

GLOBAL STUDY ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

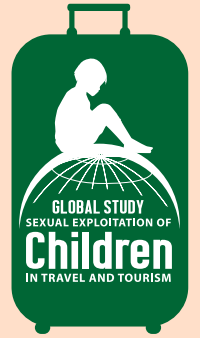
COUNTRY-SPECIFIC REPORT

INDIA: WEST BENGAL

2015

Sanlaap

Speaking of the Unspoken



This study was conducted by Priyanka Biswas, Tapoti Bhowmick and Indrani Sinha.



SANLAAP is an Affiliate member of ECPAT International.

The country-specific research report on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism in the framework of the Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism. More information can be found in www.globalstudysectt.org.

The views expressed in this report are those of SANLAAP and do not necessarily reflect those of the donors.

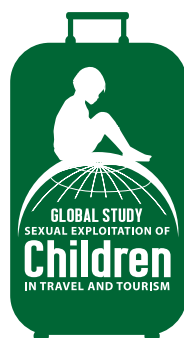
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	6
Chapter 2: Objectives and methodology	9
Chapter 3: Background	11
Chapter 4: Respondents	13
Chapter 5: Responses by the travel & tourism sector	17
Chapter 6: Findings and analysis	18
Chapter 7: Recommendations	19
Bibliography	20
Annexes	21

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

India is home to the biggest child population in the world. The country has an approximate of 440 million children, thus constituting more than 40% of the total population. With more than one-third of its population below 18 years, India has the largest young population in the world. Thus the onus is on the Government as well as the larger society to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the development of its children.

According to a report titled “Children in India 2012-A Statistical Appraisal” by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India; there has been a decline of 5.05 millions in the population of children aged 0-6 years during the decade 2001-2011. In India about 1.83 Million children die annually before the completion of their fifth birthday, most of them owing to avertable causes. This simply highlights the meagre health care facilities available to infants and children in the country.

The census also noted an increase in the number of child labourers from 11.28 million in 1991 to 12.66 million in 2001. The report also highlighted an upsurge in the rates of crimes against children, with a notable rise in crimes such as Kidnapping and Abduction, Rape, Foeticide and Procurement of Minor Girls, with Maharashtra accounting for 74% of the total buying of girls for prostitution and West Bengal accounting for 77% of the selling of girls for prostitution, during the reporting period.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is a global phenomenon that is rampant in the Indian sub-continent as well. The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is defined as the “sexual abuse where any form of compensation in cash or in kind is made to the child or a third person(s). The child is treated as a sexual and commercial object.” Simply put, Commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs when individuals buy, sell or trade sexual acts with minor girls, boys or transgendered children. Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, especially of children is a highly

profitable business and is recurrent in all parts of the Indian society.

Another form of child sexual exploitation is the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. Sex tourism includes the sexual exploitation of children by International and Indian tourists. Children selling trinkets on the beaches, street children, children working in shops in tourist locations etc. are often vulnerable to this kind of exploitation.

Sex tourism is often facilitated by travel agencies, tour guides, hotels and other related business. Moreover, cheaper air fares, opening up of newer locations and better connectivity as well as the dissemination of the internet to all corners of the world has provided easy access to child abusers looking for cheap sex with young victims.

Tourism has been a major social phenomenon of societies all over the world. It is driven by the natural desire of every human being to gather new experiences as well as to be entertained.

Travel and tourism is the largest service industry in India. It is expected that the tourism sector’s contribution to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will grow at the rate of 7.8 % yearly in the period of 2013-2023. The Indian tourism sector has been thriving in the recent years owing to the improved connectivity to and from the country. Also, better lodging and communication facilities at the tourist destinations in India have been important factors that have contributed to the increase in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA).

However, Tourism does not only entail a positive impact on local cultures. The commercial sexual exploitation of children and young women has paralleled the growth of tourism in many parts of India. Though tourism is not the exclusive cause of sexual exploitation, it often generates the demand for commercial sex and also provides easy access to it. In several situations, children and young adults are trafficked and sold into brothels

on the margins of tourist areas and often fall prey to commercial sexual exploitation and paedophilia. In other situations, many young women as well as children often trade their bodies in exchange for expensive gifts and easy money from tourists.

What is Child Sex Tourism?

Child sex tourism, can be explained as, the commercial sexual exploitation of children by individuals who are essentially tourists. These individuals usually use their status as tourists to buy or trade sexual acts with children in the tourism destination or country.

Child Sex tourism is an increasing menace in vulnerable countries with lack of stringent laws as more sex offenders are travelling across nations to sexually exploit children.

Who are Child Sex Tourists?

Child sex tourists are often child sex abusers who seek out children to satisfy their sexual urges. One common misconception regarding child sex tourists is that they are essentially paedophiles. On the contrary, most child sex tourists are situational abusers who do not have a particular predilection for children but often seek sexual contact with them as a form of experimentation and/or a varied experience.

Of course, this does not imply that paedophiles do not travel across the globe as tourists seeking sexual gratification from young children. The main difference between a paedophile and a situational offender is that while a paedophile has a clinical disorder with an exclusive proclivity for pre-pubescent children, usually 12 years or younger, a situational child abuser does not have a particular predilection for children as sexual partners but instead prefers a variety of partners, including children. Thus, situational abusers are often tempted or presented with a situation where they can engage in sexual acts with a child and they just seize it.

Also, Child sexual offenders can be local and foreign tourists, a man or a woman, individuals across various age groups and social backgrounds, though the general perception is that women are seldom child sexual offenders.

Who are usually the Victims of Child Sex Tourism?

Children living near tourist places are often victimised by situational child sex tourist or paedophiles. Several children can be seen selling trinkets, balloons, mementos, etc. on the tourist spots. There are also children, of shack-owners and shopkeepers in the tourist destinations, who loiter around, often interacting with the tourists while their parents work. Paedophiles often shower attention on the children in the form of expensive gifts. This is often the easiest way to entice the children who often come from backgrounds of economic, material and emotional deprivation.

Factors Affecting the Growth of Child Sex Tourism

Some of the factors promoting the growth of Child Sex Tourism in India are:

- The feeling among foreign tourists that the probability of detection and/or conviction is very low in Third World Countries.
- The mistaken belief that sex with virgin girls cures HIV and STIs
- The belief that it is easy to lure children with attractive gifts and little money in Third World Countries owing to the prevalence of abject poverty and an ambience of neglect and emotional deprivation of the children.
- The idea that Governments of several Third World Countries like India, turn a blind eye to such exploitation with a view to encouraging tourism.

Child sex tourism and child pornography

There is often a link between Child Sex Tourism and Child Pornography. Hardened child sex traffickers and exploiters are often found to produce, collect and distribute sex videos or pornographic materials involving children or take nude pictures of them that they sell or circulate to other child sex offenders. Social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc. and the Internet at large are also being used to lure child sex offenders to seek out these children and purchase sex from them.

Child sex tourism in india

According to a study sponsored by the National Human Rights Commission, the abuse of both male and female children in India by tourists has become a serious concern. The study also states that unlike Sri Lanka and Thailand, Child Sex Tourism is not seriously confronted and openly talked about in India and often shrouded in secrecy and denial by duty bearers, thus making the possibility of child sex abusers being caught and punished quite low.

The study also states that Goa and Kerala are the hubs where tourists go in search of sexual contact with children. It was also reported in the study that young boys and girls admitted to having sex with various tourist customers for a payment of anything between Rs 50-200/-

Sex tourism in Goa became known all over the nation with the notorious case of Freddy Peats. Peats had been functioning in Goa since the 1980s without arousing any suspicion. He was considered a respectable, kind-hearted Samaritan who provided shelter to young homeless boys and girls. Instead he would lure these young homeless boys; and coerce them into prostitution or sexual exploitation. Not only Peats himself, but other offenders from Germany, Sweden, Thailand, France and Australia also sexually exploited these children. The CBI took over this case on the orders of the High Court following a petition by a social worker. During the course of the investigation, it came to light that a number of foreign tourists would visit Peats' orphanage and take the boys out. The children were then taken to various hotels where they were abused over a period of time. Freddy Peats was convicted and sentenced to long-term imprisonment while the other offenders managed to flee.

"It is hard to measure the incidence of child sex tourism as it is difficult to conduct quantitative research on such a clandestine and illegal industry," the study, which was researched by the New Delhi-based Institute of Social Sciences, said. "Qualitative research and anecdotal evidence suggests that child sex tourism is growing and spreading into different regions of the world."

"There are fewer laws against child abuse in India and the beaches of Goa and Kovalam in Kerala are increasingly becoming the main destinations for those seeking child prostitutes. One of the areas singled out as experiencing increased sex tourism is Kerala, where the report says: "In places like Alleppy, foreign tourists stay in houseboats, making houseboat sex tourism a new and thriving concept. This is a safe method, as there are hardly raids on houseboats."

As per research conducted by the National Women's Commission, it was recorded that Karnataka is the biggest State, which supplies 80% of the child prostitutes in the country. Based upon this finding, when the Karnataka State Commission for Women tried to investigate it further, they stumbled upon a major smuggling gang whereby girls from impoverished rural families were lured to Goa and pushed into the flesh trade. The coastal areas in Calangute, Candolin and Baga in Goa have been converted into a paedophiles' paradise. Kovalam in Kerala, Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, Digha and Mandarmani in West Bengal are also following in the same footsteps.

The magnitude and dimension of Sex Tourism in West Bengal, though less acute than other places like Goa or Kerala, is on the rise. Since West Bengal does not have a very high influx of foreign tourist, the demand for sex tourism is from the local tourists, primarily people living in and around West Bengal. The main hubs of sex tourism in West Bengal are primarily Kolkata, Diamond Harbour, Digha and Mandarmani.

Kolkata is the capital of the Indian State of West Bengal and the principal commercial and cultural center of Eastern India. Digha is known as the beach tourist spot in West Bengal and Diamond Harbour lies by the delta of the Ganges. While Kolkata caters to mostly tourists from other Indian states and countries, the profile of Diamond Harbour, Mandarmani and Digha is similar, which caters to a vastly domestic population. Several Tourists from parts of West Bengal and Kolkata go to Digha, Diamond Harbour, Mandarmani and Tajpur in groups where they become friendly with beach boys and girls, trinket sellers and other vendors, often involving or luring them into sexual relations.

CHAPTER 2

OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

Research objective

- To gather information on the prevalence of Child Sex Tourism in West Bengal
- To gather information on what policies and practices do individual hotels have in place to combat Child Sex Tourism in West Bengal

Geographical area

The study is conducted in West Bengal where information has been gathered from the following locations:

- Diamond harbour
- Digha
- Kolkata
- Mandarmani
- Tajpur

Time frame

The study has been conducted over a period of 3 months starting from 30th March 2015 to 30th June 2015.

Profile of studied tourism sites

Digha: Digha is a seaside resort city in the state of West Bengal, India. It lies in East Midnapore district and at the northern end of the Bay of Bengal. It is located 183 km from Kolkata/Howrah via Mecheda and 234 km via Kharagpur. This proximity has probably helped this small hamlet to emerge as a popular weekend getaway with number of good hotels and tourist lodges. Digha is connected to Kolkata/Howrah by a highway and a rail-link via Tamluk.

Diamond Harbour: Diamond Harbour is in the southern suburbs of Kolkata, on the eastern banks of the Hoogly River, quite near where the river meets the Bay of Bengal. This small town is a popular weekend tourist spot located in South 24 Parganas District. Diamond Harbour is well connected with Kolkata by road and rail. It has a number of private hotels. As Diamond Harbour is within easy reach of Kolkata, just around 50 km, it is generally a day out picnic spot for city dwellers. There are plenty of small hotels and bars in the Diamond Harbour area.

Mandarmani: Mandarmani is a seaside resort village in the state of West Bengal. It lies in the East Midnapore district and at the northern end of the Bay of Bengal. It is one of the large and fast developing seaside resort village of West Bengal. It is almost 180 km from Kolkata Airport on the Kolkata - Digha route. Mandarmani has several hotels and resorts and Mandarmani is quickly becoming a popular getaway for young people over the weekend.

Tajpur: Tajpur is the latest addition in the tourist map of West Bengal. Tajpur is located in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India and located on the shore of West Bengal. Tajpur is located 170 kms from the city of Kolkata and located between Mandarmani and Shankarpur. The convenient location of Tajpur is the major cause behind the emerging popularity of this sea beach holiday destination. Tajpur is still the most unexploited virgin sea-beach around Kolkata. There are regular trains and bus services to Tajpur thus making it easily accessible by rail and road.

Kolkata: Kolkata is the capital of the Indian State of West Bengal. Located on the east bank of the Hoogly River, it is the principal commercial centre of Eastern India. Spread roughly north-south along the east bank of the Hooghly River, Kolkata sits within the lower Ganges Delta of eastern India. Kolkata is the main commercial

and financial hub of East and North East India. In Kolkata, prostitution is based in different forms. It may be brothel-based or non-brothel based as in the case of escort services and massage parlours. The largest Red-Light Area in Kolkata is Sonagachi.

Questionnaires

Child Sex Tourism is essentially a complex issue that is extremely clandestine in nature. Gathering information on this issue proved to be quite challenging as the respondents comprising of hotel owners, rickshaw pullers and middlemen, were quite apprehensive to talk to the researchers owing to their NGO status. The researchers also gathered information through the victims who were rescued from hotels in Diamond Harbour and Digha and were sent to Sanlaap's Institutional Care Facility. In addition Sanlaap also spoke to Police officials and other NGOs who have rescued children from child sex tourism.

In the first visit to Diamond Harbour, it became evident that the research questionnaire can't be direct and conventional. Apart from Kolkata and Diamond Harbour, none of the other places, namely Digha, Mandarmani and Tajpur have Red Light Areas. Though it was gathered from the hotel owners, pimps, middlemen and rickshaw pullers, that the commercial sexual exploitation of children (also known as flying child prostitution) is rampant, it was difficult to get hold of the victims as they were usually brought in by the touts, pimps or the customers themselves. The children are usually brought from the towns of Contai, Kharagpur, Bankura, Howrah, South 24 Parganas and Kolkata.

The information was collected through means of questionnaires, observation; face-to-face interviews based on one to one interaction and focused group discussions. Two different questionnaires were used to record responses of the victims and the hotel

owners where as face to face interaction was held with the middlemen, also comprising of rickshaw pullers; and the police officials or NGO representatives. Staff members of Sanlaap also travelled to Digha and Mandarmani and posed as prospective customers to gather information from the middlemen about children in prostitution. The age of the two staff members pretending to be prospective customers is around 40 years approximately. They approached rickshaw pullers asking for the availability of girl children for commercial sex. One male and one female staff members of Sanlaap also visited various hotels and interacted with the hotel owners and managers to gather information regarding the various policies they have in place to combat Sexual Exploitation of Children and women in hotels. Face-to-Face were also conducted with the girls at Sneha, especially with those girls who have been rescued from hotels and lodges.

Before conducting the interview with the girls, the researchers explained in details the purpose of the study and they were also assured that the confidentiality of their identity will be preserved. The researches explained at length why such a study was being undertaken and their contribution through sharing of their experiences in making this global study a success and spreading awareness on the issue of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

Limitations/challenges

Since sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is extremely clandestine in nature, collecting primary data proved to be extremely challenging.

Moreover the surveyors also experienced reluctance on parts of several of the hotels to openly share their observations and experiences on the issue of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND

India is one of the few countries where males outnumber females. As per the current sex ration of India, 2015, there are 943 females for 1000 males. As children, girls are usually treated differently from their male counterparts in terms of nutrition, health care and education; where limited food, financial or educational resources are available, the inadequate means or resources are mostly allocated evenly in favour of the male children. This imbalance results in the insufficient care and attention provided to girls and women and is one of the biggest reasons for the high levels of child malnutrition and child deaths.

The constitution of India provides free education to both boys and girls till the age of 14 years under the Right To Education Act. However education, even primary education, is not seen as necessary for girls; and their parents would rather have them learn household chores as they will need to perform them to please their future husband and in-laws. Another demotivating factor for sending girl children to school is the apprehension regarding the protection of the virginity of girls and women. Sex before marriage is a social taboo in India even today. Every Indian man wants to fulfil his desires before marriage, preferably with a young virgin girl but expects his wife to be a virgin. When the school are located too faraway, and the girls are expected to study alongside boys, and with usually male teachers teaching them, the parents are often concerned regarding the safety of their daughters and potential assault on their virginity. An assault on a girl's virginity implies the dishonour of the girl's family.

Child Marriage, though banned by the Indian Constitution, is a common practice in many parts of India. Marrying off a girl at a young age ensures that she is a virgin, thus keeping her family honour intact. Moreover the tendency of several men to demand young wives, who are usually viewed to be submissive, meek and virgins extensively propagate the problem of child marriages in rural India. When girls married off as children move in with their husbands and in-laws, they usually end up experiencing domestic violence,

marital rapes, deprivation of food and nutrition, poor healthcare support etc.

According to an article published in 'India Today', a leading magazine in India, there are nearly 1.2 million sex workers in India who are below the age of 18 years, with almost 40 girls under the age of 15 years, being coerced and duped into prostitution on a daily basis.

Research suggests that there are as many as 10 million children in prostitution in India.

Interview of child in prostitution Papiya Shau (name changed) who was rescued from a hotel in Digha

Papiya Shau (name changed) aged 14 years, was the youngest daughter in a family comprising of six children. Owing to their severe economic deprivation, she was never sent to school. Instead at the age of 7 years she was sent to work as a domestic maid in a house in Kolkata. When her father borrowed some money from a loan shark for the marriage of his second daughter and could not repay the loan, he and his family were often threatened and sometimes even severely beaten up till he was forced to sell Papiya to traffickers for a couple of thousand of rupees. Papiya was then taken to work as a child prostitute in a couple of hotels in Digha, where she was given to several men-both young and old- in exchange of Rs 1000/- Each time she refused to go to work, she was severely beaten up, and/or denied food till she was forced to accept her fate. Her abuse continued for 10 months after which she was rescued in a police raid in one of the hotels in Digha.

The story of Papiya is quite similar to several children in West Bengal who are coerced or duped into the sex trade in the name of love, marriage, job or; simply exchanged for money. While poverty and lack of adequate economic opportunities is at the core in most cases, the role of traffickers in their being bought and

coerced into commercial sexual exploitation or forced prostitution may vary from overt to covert coercion. Most girls in rural West Bengal have little means of survival other than marriage or employment and in case of marriage; there is a huge level of dowry involved. It has been the observation of the organisation that sheer economic desperation of the girl children along with the stigmatisation of eloping with lovers, who then sell them off in the red light areas, leave many of them with no choice than to carry on with prostitution. The rate of child marriages- whether forced or by elopement, remains incessant and ostentatiously ignored in spite of the strict legal strictures and this is often because of the social stigma attached to the birth of a girl child and the lack of opportunities accessible to them. Parents would rather send their girl children off to work as domestic maids and labourers or get them married off, than give them the scope to develop naturally by making all the resources, even though limited, available to them. Girl children are married off as young as 10-12 or sometimes even before they enter puberty, and the inaction by the Panchayats or Law Enforcing Agencies in such issues is cross-cutting through all the districts of West Bengal. The rate of violence, whether sexual, physical or emotional, remains omnipresent in cases of child brides but often goes unreported owing to the socialisation of girl children that violence is a natural course of their life and the husband is always right. It has also been documented by the organisation on several occasion that these child brides are later on sold into prostitution once the husband satiates his hunger for sexual intercourse with a young, virgin wife and also once she is unable to bring in anymore dowry.

Interview of child in prostitution Rukmini (name changed) living in Tollygunge and who goes to Mandarmani, Tajpur and Kerala

Rukmini was 15 years old when her parents gave her off in marriage with a 27 years old man named Akash. He was a carpenter by profession. After marriage, Rukmini used to live with her in-laws who weren't too happy with the wedding arrangements made by her parents and demanded more dowry to compensate for the humiliation they had to face owing to the poor preparations. Her parents had already given her husband a bike and Rs 25,000/- in cash as their wedding 'gift' but her husband and in-laws kept demanding for more. She used to be kicked, slapped and called names when Rukmini refused to ask her parents for any more money. One day her husband came home and

asked her to get ready as they were going to Mandarmani. She was excited because she thought that he had a change of heart and had started accepting her. The two of them went to Mandarmani and checked into a reputed hotel there and she was really surprised because the hotel was a big hotel and she was curious to know how her husband managed to organise a room in such a big hotel. When Rukmini could not contain her curiosity and asked him about it, he just asked her to shut up and not ask too many questions. That night when she was sleeping, Rukmini was woken up by the touch of a man and opened her eyes to see a complete stranger. She tried to shout but he pressed his hand against her mouth and informed her that he had paid Rukmini's husband Rs 2000/- to have sex with his wife. Rukmini pleaded with him to leave her but he did not listen and raped her. After he left, Rukmini's husband came in and forced himself on her. The following day she was again raped by three other men and on the third day they returned home. After that, her husband used to take her to Tajpur and Mandarmani often, and Akash and his family would take away all of Rukmini's earnings. One day when nobody was home, Rukmini stole some money and ran away and returned to her parents but they refused to accept her saying that since she was already married, she was no longer their responsibility and it was not possible for them to feed one more mouth. Her world came crashing down and after a lot of thinking she returned to prostitution but on her own terms. Today Rukmini goes to Mandarmani and Tajpur at least four times a month and charges her customers Rs 2000/- - Rs 3000/- per night. She also went to Kerala a couple of times with the help of a friend who is also into prostitution and there she charged Rs 4000/- a night and her friend took 25% of her total earnings as a commission. Today Rukmini is 19 years old and she shares a one room flat with two of her other friends and they all work as call girls. Most of her clients are repeat clients or their contacts.

Around 10 minor girls rescued from a resort in Purba Medinipore were sent to Sanlaap for their care and protection. While interacting with these girls, the organisation learnt that most of these girls were brought to the hotel in the name of jobs. Some of these girls were also trafficked from Bangladesh and Nepal.

According to all the girls, they were always kept locked up and only given to customers who came to the hotel through pimps acquainted with the hotel manager and other staff.

The police rescued all the girls together and have sealed the hotel as of now. The hotel manager, the staff and some of the customers were arrested and legal proceedings against them are still on. Some of the girls also shared with us that the police also picked up some of the local women residents as they mistook them to be victims.

According to the pimps and middlemen interviewed during the course of this study, the demand for children in prostitution is higher than that for adults. The pimps, middlemen and rickshaw pullers admitted that children are prostituted in Digha, Mandarmani, Tajpur and Diamond Harbour but most of these children are usually booked and brought in by the customers themselves. The others that are available are always accompanied by the pimps or the touts themselves and these pimps or touts can be contacted via rickshaw pullers or van pullers acting as middlemen. Owing to the limitation of time, the researchers were unable to interview railway staff members or bus drivers and conductors.

Child Prostitution in the name of bar dancing and massage parlours is also becoming quite common all over West Bengal. Young girls are enticed by promises of good earnings in a short period of time by working as only bar dancers or masseurs in resorts or spas. However, the girls are later on coerced into the sex trade.

According to an article published in the Times of India on the 16th of July 2015 Kolkata pubs are pushing women and young girls into the flesh trade. The newspaper spoke to an officer from the Biddanagar Commissionerate who shared their experience of a woman/girl who was trafficked from the Jessore District of Bangladesh. The article quoted him as saying "Take the example of a woman who was "trafficked" from Jessore.... When we counselled her, she said she had gained experience from a bar near south Bishnupur. The girl claimed she had come with a pimp knowing he had ruined the lives of two others, as there was nothing to eat there. She said that the men can't earn a living, so they send them across the border."

The source areas for these children are Contai, Ramnagar, Chaukhola near Digha, Mandarmani and Tajpur, Amtala and Bagirhat for Diamond Harbour and Kolkata is a source as well as a destination area.

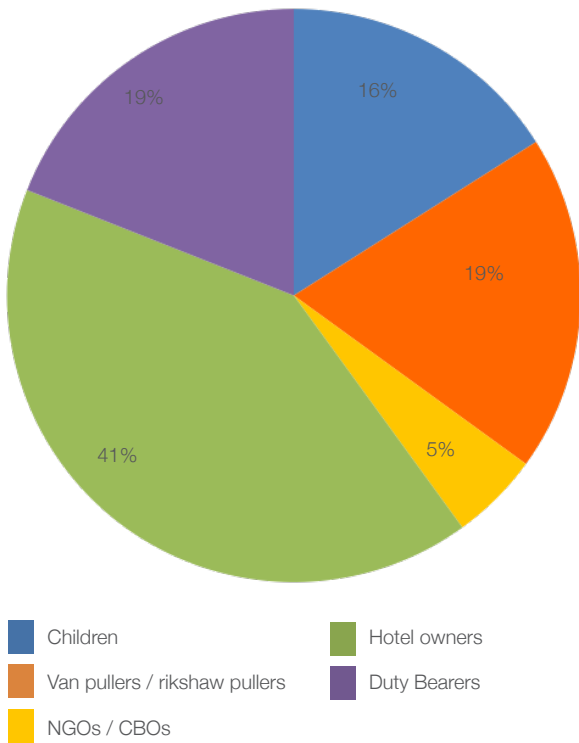
CHAPTER 4

RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Total number. of respondents for the study on sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

	DIAMOND HARBOUR	DIGHA	KOLKATA	MANDARMANI	TAJPUR	TOTAL
Children	-	-	25	-	-	25
Van Pullers/Rickshaw Pullers	5	12	-	10	2	29
NGOs/CBOs	0	2	5	0	0	7
Hotel Owners	6	25	20	8	6	65
Duty Bearers	8	10	12	0	0	30
Total	19	49	62	18	8	

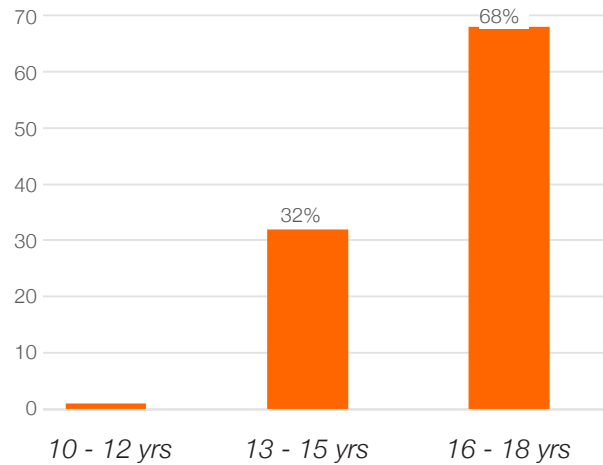
Graph 1: Total % of Respondents



During the course of the research Sanlaap spoke to a total of 156 respondents in the five areas of Diamond Harbour, Digha, Kolkata, Mandarmani and Tajpur. Of the total respondents, 16% were children, 19% were van or rickshaw pullers, 5% were other NGOs or CBOs, 41% were hotel owners or staff and 19% were duty bearers such as Police Officials.

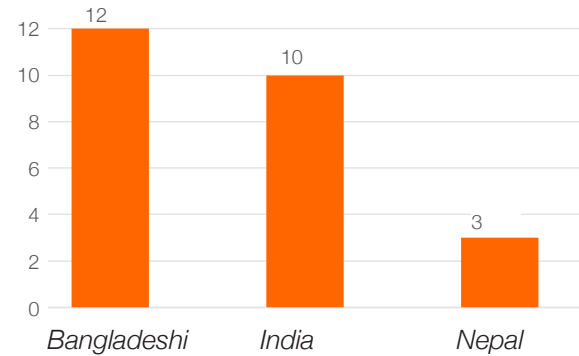
Sanlaap conducted focused group discussions and face-to-face interviews with 25 girls at Sanlaap's Shelter Home 'Sneha'. According to the respondents interviewed (between ages 13-17 years), they were all coerced into commercial sex as children and the customers usually seek them out with pimps, middlemen comprising of rickshaw and van pullers, cameramen or fellow customers acting as agents.

Graph 2: % of respondents between the age group 10 - 18 yrs

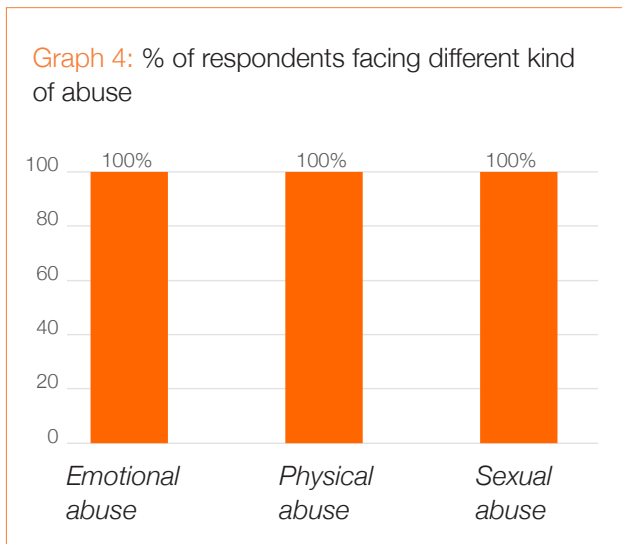


The researchers interviewed 25 girls who were rescued from commercial sexual exploitation in different hotels and lodges. 32% of the respondents were coerced into commercial sex between the age group of 13-15 year while 68% were sold between the age group of 15-18 years.

Graph 3: Total number of respondents

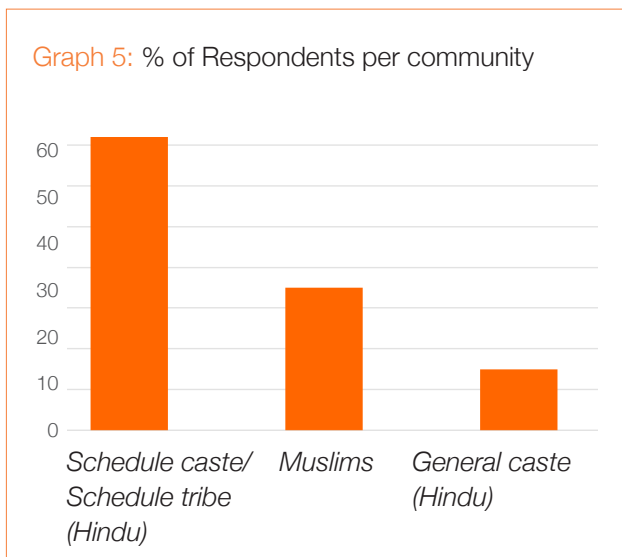


Out of these 25 girl respondents, 12 girls were trafficked from Bangladesh, 3 girls were from Nepal and 10 girls were trafficked from different districts of West Bengal, who were taken to different hotels, lodges and inns in tourist spots in West Bengal.



The respondents also shared that all of them were subjected to physical and emotional abuse in addition to sexual abuse. Whenever the girls refused to attend to clients, they were beaten or threatened with dire consequences or kept locked up all the time.

Sanlaap also noted that most of the respondents coerced into commercial sex in the various hotels belong to the minority communities such as Muslims, Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe.



Out of the 25 respondents, 15 girls belonged to the minority castes of Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribes, 7 girls were Muslims and 3 girls belonged to the General Caste under Hinduism.

Interview of rickshaw puller Nagen Halder (Name Changed) in Diamond Harbour

Our researcher Abhijit Chakraborty pretended to be a prospective customer and after talking to some people, approached Nagen Halder (Name Changed) about whom he got to know of from another rickshaw puller.

Mr. Chakraborty informed Nagen Halder that he was looking for sexual intercourse with a young girl preferably below the age of 18 years. He then enticing Nagen with alcohol, food and a good commission took him to a small restaurant and bar and had a chat with him.

According to the rickshaw puller, most women in prostitution are between the ages of 22-28 years and they usually work as flying prostitutes coming in from Amtala or Kolkata. Though not readily available, he did confess, that he does know of a couple of young girls in prostitution who are around 16-17 years in age but to access them, their pimps need to be contacted in advance. The rates of the girls vary between Rs 125/- Rs 250/- He also went on to state that he charges Rs 75/- as commission and often demands free sex from the women for getting them clients. Nagen also shared that most of these women work independently but there is a group of pimps who bring in women and girls from Kolkata and South 24 Parganas. The child prostitutes are always kept under strict monitoring and are never allowed to go out without someone accompanying them.

In Diamond Harbour, the rickshaw pullers, van pullers and sometimes even the beggars' act as middlemen and according to Nagen Halder, they can identify prospective customers through their body language.

In Mandarmani and Tajpur, the hotels themselves connect the customers to the pimps or the prostitutes themselves or even some van and rickshaw pullers who have connection to pimps or prostitutes. In Digha, almost all the rickshaw and van pullers are involved in the flesh trade as middlemen and earn Rs 250/- to Rs 300/- as commission per customer and prostitute contact. So a rickshaw or van pullers can earn anything between Rs 9,000/- to Rs 12,000/- through pimping, where as they would earn between Rs 3,000/- to Rs 5000/- for ferrying customers.

In Kolkata, children in prostitution can be found in the established Red Light Areas of Sonagachi and Bowbazaar and pimps with information to school or college going girls are conspicuous in Park Street and Sudder Street Area. A customer may be charged anything between Rs 3000/- to Rs 6000/- for sexual contact with a young girl depending on the 'quality' (implying age, looks, built) of the girl. The pimps charge a percentage from the hotel staff, the customers and the prostitutes for getting them business. However, in the established Red Light Areas, the 'chukri' system is predominant where the earnings of the girls are taken away by the Madams or pimps.

Observation study in a known hotel in Baguihati (an area near the Kolkata International Airport.)

Ms. Tapoti Bhowmick and Ms. Priyanka Biswas visited a bar in a known hotel in Baguihati where bar dancing goes on publicly. The bar was full of men sitting and drinking while young girls who looked to be between the age group of 17-22 years danced to the tunes of various Bollywood songs. Behind the girls sat empty chairs with numbers pasted on them and the girls were given a token each. While the researchers sat there, the girls just danced to one song after another and the men sat drinking. After a point, the servers seemed in a hurry to get rid of the researchers and because the ambience seemed to be getting a little unsafe, the researchers left. Later on the researchers gathered from some of the local residents that the bar dancers are available for commercial sex. However, it is extremely difficult to prove that prostitution is practiced in the hotel as it is well hidden under the shroud of bar dancing only.

Sanlaap also spoke to police officials and representatives from NGOs who have conducted raids and rescued minor girls from hotels in and around Kolkata. Most of the interviewees said that in the hotels in Kolkata, the girls came in with the customers themselves where as in places such as Digha and Mandarmani the hotels, the rickshaw pullers or van pullers act as a link between the customers and prostitutes.

According to police officials, homosexual rapes of young street boys/homeless boys are also being

witnessed. Being traumatised by their first experience, they are often threatened or shamed into conforming eventually. Moreover these children exposed to sexual violence have little or no information and access to counselling and health care support for the prevention of STDs and/or HIV/AIDs as there is still limited awareness on the sexual exploitation or abuse of boys.

It is also important to mention here that some of the police officials interviewed stated that minor girls are not involved in prostitution and most go to the hotels with their 'lovers' and not for the purpose of prostitution.

According to a report published by UNAIDs in 2001, the fear of HIV and STDs prompt several men to seek out young girls as partners as it is believed that a younger girl is less likely to be infected. This still stands true. Sanlaap has also recorded through its own researches that there is a myth among men frequenting Red Light Areas in Kolkata that sexual intercourse with a young, virgin girl offers a cure to diseases such as gonorrhoea, STIs and even HIV/AIDS. And since there is always the risk of raids being conducted in hotels and Red Light Areas in Kolkata as the police officials are much more proactive in the city, a lot of these customers take the girls on a contractual basis to places like Digha, Diamond Harbour and Mandarmani where the percentage of raids conducted is much lower.

Interview of Zothanpuui Varte, Legal Consultant, International Justice Mission Kolkata

According to Ms. Varte, several of the hotels where they have conducted raids and rescued minor girls, are designed to look like resorts and spas but in reality are brothels where girls- both minor and adults- are available for commercial sex. In her experience, most of these girls have been trafficked in the name of love or a job, with the trafficker pretending to be a boyfriend and then ultimately taking her to these hotel-resorts and coercing her into prostitution.

Though post-rescue, the Investigating Officers file for complete closure of these resorts/spas before the District Magistrate, there is yet to be a favourable order for the same.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONSES BY THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR

Mr. Abhijit Chakraborty and Ms. Priyanka Biswas visited several hotels on Sudder Street and Park Street to record their responses on the hotels' policies to combat sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. It was interesting to note that not a single hotel interviewed, including 5 star hotels, have any exclusive policy in place to combat the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

Interview of a staff member (name not disclosed on request) of a known Guest House in Kolkata.

According to the respondent, he has only read about the sexual exploitation of children and women in hotels, in newspapers but in his opinion it does not happen anywhere in Kolkata but mostly in small hotels in Digha and Amtala. When asked, he shared that the Guest House does not have any kind of policy to ensure the safety of children, though they copies of the ID Cards of all the guests coming into the Guest House. When probed further, he also admitted that the wellbeing of children is not monitored in any way once they enter the rooms with the adult members accompanying them and there is limited contact between the staff and the guests once they check into the room.

The interviewers observed that though the respondent stated that the ID Cards of all the guests are taken when they check into the hotel, yet when a couple checked in with a child, only the ID Card of the male member was taken.

The Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism is common and yet most of the hotels interviewed, seemed really reluctant to address this issue or even talk about it. The general response is, "It does not happen in our hotel".

Profile of Hotels Interviewed:

The researchers talked to several hotels across Kolkata and other tourist spots in West Bengal. The following are responses of the some of the hotels on combating sexual exploitation of children in hotels:

Hotel Type 1

Location: Sudder Street. Kolkata.

Type of Hotel: Luxury Hotels

As per the hotel, they have read about the sexual exploitation of women and children in hotels, they have no policy on child protection or child sexual abuse. They just check the ID Cards of the guests and depend on CCTV Cameras to ensure the safety of the guests.

Hotel Type 2

Location: Sarat Bose Road. Kolkata

Type of Hotel: Budget Hotel

As per the hotel, they have read about the sexual exploitation of children and women in hotels but they claim that it does not happen in their hotel. On probing, they claimed that there is no interaction between the hotel staff and guests once the guests check into the room. The hotel also shared that they do not really monitor the safety of the children as theirs is a budget hotel and as a measure of safety they only take the Id. Cards of the adults. They also stated that though they turn away guests with an unattended child, they however do not inform the local Police Station about the same or probe the matter further.

Hotel Type 3

Location: Gadadharpur, Digha

Type of Hotel: Inn

According to the Hotel, prostitution is rampant in Digha but it happens in selected hotels only. The hotel does not have any specific policy to ensure the safety of children in their hotel and they too like all the other

hotels across West Bengal take the ID Card of one of the adults as a measure of safety.

Hotel Type 4

Location of Hotel: Rabindra Nagar, Diamond Harbour

Type of Hotel: Tourist Lodge

The hotel stated that they have never heard of sexual exploitation of children in hotels. They stated that most of the women who work as prostitutes come in from outside and rent rooms. The hotel has no policy to combat the safety of children in their hotels. They too just take the ID Cards of the guests as a measure of safety.

Note: Only the luxury hotels interviewed had the facility of CCTVs and some written to policy to ensure the safety of the guests in general.

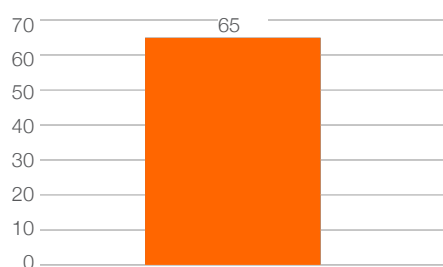
Table 2 - Total number of hotels interviewed in different tourist spots of West Bengal

Kolkata	Mandarmani	Tajpur	Digha	Diamond Harbour
20	8	6	25	6

Sanlaap conducted interviews with 20 hotels in Kolkata, 8 hotels in Mandarmani, 6 hotels in Tajpur, 25 hotels in Digha and 6 hotels in Diamond Harbour.

Sanlaap interviewed a total of 65 hotels across West Bengal and none of the hotels interviewed had any relevant policy or preventive measures in place to ensure that no children were sexually exploited or abused within their premises by any of the adult guests accompanying them.

Graph 6 - Number of the 65 hotels interviewed that did not have child policies in place to protect children



CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- The commercial sexual exploitation of children is prevalent in all the tourist spots of West Bengal but is too clandestine and organised to easily come into the notice of the general public at large, including those working to combat it.
- Most of the children in prostitution are brought to the hotels either by the agents or the customers themselves. The agents may involve the respective hotel staff, the pimps of the red light areas, the rickshaw or van pullers, or vendors who also pimp the local prostitutes.
- In several of the places, the hotels themselves act as the liaison between the customer and the prostitute, and this came to the forefront from accounts of the victims, the van and rickshaw pullers in Digha, Diamond Harbour Mandarmani and Tajpur, though all the hotels interviewed refused to comment on the involvement of any other hotel.
- The demand for children in prostitution is much higher than adults and is increasing with time and there are several social factors and myths contributing to it.
- Though the police is now playing a much more proactive role to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children, there are however some police officials who tried to stress that minor girls are seldom found in prostitution and most of the girls rescued just come to the hotels with their 'boyfriends' and get caught.
- While efforts are being made by NGOs and the Women's Commission to address the issue adequately, the Law Enforcing Agencies are still

pretending to be ignorant of the presence of Child Sexual Abuse in India.

- It is also true that plenty of young girls are turning to prostitution as a means of earning quick money or maintaining a prosperous lifestyle. However, it does not undermine the fact in any way that most of the children in prostitution are coerced or duped into it.
- Though it has been revealed that minor girls are involved in prostitution, and they are brought to the hotels by the agents or the customers, it is however extremely difficult to access them because the hotel or lodge owners or any person related to this racket will not easily help in the fear of jeopardising their business and earning. They do not see the issue of Child Prostitution as unlawful or a problem and easily absolve themselves of any responsibility.
- None of the hotels have an exclusive policy to combat the exploitation or abuse of children in hotels and for most of the hotels interviewed it is not an issue that essentially concerns them.
- Though the authorities in most of the tourist spots are aware of the prevalence of prostitution in these places, however owing to the revenue generated from the tourists, the authorities do not want to really eradicate this social menace.
- There is no common, national Law on Child Sex Tourism in India though the Goa Children's Act, 2003 is the only Act that addresses the issue of Child Trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism. However, the Act is only applicable to the State of Goa.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more detailed and elaborate research needs to be conducted on the issue of Child Sex Tourism in West Bengal.
- There is a need to regulate and monitor all hotels in tourist spots so that they are unable to serve as a spot for prostitution.
- Stricter legislations are required to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Law Enforcement Agencies, Van and Rickshaw pullers associations, and other relevant stakeholders need to be oriented and sensitised on the issue of sexual exploitation of women and children.
- Awareness needs to be created amongst the hotels on the issue of combating the exploitation of children and women in hotels and promoting the safety and security of children.
- Advocacy needs to be conducted with the Government so that they introduce and implement an Act making it mandatory for all hotels, lodges, inns etc. to have a child friendly policy dealing with the safety and protection of children.
- The Government should introduce and implement two different policies to separately monitor the safety of children coming in as boarders with adults and those being employed in hotels.
- The Government and Judiciary must play a much more proactive role in order to deter Child Sex Tourism.
- An Act similar to the Goa Children's Act, 2003 needs to be replicated all over India so that there is a common, national Law to combat Child Sex Tourism all over India.

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ANNEX I - QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES IN HOTELS

Name of Hotel:

Address:

Phone Number(s):

Email Address:

1. Do you have a chain of Hotels? YES/ NO

2. Do you have any written policy for your hotel(s)? YES/ NO

3. Have you heard of Sexual Exploitation of children and women in hotels? YES/ NO

If yes, please elaborate:

.....
.....
.....

4. Does your hotel have any written policy to combat the exploitation of children within the hotel premises? YES/NO

5. Do you check on visitors when they come to your hotel with young girls/boys? YES/NO

6. Do you say no to a guest who is visiting alone with a young girl or boy? YES/ NO

7. How do you monitor the safety of children in your hotel?

.....
.....
.....

8. What would you do if you realised that a guest is bringing an unattached (a child not related to him/her) child to stay in the hotel?

.....
.....
.....

9. Are you aware of the provisions in the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, which criminalises prostitution in hotels and provides penal action on hotels in such cases? YES/NO

***** THANK YOU!!! *****

ANNEX II - INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN

Name of respondent:
Age:
Country of Origin:
Religion:
Caste:

1. Tell us a bit about your background.

.....
.....

2. How did you come into commercial sex (exploitation)?

.....
.....

3. At what age were you coerced into commercial sex (exploitation)?

.....
.....

4. Did you know your trafficker?

.....
.....

5. Where were you usually taken?

Private Property

Massage Parlours

Hotels

Bars

Red Light Areas

Other

6. What are the various kinds of abuse faced by you?

Emotional Abuse

Sexual Abuse

Physical Abuse

All of the above

7. Who were usually the customers/clients who came visiting?

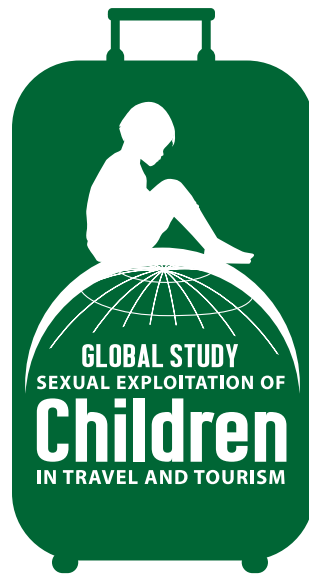
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8. How and by whom were you rescued?

.....
.....

9. What are your plans for the future?

.....
.....



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