

FOCUS

Women on the Move

Victims of Vulnerability

Young Girls From the Brothels of Tanbazar

by Lamis Hossain

SAATI, Kulsum and Shahnaz have been lured, sold, used, and beaten up, but their appearance reveals little about their life as child prostitutes.

Saati was on the train from Dinajpur to Dhaka in search of a job, when the train stopped at a station on the outskirts of Dhaka, and two women pushed her off.

Shahnaz arrived in Dhaka, of course, there were no signs of such a job. The girls were not only economically vulnerable but emotionally exploitable as well.

later when a boy who visited the brothel said he would take her away and marry her. She tried to shave off the window grills, but was caught by the sardarni (female pimp).

Shahnaz dropped her salwar without inhibition and pointed to the black marks on her knees and thighs. "This is where they hit me," she said matter of factly.



Salma Ali of the BNWLA (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association), who rescued the girls, first began these sort of 'raids' in 1993. The week before 14 year old Shahina's story was picked up by the press, Ali had pulled off another rescue, involving 13 and 12 year olds Nazma and Reena.

NEWS of arrest of traffickers and rescue of child prostitutes find their way into column inches, but not much is said of the subsequent fate of the young girls.

Rehabilitation Homes Needed



could not be located later. Kulsum too, wanted to return at first. Her stay of about seven months was the longest of the three, and she had obtained a licence to practice prostitution even though she was underage.

according to aptitude. The vocational programme will begin once an assessment of skills in demand in the market is completed. Ideally, the girls will be kept for a year because the job of instilling confidence in the young girls is one that requires time and patience.

Reacting to an Emergency in Bangladesh

BANGLADESH is one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the greatest needs for family planning and reproductive health services.

entlisting their support for the promotion of family planning in the light of the Holy Quran and the Hadith. This project has been very successful in gaining their backing for family planning.

mote village called Badekusha in the northern part of the Serajganj district of Bangladesh. The village elders of Badekusha were unhappy that the women were being encouraged to change from their traditional roles, gaining some financial independence and demanding a greater say in family decisions and community life.

the distressed women who had adopted family planning methods — an unprecedented step — and the women were then publicly invited back into community life.

To be Born Female...

To be born female is not a crime, but you would never know it by looking at the deplorable conditions of girls in many parts of the world. Often underfed, neglected, overworked and denied access to proper health care and education, girls are forced into early marriages and pressured to bear children when still teenagers.

abortions, or are neglected or killed as infants, with the result that an estimated 100 million fewer women are alive today than could be expected.

are common in parts of Asia and North Africa. In a study in one community in South Asia, 51 per cent of the 640 families questioned admitted killing a girl baby within a week of birth.

group. For example, in Uganda the ratio of girls to boys 15 to 19 years old who are infected with HIV is 6:1. In Zambia and Malawi the girl/boy infection ratio in that age group is 5:1.

1945-1995: FIFTY YEARS OF UN WORK FOR WOMEN. 1948: The UN Charter declares the principle of equal rights for all 'without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'. 1946: The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is established by the UN Economic and Social Council. 1958: The Convention on the Political Rights of Women. 1953: The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women. 1968: The Convention on the Consent to Marriage. 1967: The General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 1975: The UN observes International Women's Year. First World Conference on Women is held in Mexico City. The UN General Assembly declares 1976-1985 United Nations Decade for Women. 1979: The General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. 1980: Second World Conference on Women (Copenhagen, Denmark); adopts a Programme of Action for the second half of the UN Decade for Women. 1981: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women comes into force. 1986: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) begins its work. 1985: The Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, Kenya) adopts the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. 1986: CSW begins work on reviewing progress towards implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. 1993: World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, Austria) recognizes women's rights as human rights and recommends appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women is adopted by the General Assembly. 1994: Regional preparatory process for the Fourth World Conference on Women; regional meetings are held in Indonesia, Argentina, Austria, Jordan and Senegal. International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, Egypt); underscores the empowerment and autonomy of women as the basis for development. 1995: World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, Denmark); calls attention to the pivotal role of women in addressing the problems of poverty, unemployment and social integration. Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China).



At the end of the meeting, the imam of Badekusha Mosque and two local headmen gave an unqualified apology to