Sex workers are exposed to all these stressors directly. Do they perceive their work environment as stressful ? The findings show that there is a very thin difference between the number of respondents who experienced stress in their work life and those who did not. 50.5% of them showed low occupational stress whereas 49.5% of them showed high occupational stress level. According to researcher there are two possibilities : one, those who are newly inducted in to flesh trade especially by fraud or force experience higher stress. In absence of better options, they perhaps easily compromise with their fate and develop a defensive shield of indifference which protects them against stress. Secondly, it is possible that their previous life experiences i.e. life before coming

to sex trade was so bad that majority of them found their present life comparatively less stressful. In other words, their decision to accept and continue in flesh trade was made based on a sound rationale. Action of any person with ordinary prudence or wisdom is based on her/his calculation of cost-benefit involved in the act; and sex workers seem no exception to it.

### **Self Esteem :**

It was good to note that majority of respondents showed relatively higher level of self esteem. 51.4% of them showed higher self esteem whereas 48.6% of them scored lower than mean on the self esteem scale. Thus, though in minority, a significant number of respondent's perception of self worth was below the mean level.

While discussing association of family dependency and level of self esteem. Previously, it is already noted that the hypothesis 'higher the family dependency on sex worker, higher her self esteem' holds good. To avoid repetition, the same is not discussed here again.

Another important factor which showed a strong association with respondent's self esteem level was their native place. Majority of respondents from Maharashtra and Gujarat reported higher self esteem whereas majority from rest of the country and Nepal showed lower self esteem. It seems that the

compulsion to live far away from their places of origin created an insecurity in the minds of the respondent. The option to visit their home town without much difficulty itself perhaps gave them inner security.

Another possible reason, for lower self esteem of respondents from farther states and Nepal, again, could be that their entry in flesh trade was not as voluntary as they claimed to be. Falling prey to traffickers might have affected their self worth negatively.

### **Sex Typology :**

Respondent's masculine and feminine traits were measured with the help of Bem's (1974) sex role inventory. The results showed that those in stereotyped category (High female - low male) were 12.1%, those in Androgynous category (High female-high male) were 15.9%, those in cross sexed category (Low female - high male) were 38.3% and those in undefined category (Low male - low female) were 33.6%.

Thus, frequency of respondents was highest in cross sexed, followed by those in undefined category whereas the other two categories showed less than 16% of frequency. In otherwords, more than 71% of respondents have scored lower on femininity scale. Considering the fact that all respondents were women and were engaged in sex trade in which their feminine gender is a major factor, this is indeed a finding that poses a paradox.

The possible reason for low score on femininity could be the realization that it was their womanhood or femininity which compelled them to be subjected to exploitation and victimization. To prevent further exploitation and emotional breakdown these women might have consciously or subconsciously assumed masculine traits as a defense. While their occupation demanded that physically they should put in best efforts to project their femininity, researcher could observe that their behaviour was quite harsh and rude with customers as well as colleagues. It was as though through their aggressive masculine behaviour, they built a shield to protect the 'woman' in them!

#### **Purpose in Life :**

To what extent the respondents found their life meaningful ? The findings showed positive results. Majority - 60.4% of respondents scored high on 'purpose in life' scale whereas others i.e. 39.6% scored low.

Native place was again found to have a bearing on respondents performance on 'purpose in life' score. Among the respondents from Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, majority showed high score whereas majority from Nepal and West Bengal scored low on purpose in life scale. Compulsion to live away from homeland detaches one from her cultural roots, which might be the reason why these respondents found their life meaningless.



It was found that sex typology also had a strong association with respondent's purpose in life. Androgynous, cross sexed and stereotyped respondents showed higher score on purpose in life scale whereas undefined category scored relatively lower on the same. Those having confused personality were perhaps confused about their purpose in life as well or vice versa.

#### **Values :**

The 'value' test showed that majority - 51.4% of respondents scored low on value whereas rest of the 48.6% respondents scored high on value scale.

Respondent's type of family was found to bear a strong association with their value score. Majority of respondents hailing from nuclear family scored higher on value scale whereas majority coming from joint families scored low on value score. This negates the general belief that those who are brought up in a joint family go through a healthier socialisation process, and hence hold positive values in life.

Another factor showing strong association with respondent's value score was their period in sex trade. Among those spending 0 to 5 years in sex trade majority scored low on value. Majority having spent 6 to 10 years in flesh trade and also from 20 or more years scored higher on value scale.

One can observe a pattern emerging here. In the initial period and in later years (i.e. between 11 to 20 years) majority showed lower value score whereas

after having stabilized in trade i.e. during mid phase and also after having spent 20 years in flesh trade majority scored higher on value score.

Sex typology, too, was found to be associated with value score. Majority of those in undefined and stereotyped sex typology scored lower on value whereas from those in androgynous and crossed sexed categories majority showed higher value score. On the whole, the fact that they have chosen to compromise with the prevailing social and moral standards by accepting flesh trade for survival explains majority scoring low on value scale.

### **Religiosity :**

Religious beliefs, to a great extent determines one's pattern of behaviour and values. While researcher's personal observations showed that some of the respondents had great faith in religion, the overall picture was slightly different. Two third of the respondents scored low on religiosity scale and the rest scored higher than mean score, suggesting high faith in religion. Majority believed that they got support from religion in times of stress and more than 88.8% said they believed in the supernatural entity, majority also said that they did not believe in rituals, did not keep 'vrat' and did not observe fast. Many said they did not worship daily and did not visit religious places.

Case study also revealed that brothel keepers resorted to religious rituals to mentally prepare a newly inducted girl for 'accepting' customers.

### **Crisis and Coping Strategies :**

Crisis is an emotionally significant event, causing unusual stress in one's life. Researcher tried to probe in to whether respondent suffered any crisis. More than 94% of respondents said they had experienced one or the other type of crisis either immediately preceding to or after their accepting this occupation. About 73% said they suffered from emotional crisis, 93% of them faced health related crisis, 73% underwent economic crisis and 72% of them experienced legal crisis.

In case of health related crisis, they tried to first cope it by self medication and home remedies and in case of severe sufferings they approached qualified medical practitioners.

Majority of them applied different defense mechanisms to cope with emotional crisis e.g. by projection or rationalizing.

Economic crisis was coped either by compromising with their needs or by seeking help from others. 9.4% of them borrowed money from money lenders at a high interest rate. Most common way of coping in times of legal crisis was by quietly surrendering to the law implementing authority. 17.8% of them sought release by bribing the police whereas 10% of them said they agreed to pay regular instalments or 'Haptas' to the police to prevent arrest in future.

The very fact that they still survived in business implied that respondents could somehow manage to cope with their crisis at least temporarily.

The role of the social work interventionist is to evolve intervention strategies that can protect respondents against avoidable crisis, to minimise the occurrence of unavoidable crisis, to reduce the severity of the blow caused by it and to lend a helping hand by ensuring minimum civic and human rights to the respondents.

In the following section, the researcher has tried to identify scope of social work intervention in the form of suggestions, after presenting her concluding summary.

### **Conclusions :**

The study shows that adolescent or young girls - both married and unmarried from low socio-economic class and with low level of education are vulnerable to prostitution. Some were victimised by traffickers by giving false promises of job / marriage, and by deceit were compelled to join flesh trade. Others were drawn to prostitution under the influence of village friends who were already in flesh trade. It is also seen that although women and girls from all over the country and even from outside India are recruited in the sex markets, there are definite identifiable zones which are major sources of supply for the sex markets. e.g. Akola in Maharashtra, Eluru in Andhra, Gorakhpur and Nepal. Similarly, the major spots receiving fresh supply of sex workers also are identifiable.

As far as the age group of sex workers is concerned, majority of them are adults. However, incidence of child prostitution was not totally absent. About one fifth of the sex workers entered flesh trade when they were minors. Since minor sex workers attract more customers, their vulnerability to STD / AIDS also is higher. Their frequency of exposure to sexual acts and number of sex partners (customers) is more as compared to older sex workers. In other words, the risk behaviour is especially higher among minor or child prostitutes. Their immaturity and lack of experience increase the chances of economic exploitation by brothel keepers as the bargaining / negotiating skills of minor sex workers are too poor.

On the other hand, it was noted that the only elderly retired prostitutes found by the researcher were the brothel keeper. Barring few middle aged sex workers - turned - 'ayas' one could hardly see an elderly ex-prostitute. Thus, either their longevity is very short or they are driven out of brothels in old age. What happens to the elderly ex-prostitutes, thus, is a matter of investigation.

The work environment and working conditions are poor. Since the brothels are situated in the midst of the city in a thickly populated area, the scope of expanding the brothel houses is poor. They, infact, had to squizz in smaller buildings as parts of the buildings had been demolished for road alignment by Municipal Corporation. Inadequate space and poor sanitation further increase the risk to their health. Their access to medical services, however seems to have

improved owing to the special attention and resources diverted for AIDS awareness /prevention programme - by the government.

It must, however, be noted that this positive change is restricted to the health related issues only. Neither the government nor the society seems to be bothered about addressing to their other needs and problems. Their marginalization due to economic inequalities and social injustice both before and after coming to flesh trade continues. Other government departments e.g. social defence, Home, Social Justice and Empowerment do not seem to have exerted sufficiently to even initiate efforts towards prevention and control of prostitution as a commercialized vice and to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate sex workers in to the mainstream of society. Nor can one notice any whole hearted effort being made to ensure opportunities of healthy growth and development of their children.

The office of the District Social Defence Officer is located at a walking distance from the Surat red-light area. There is a full fledged 'State home for women' established under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act which is supposed to provide shelter and vocational training to women rescued from brothel houses. The Surat Municipal Corporation, The UCD - Urban Community Development project office and the Police station are located at a stone throwing distance from the chakla bazaar red-light area. All these agencies are vested with adequate authority and resources to intervene and help women in sex work. None

of these can deny its direct or indirect responsibility to deal with the problems of prostitutes and prostitution. Until the sex workers become empowered enough to assert their own rights, it is the duty of these government departments to take the lead in developing need based, area specific outreach programmes. So also, the local NGOs need to expand their roles as organized watchgroups to question the administration for its lack of commitment and inefficiency. They can play a vital role in nabbing the trafficker - police - politician nexus.

It is equally necessary that actions by police, per se, need not be seen as police harassment. So long as the police is complying its lawful duties, without any indecent behaviour violating sex workers' dignity, so long as the main target of police is **traffickers** and not sex workers, so long as it does so honestly (without adopting corrupt means) and so long as it is not acting as an agent of a third party having vested interest (e.g. builders, politicians) police deserves co-operation not only from the local citizens but also from sex workers and judiciary. The vicious net work of traffickers needs to be broken somewhere. Since prostitution per se is not a crime and law takes a softer view towards sex workers, the traffickers and brothel keepers tend to use them as camouflage whenever a legal action is initiated.

Many respondents in the present study shared that they knew about the existence of Surat sex market and hence were encouraged to leave home and take up sex work in Surat red-light area. Others were brought to the Surat or Bombay red-light area and were forced to join flesh trade. In both cases of forced or self decided acceptance of sex work, the existence of ready markets have facilitated women's entry in to flesh trade. In other words, had there been no organized sex markets, many of them would not have left home and would have chosen to earn through other occupation.

The present legal policy of abolitionism, thus, is ideal on paper but seems operationally inadequate and unrealistic to combat the problem of forced prostitution. Since the present law does not recognize prostitution in its organized and commercial form, regulation of working and living conditions does not become possible. Sex workers are compelled to live in inhuman conditions.

Sex workers, thus, are denied their dues from all the three - **the society** of which they are members, **the traffickers and brothel keepers** who earn through them and **the state** of which they are citizens. It is obvious that the traffickers, with their vested interest, can hardly be expected to work for the betterment of sex workers.



The other two components - the state and the society can definitely do a lot more through their active and well co-ordinated intervention.

Different government departments can atleast keep each other informed and seek each other's support to ensure justice to those who deserve it. e.g. if Police announces closure of sex market, officials from social defence or social justice and empowerment department, if properly informed, can atleast remind the sex workers of the existing survival alternatives offered by the state and encourage them to make optimum use of the same. Sitting and negotiating with the sex worker's representatives would help in removing the obstacles which cause underutilisation or nonutilization of help offered by the state. Agencies like 'Mahila Aarthik Vikas Nigam Ltd.' can float special schemes to suit the rehabilitation needs of displaced sex workers. Local NGOs can remove the insecurities and inhibitions of displaced/retired sex workers to accept alternative occupation through counselling.

What is needed is a firm commitment and human approach towards this less fortunate section of our society.

Following is a model composite intervention programme suggested by the researcher with preventive, curative and rehabilitative goals with specific actions recommended at Micro, Mezzo and Macro level.

In the end researcher has also suggested an action plan with a special focus on preventing and controlling incidence of forced and child prostitution.

**Suggestions :**

**Social Work Approach :**

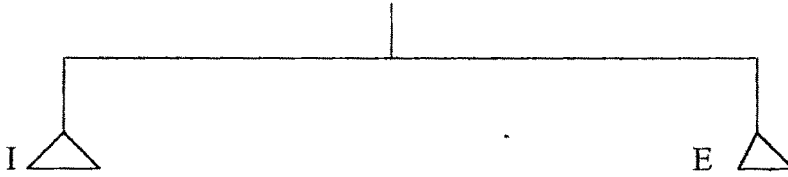
Before presenting suggestions and recommendations, the researcher feels necessary to briefly explain the general approach adopted by her while making the suggestions.

She has drawn from Max Silverstein's (Tudu, 1982) approach of professional social work that explains the crux of social work as "neither appeasing the inner psychology, nor trying to change the outer reality (completely) but preparing the inner psychology (of an individual) to meet the outer reality wherever it is possible; or if it is not possible, then to create an environment that softens the blow of reality to an acceptable form for the needy - - - through both psychological as well as educational treatment."

Needless to say, it blends, to an extent, the functional and psycho social approaches. Graphically, it can be explained thus :

### Socialwork Approach - Fig. 1

- A. Normal - Average Healthy Person :  
Equilibrium between Individual (I) and Environment (E)



- B. Abnormality occurs when equilibrium gets disturbed :  
Resulting in to emergence of Problem (P).

- i) Environmental factors (E) and/or      ii) Individual factors (I)  
Pose a problem                                      Pose a problem



- C. Goal of social work intervention (SI) and Role of professional care givers :  
Enable one to reach / restore equilibrium.

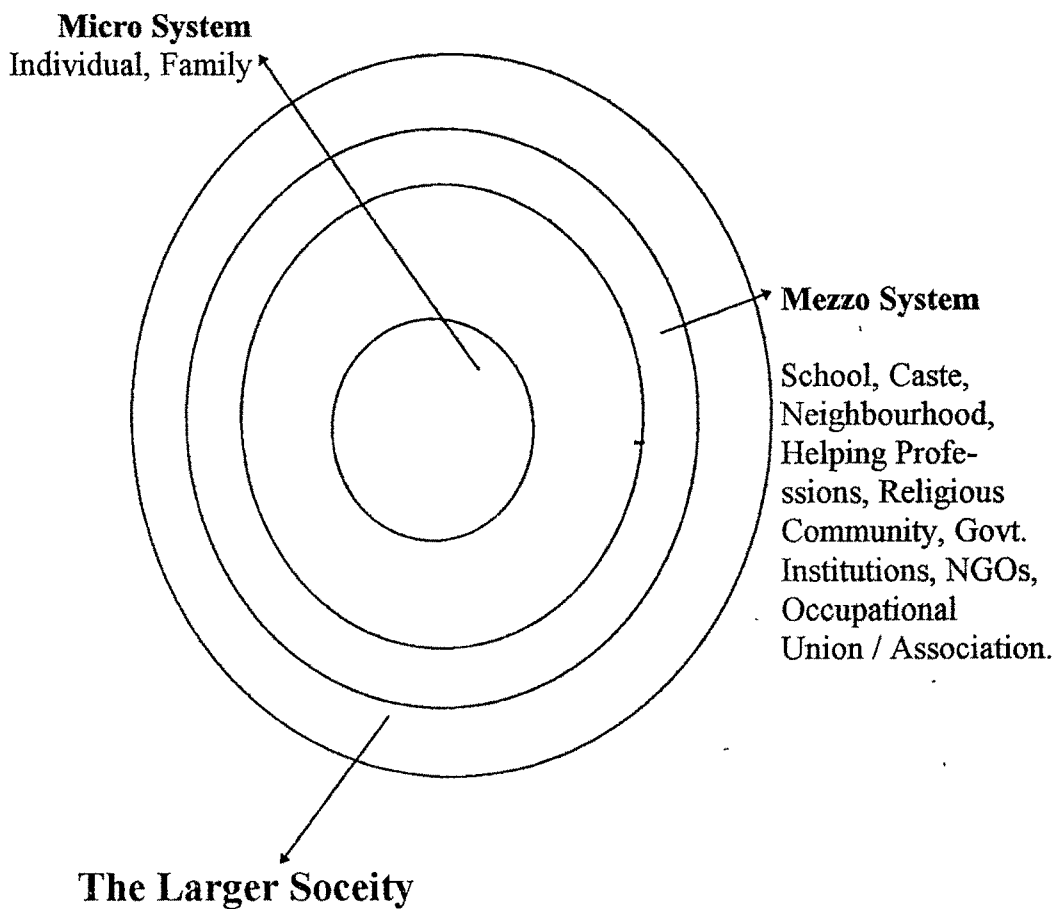
- i) Equip Individual      and/or      ii) Manage Environment



Secondly, researcher's suggestions are directed at three operational levels as suggested by Mullen (1972) viz.

- 1) Macro system i.e. the large scale complex social system,
- 2) Micro system wherein the units of attention are individuals, families or small groups and
- 3) Mezzo system i.e. the in between of the social work intervention terminals viz. agencies and institutions.

**Socialwork Approach - Fig. 2**



### **Suggestions for Social work Intervention :**

According to G. Caplan (1964) rehabilitation should start with diagnosis and one should not wait to start rehabilitation until the problem has ended - it should be integrated with the process of diagnosis and therapy.

The researcher, therefore, has presented her suggestions for social work profession's contribution to the psycho social rehabilitation of prostitutes right from the phase of prevention. The suggestions and recommendations thus are divided in to three phases.

- 1) Prevention State : Before women and girls enter the sex market.
- 2) Curative Phase : While they are in the sex trade.
- 3) Rehabilitation Stage: While they are prepared/forced to leave flesh trade.

For the purpose of clarity and practical application suggestion at each phase are presented at three operational levels - macro, mezzo and micro.

The researcher suggests following measures to curb and combat the ill effects of prostitution.

#### **1) Preventive Measures :**

Illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, social maladjustment and lure for easy money are the prime factors that cause and perpetuate prostitution.

***Macro Level Preventive Measures :***

- \* Structural changes in social institutions e.g. marriage, family, inheritance to remove gender based discrimination both in personal and civil matters through legislative actions need to be brought about.
- \* It requires influencing policy decisions especially directed at empowering women on all fronts - social, economic and political.
- \* Loopholes in personal laws which perpetuate women's victimization must be sealed.
- \* Special efforts to check migration of women due to economic compulsions must be made. If need be, special relief schemes (as in case of drought affected areas) may be floated with a special focus to ensure women's employment.

***Mezzo Level Preventive Measures :***

As noted earlier, there are specific geographic zones from where women and girls are procured or lured for prostitution in large numbers. Area specific approach to prevent induction of girls in to flesh trade is needed.

- \* Net work of existing social / government institutions should create awareness among women and girls. Since most of the women in prostitution are illiterate, schools may not prove to be an ideal agency to catch the target groups. Fortunately, caste and religious institutions have a strong net work in Indian society. Mahila mandals or Bhajan mandalis are also informal but organized

groups. Over and above their traditional functions, these agencies or groups and institutions can be prepared to assume newer roles as community watch groups to prevent women's victimization by traffickers.

- \* In addition to existing community groups, special agencies / schemes can be created to identify and train peer educators by the government especially in the prostitution prone zones, thus creating a special task force.

- \* Such newly created / existing community groups can work with a two pronged approach of :

- i) Spreading awareness to caution the young women, girls and their parents against their probable victimization by procurers.

- ii) Acting as watch groups to counter and confront the procurers and traffickers.

(Researcher remembers having read how village youths prevented girl's victimization by a professional procurers' gang in South Gujarat through vigilant actions).

- \* Existing net work of government e.g. police functionaries can be activated at both ends - prostitute procurement zones and receiving zones to identify the professional procurers and traffickers, to trace their movements and to maintain and update their records for effective legal actions against them.

\* Awareness through mass-media regarding the risks involved in engaging in to prostitution can prevent girls' voluntary entry in to flesh trade. Since the procuring points are mostly in remote villages on hilly areas, convincing the local folk artist groups to specially design and perform programmes carrying social messages to prevent prostitution may help. Folk media (e.g. folk songs, drama etc.) can prove to be an effective means to reachout to illiterate population in remote villages. Documentary films on the pathetic conditions in red-light area can go a long way in breaking their illusion of city life.

*Micro Level Preventive Measures :*

These include efforts targeted at individual or family level. Girl children of poor families in rural areas and hilly areas of north-east and some districts of Maharashtra deserve a special attention. Eldest girl child or destituted girl child seem to be more prone to prostitution.

\* Promoting education among girls by ensuring enrolment of every girl in school and facilitating her school attendance at least till she completes primary education is a must.

\* For older women/girls, functional literacy programmes should be evolved along with some vocational training which enables a woman to earn enough for their survival needs at village level.



- \* In poverty stricken areas, direct incentives to parents of girl child should be given so as to motivate them to educate them and to accept the responsibility of maintaining a girl child.
- \* Short stay / shelter homes for socially maladjusted or victimised women should be there to prevent their further victimization through procurers or traffickers.
- \* Sufficient work opportunities should be created for young and needy women, within the vicinity of their own talukas.
- \* In prostitution prone zones, the village panchayats can constitute vigilance committees to ensure safety of young girls.
- \* Young girls should be given sex education with special focus on birth control measures, on provisions for medical termination of pregnancy and on safer sex practices so as to prevent HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy. Many a times, young unmarried girls getting pregnant and later deceived by their fiancée find shelter in sex market. Sex education can help in preventing such incidence.
- \* Some mechanism should be developed involving joint efforts by government agencies (e.g. local police or village panchayats) and community groups (e.g. caste panchayats, yuvak mandals) in high risk procurement zones to monitor and trace the movement of young girls. Net working of such agencies can help each other in providing correct information. e.g. many girls are assured good

jobs in cities and are then sold off in sex market. Instead of relying on oral commitments of traffickers they may be asked to give exact details of the employer who offers a job, the scrutinising agency can, through their net work, verify the whereabouts and credibility of the employers and the terms and conditions on which jobs are offered. It can also keep a follow up record of the migrating girl. Parents and guardians of young girls should be convinced to send out their daughters/wards for jobs only through such authorised scrutinising - cum - monitoring agency channel. Such machinery can be designed on the pattern of scrutinising and placement agencies for adoption of children - both in country and inter country. The net work of government probation officers also can be used for this purpose.

## **2) Curative Measures :**

Curative suggestions focus on the women and girls who have already landed up in flesh trade in a red-light area and aim at ensuring them survival, justice and freedom against exploitation by traffickers and police.

### ***Macro Level Curative Measures :***

\* At policy level, a major change is required. Having subscribed to the abolitionist approach rigidly, it is presumed that third party intervention is absent - i.e. we close our eyes to reality. The presence of traffickers and brothel keepers

may not be possible legally, but operationally, they are the real vested interests who perpetuate flesh trade. To maximise profit, they hardly spend for improving the living and work conditions or health care of sex workers. Since law does not recognise their existence, law can not compel them to maintain minimum standards of health and hygiene. To alter this situation, researcher feels that a realistic and workable formula combining abolitionist approach with regulatory approach is needed.

While the central law can continue to attack on traffickers the local laws or rules must insist for minimum standards of working and living conditions and regular health check up. This will atleast improve their pathetically unhygienic work environment.

- \* Stricter steps against procurers and traffickers are needed. The local police officers should be made personally responsible for their negligence and failure to control trafficking in human beings.

- \* Reasons for low conviction rate of traffickers must be investigated and analyzed. Appropriate steps to increase efficiency of police, to seal the loopholes in legal procedure and to sensitize judiciary towards misuse of its pro-sex workers approach by traffickers are needed.

- \* The sex workers are deprived of many civic rights and social security benefits because of rigidity of government agencies. Such government welfare

schemes can surely improve the conditions of sex workers; if the administrators are sensitized towards the needs of this section of society, and are authorised to be flexible in considering their needs. e.g. giving short term loans to sex workers in times of crisis can be considered by banks to prevent exploitation by money lenders.

- \* Except the illegal migrants from other countries voting rights, ration card facilities should be extended to the sex workers who are steadily living at one place for a long time.

- \* Making of welfare programmes for the children of prostitutes must be expedited at Gujarat state level.

***Mezzo Level Curative Measures :***

- \* Mobilize existing government and community resource / support systems e.g. health services, legal aid etc.

- \* The local district social defence office can extend the benefits to the eligible sex workers / retired sex workers e.g. old age pension scheme or widow pension scheme. If need be, the sex workers can be exempted from fulfilling certain formalities availing benefits under these schemes as a special case.

- \* Fostering self help groups among sex workers through local community organizers (e.g. under the U.C.D. programme) can help in promoting the interest of

the sex workers. Through participatory approach their dependence on the state on one hand and traffickers on the other hand can gradually be reduced.

\* If the judiciary endorses sex workers' right to earn through sex work, and the red-light area is likely to continue for coming few decades, it is suggested that a special post be created in cities where organized sex markets exist by the department of social defence. The person so appointed should be a professionally trained social worker, preferably a woman. She can initiate small savings schemes, consumer co-operatives with the support of local bank, can do liaison with the local corporation, police authorities and district courts, can take up individual counselling for the needy. (Please see the action plan suggested by the researcher).

\* Local NGOs, University and Government agencies like 'Mahila Aarthik Vikas Nigam' or 'Shramik Vidyapith' can float adult education program, vocational guidance and training or functional literacy programme for the benefit of sex workers who are willing to go for the same.

\* Some strategies should be worked out to educate customers for HIV/AIDS prevention and for adopting safer sex techniques.

\* The Municipal Corporation should ensure that prostitutes' children's enrolment in primary schools is done. The corporator of the zone in which the red-light area is situated should personally take interest in facilitating such

enrolment. Older children can be admitted in to the nearest government run 'Ashramshalas' or residential school.

\* Day care centre for small children of sex workers be initiated, preferably in a nearby area. If this is not possible in near future, the fosterhome attached with the state home for women can offer such services. A needy, retired sex worker, having an aptitude to work with children can be employed as a care taker.

***Micro Level Curative Measure :***

1. Each woman sex worker's minimum survival needs must be ensured and human rights must be protected.
2. Whole hearted efforts to rescue child prostitutes / forced prostitutes must be made. Every possible means should be adopted to identify new entrant in sex market. She should be interviewed thoroughly in a place away from a brothel where she feels safe and secure to talk freely. If she expresses her unwillingness for sex work, she must be extended full security and safe custody.
3. Extensive counselling services should be made available to sex workers, where they can seek help, support and guidance in times of crisis like emotional breakdown, indebtedness, health problems or victimization by anti social elements.

4. Counselling / group work techniques can also be used for increasing their awareness about their rights not only qua government but also against exploitation by brothel keepers and pimps. They need to be more assertive in fighting against exploitation.
5. Children living in brothels deserve a special attention. It is hightime that the state government keeps up its commitment to start programmes for the protection and development of children of prostitutes. It is necessary that government abandons its policy to initiate its efforts only when the eligible beneficiaries reach a sizeable number. Human life and not economic viability should be the focus in such matters. What is needed is the 'will' more than the 'resources'.

### **3) Rehabilitative Measures :**

The rehabilitative measures include steps facilitating sex workers reintegration in the main stream of the society. Rehabilitative measures focus on encouraging the women to leave sex work and accept a healthier means of earning their living. For those who are unable to work due to ageing, rehabilitation may mean providing for their basic survival needs and health care.

#### ***Macro Level Rehabilitative Measures :***

- Incorporating the rehabilitation aspect in the law relating to immoral trafficking in human beings may be considered.

- As stated in the earlier paragraphs, combining regulationist approach with the present abolitionist approach may help in fixing up the responsibility of sex workers' rehabilitation on their employers or brothel keepers.
- Any rehabilitation programme for sex workers must also cover the rehabilitation of the retired/elderly prostitutes.

***Mezzo Level Rehabilitative Measures :***

- Local government / semi government or non-government organizations should evolve special extension / continuing education and vocational training programmes after carefully assessing their needs and interests.
- Functional knowledge about health awareness, legal awareness and money management should be provided to the sex workers, over and above functional literacy.
- NGOs engaged in working for the sex workers should frequently create opportunities to bring government functionaries, community / neighbourhood people and sex workers together on a common platform not only in seminars and workshops but also in programmes like celebration of festivals to remove alienation of the sex workers from the social mainstream. Promoting such planned intermingling can definitely initiate the process of de-stigmatization, which is necessary for any rehabilitation programme to yield success.



***Micro Level Rehabilitative Measures :***

1. It is very necessary to identify sex workers who are wanting / willing to leave sex trade and are ready to accept other work. Apart from older sex workers who are compelled to leave sex work due to old age, younger sex workers, too, should be encouraged to opt for other means of lively hood, through counselling.
2. Vocational training of their choice should be made easily available to them. Many sex workers in the red-light area already possess skills e.g. knitting, carpet weaving or other crafts. They should be encouraged to keep these skills alive. Short term training with stipend may also tempt them to undergo such training.
3. It is suggested that giving them some meaningful leisure time activity of productive nature having a ready market can be considered. e.g. doormat/broom/paper flower making even while awaiting customers can not only serve therapeutic purpose of overcoming their frustrations but also can supplement their income and help them regain their confidence in their ability to earn through other mean. Initially, assuring market to such products may be needed.

- Sex workers who are literate and possess leadership qualities can be trained and employed as peer educators or community workers for spreading literacy, health and legal awareness. Gradually, such workers can be helped to withdraw from sex work and lead a normal life.

Researcher again emphasizes that operationally, an integrated approach encompassing all the three goals of prevention, cure and rehabilitation has to be adopted. One must remember that fighting against one of the oldest evil practices of the society is a herculean task. Choosing right persons having appropriate knowledge, skill and aptitude is, therefore, very essential. The efforts and will rather than numbers or statistics can help us measure the success. The task requires patience, perseverance and above all, faith in human beings' capacity to change.

#### **Areas for Further Research :**

There are many areas which have remained unexplored and many others requiring further in-depth probing, so as to understand prostitution as a social and economic phenomenon. The areas which are likely to have possibilities for social work intervention and which need to be explored further are as follows :

1. A follow up study of elderly (ex) prostitutes is needed to know their rehabilitation needs.

2. A study on adolescent children of prostitutes - especially focusing on how they perceive their socialization process and what are their attitudes towards their mother, and her work is needed.
3. A study of grown up / adult children of prostitutes and their social/economic profile can help in assessing the rehabilitation needs of the children of sex workers.
4. A qualitative study of sex workers who have freshly accepted sex work - especially focusing on how they are initiated in sex work and what impact it has on their emotional being is needed.
5. A study on the attitude of neighbourhood community towards sex workers can reveal facts which can facilitate social rehabilitation of sex workers.
6. Government machinery must keep a basic survey record of the sex workers operating in a specific area - this record may also include street walking sex workers, call girls as well as brothel based sex workers. Such record must be updated at short intervals, so as to assess the magnitude of prostitution accurately.

7. A city wise record of historical milestones of the major events occurring in this field must be maintained. This task can be assigned to an academic institution so as to observe major trends and noting the emerging patterns.
8. The immediate as well as long-term impact of police's attempts to close down the sex market and sex workers' and traffickers' reactions should be studied.
9. Case studies of sex workers who have attempted to leave sex work and tried to socially/economically settle down either by getting married or by accepting other mode of earning can help in assessing their rehabilitation needs.
10. Sex workers' attitude towards institutionalization of self their children should be studied.

### Life Style of Prostitutes : Social Work Intervention Model :

Stages → Goals ↓	Micro	Mezzo	Macro
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduce one's vulnerability to prostitution</li> <li>- Focus on young/ adolescent, poor married / unmarried females</li> <li>- Focus on identified vulnerable procurement zones</li> <li>- promote education, awareness among girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make effective use of existing institutions/ network e.g. caste, school, mahila mandal etc or</li> <li>- create new need based agencies with a two pronged approach of i) spreading awareness to caution target group against probable victimization.</li> <li>ii) acting as watch groups to counteract traffickers</li> <li>- Activate local police to identify new entrants in sex market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influencing policy decisions i) to seal loopholes in law</li> <li>ii) to check migration of women for unhealthy purpose.</li> <li>- Bring about structural changes in social institutions for correcting gender based discrimination</li> </ul>
Cure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One to one Counselling services to</li> <li>- Ensure minimum survival needs</li> <li>- Rescue child prostitutes</li> <li>- Ensure protection against forced prostitution</li> <li>- Ensure human rights</li> <li>- increase assertiveness provide crisis intervention in emotional breakdown, indebtedness, victimization by anti social elements, health problem</li> <li>- Reduce vulnerability of second generation i.e children.</li> <li>- Convince clients for safer sex practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilize existing government and community resource systems e.g. health services, legal aid, old age insurance/pension, fair price shops, small savings, co-operative societies.</li> <li>- Foster formation of self help groups through community development programmes.</li> <li>- Day care services, residential schools, for children</li> <li>- Vocational guidance and training for sex workers and their children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authorise concerned government agencies to be flexible in considering needs of this group.</li> <li>- insist for stricter steps against traffickers by making concerned officer personally responsible.</li> <li>- Evolve strategies to identify traffickers camouflaging as leaders of sex workers.</li> </ul>

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **A Pilot Project For Helping Women Sex Workers In Surat City**

#### **Objectives :**

1. To rescue child prostitutes and victims of forced prostitution.
2. To promote healthier lifestyle among women sex workers.
3. To facilitate rehabilitation of sex workers and their children.

#### **Rationale :**

The pro-women, pro-poor approach of law makers and judiciary, the changing social values and the demands put forth by organized groups of sex workers to recognize sex work as a legitimate occupation have made prohibition on prostitution impossible in near future. In other words, prostitution and prostitutes are going to continue in one form or the other in coming decades. Under such circumstances, state intervention and help become essential for protecting the interest of the worst affected groups of prostitutes. Brothel based prostitutes are one of them. Hence, designing a special scheme / project with the above mentioned broad objectives becomes essential.

**Duration :**

Initially the project may be started on experimental basis for a period of two years. Depending on its success, it may be extended to other cities, covering even street walking prostitutes or call girls.

**Funding :**

The project should be fully funded by the state government.

**Staff :**

A project officer or a program officer may be appointed. The person should be a professionally trained social worker, preferably a woman. She should be designated in the rank of a probation officer. She should operate from a cell located in the vicinity of the red-light area.

The project officer can seek support from a multi disciplinary team consisting of a lawyer, a medical officer, local police officer, a social scientist and volunteers from local community.

**Job Description and Modus Operandi :**

\* In the first phase, the programme officer may conduct a benchmark survey and try to collect and record data on the existing status of women in red-light area and build rapport with the sex workers, brothel keepers and other key persons in the red-light area. She may regularly visit and hold informal meeting

with sex workers individually or in groups, and also keep in touch with the government functionaries directly or indirectly concerned with their problem e.g. health/legal aid etc.

**\*In the second phase, her tasks may include the following :**

1. Identifying child/minor prostitutes and girls/women who are forced in to prostitution against their will, and facilitate their rescue, if need be, with the support of the police.
2. The programme officer may also keep an eye on the new entrants in the flesh market. Tapping informal sources like local autorickshaw drivers or shop keepers can also help her in identifying new entries. New entrants can be helped through counselling to consider accepting other dignified work for earning and may be guided to protection homes.
3. For those who are already into sex work, and do not willingly opt to leave it, the programme officer can help them organize in to small self help groups, who, with her support can assert and demand their rights by proper representation before appropriate authority. e.g. in case of abuse/exploitation by police, harassment by anti social elements or brothel keepers, they can avail legal aid or seek intervention from higher authorities.



4. Fostering small saving groups and small scale consumer co-operatives can reduce indebtedness of sex workers, and save them from the clutches of money lenders who charge high rate of interest.
5. The programme officer can also make certain existing welfare schemes - (like old age / widow pension scheme) - accessible to the needy and eligible sex workers.
6. Spreading health awareness and facilitating use of available health services can go a long way in improving health status of sex workers. Identifying and training peer educators from amongst the sex workers for HIV/AIDS prevention measures can be one of the tasks of the programme officer.
7. Organizing celebration of festivals or occasional pleasure trips to nearby places in small groups can give the sex workers some relief from their tedious daily routine and ensure better mental health. Inviting local leaders and neighbourhood people on special occasions like puja etc. can promote planned intermingling of sex workers with community which is very essential to minimise stigmatization and alienation of sex workers from the social mainstream.
8. One to one counselling in case of emotional breakdown, depression and providing crisis intervention services also can be taken up by programme officer.

9. Giving them meaningful and productive leisure time activities may gradually help them revive their interest in a healthier economic activity. Vocational training or even functional literacy programme can also be taken up. Those who show desire to undergo such programmes may also be given some material incentives to encourage others to do the same.
10. Starting a day care centre for sex workers' children during their business hours and ensuring enrolment of older children in schools can be co-ordinated by the programme officer.
11. Rehabilitation / institutionalization of aged and elderly needy (ex) prostitutes can be one of the tasks of the programme officer.
12. Networking and co-ordination of all the government and non-government resource agencies for the benefit of sex working community can be done by the project officer.

#### **Evaluation :**

Six monthly progress report of the work may be sent to the state advisory committee. At the end of two years the state advisory committee may assess the contribution of the programme in improving the status of sex workers and their children.