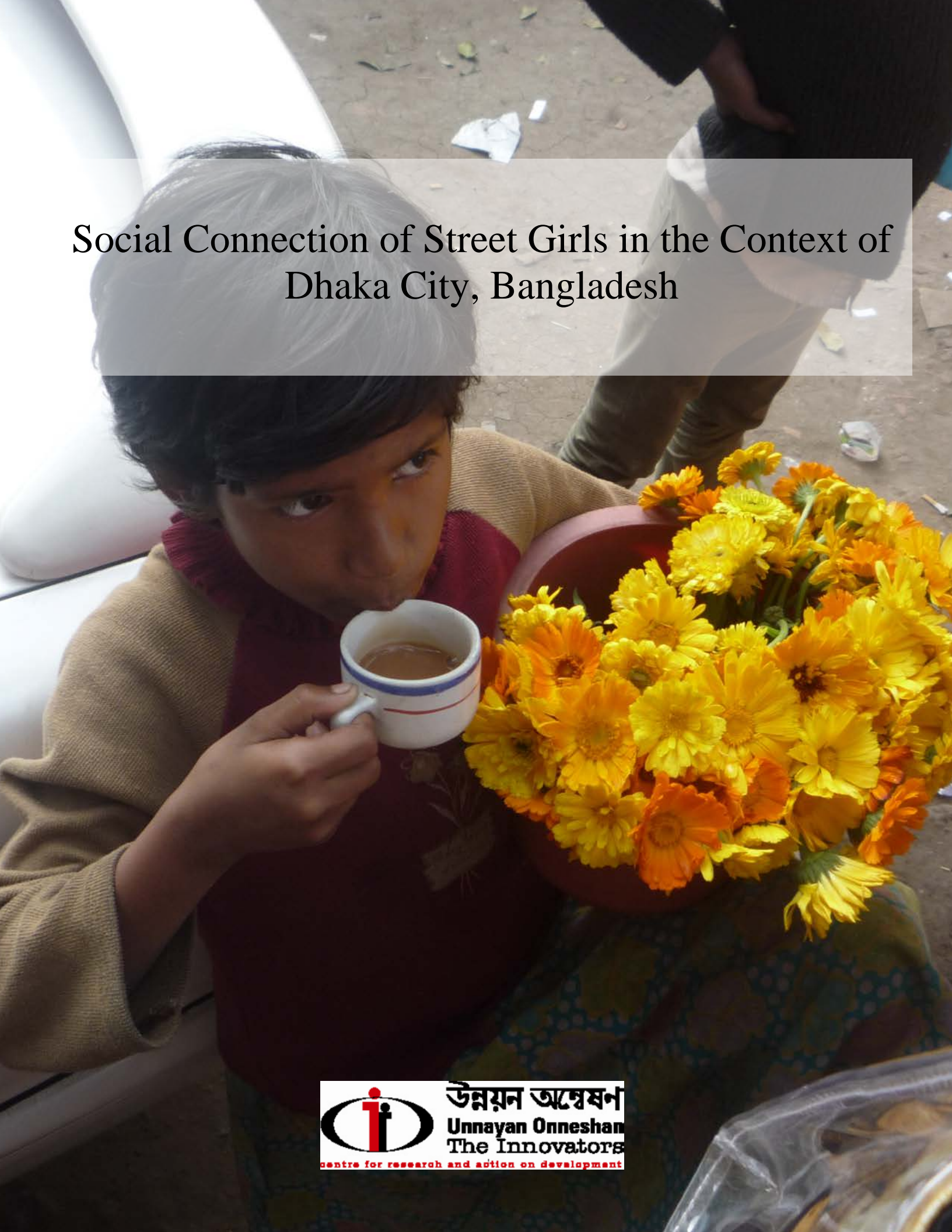


Social Connection of Street Girls in the Context of Dhaka City, Bangladesh



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International Women's Day (IWD) is observed once a year on March 8 to celebrate women's achievement throughout the world. It is also known as the United Nations (UN) Day for Women's Rights, equality-equity and International harmony. 8th March is a vital event to celebrate the successes and gains made by women and girls to focus on the job still left to achieve equality for women and girls around the world. In a message, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said 'Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, our entire goals -- peace, security, sustainable development -- stand in jeopardy. Let us work with renewed determination for a future of equal rights, equal opportunities and progress for all'. This year 2012, the theme of IWD is "*CONNECTING GIRLS, INSPIRING FUTURES*". Following this theme, this paper is going to study about a deprived but major segment of girls who are street girls and their social connection in Dhaka city, Bangladesh. On this occasion discussion, meetings, rallies, exhibition, human chains will be conducted and media and national dailies will mark the observance in Bangladesh as well.

In Bangladesh, much progress has been made to protect and promote adolescent girls and girl children's rights in recent times. However, girls are found in continuous victimization of violence, deprivation of basic human needs and rights worldwide. From this study, it has been revealed that majority of the street girls (37.50 percent) are flower sellers whereas, 18.80 percent are prostitutes, 6.25 percent are garments worker, 6.25 percent are beggars, 12.50 percent are shopkeepers and 6.25 percent are paper-hawkers. Five of every ten street girls have their daily income Tk. 101-299 whereas, only 6.25 percent girls earn less than Tk. 100. Furthermore, 43.75 percent of the girls have their daily income Tk. 300 and above. About 45 percent of the respondents are taking treatment from other sides rather than public medicals or clinics. It was also observed that about 3 of every ten respondents are not enrolled in educational institutions. On the other hand, Street girls accumulate numerous experiences of violence from an early age in different range of different circumstances. Their high risk of exposure to multiple abuses is consistently overlooked in policy development and service delivery.

Since girls especially those, live on streets are in a relatively disadvantaged position even with no work facility. The government must put more emphasis on ensuring their socio-economic development as social, political and economic development cannot be achieved keeping the girls aside. For that reason, the vision of this study is to elevate a dialogue on street girls in Bangladesh through comprehensive efforts and for making arrangements to develop a violence-free and equitable society. Its mission is to create responsiveness among the people regarding various types and severity of gender-based violence and to make arrangement for reporting all incidence of violence against girls. This will help to develop our national government in providing all sorts of support to rehabilitate girls living on streets.

In reducing gender gap not only between men and women but also among women and girls', participation must be increased at all tiers of our society. The 8th March, international women's day calls for connecting girls in all events to inspire future of the entire world. This manifestation of connecting Girls cannot ignore the particular proportion that means association of street girls. Therefore, their connection must inspire the future of Bangladesh. Considerable progress can be gained if much more work is done for street girls. Therefore, it is high time to let involve these girls, including street girls in all events to focus their issues, challenges, prospects, deservingness, and responsibilities. A dialogue can be introduced to raise a voice for them. Let's start it from now!

I. INTRODUCTION

“*CONNECTING GIRLS, INSPIRING FUTURES*” is the theme of ensuing International Women’s Day, 8th March, 2012. This paper is going to discuss existing social association of Bangladeshi street girls in relation to sociable facts, events, accesses, barriers, way out and policy recommendation which can be truly helpful for Bangladeshi government and development organizations in taking crucial initiatives for the inclusive development on them throughout the country including Dhaka city.

Based on the theme of international Women’s year on March 8, 2012, every International Women's Day event held in 2012 must include girls in some way, and then thousands of minds will be inspired globally for better future. Therefore, this is the call from international, regional, national and local level. Development organizations, governments, charities and women's groups around the world pick different themes each year that reflect global and local gender issues as well as to address economic, political and social achievements or challenges of women. Among women, girls are the young group-adolescent and girl child. It is possible to bring sustainable changes to the global world including developing countries. The future of Bangladesh depends on the future of its girls mostly. If girls are treated as inferior than boys, malnutrition will remain high and Bangladesh will suffer impaired economic growth. It is incredible to develop our social values without developing our girls. National Girl Child Day, September 30 is a national strategy that seeks to improve the status of girls to end discrimination against them in Bangladeshi society.

In developing countries like Bangladesh, women are the most deprived segment. Among them, street girls are more prone to vulnerability. They are not regarded as common and respected members in the mainstream general society. Thus, from gender mainstreaming perspective they are the most negligible since they are mistreated in general society. We just overlook their issues most of the time. Under these circumstances, mainstreaming their issues is not only forgotten but also very tough. Through incorporating them in mainstream society, we may go ahead one step further towards gender equality.

To address Poverty and Inequality in inclusive society, a state like Bangladesh must reduce violence and ensure state protection of girls surviving on the streets. Equality and equity can not be ensured without taking a look of street girls’ issues. Though till now, they are the small segment of the mainstreaming society. Integrated schemes involving reallocation of resources should be developed for poor neighborhoods which can protect the excluded girls from external shocks. Community-based organizations and service providers should be instrumental in supporting families and protecting children, including new arrivals.

For this reason, it is essential to understand how girls can be connected, their existing connection level, probability of connectedness and the future reflection by inspiring girls. This paper is going to apprehend the social connection of a very small but significant section of Street Girls in the context of the capital Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Defining street girls as well children

In defining street girls, we need to define street children since there is no specific definition of street girls. According to Amnesty International, ‘Children on the street are those engaged in some kind of economic activity ranging from begging to vend. Most of them go home at the end of the day and contribute their earnings to their family. They may be attending school and retain a sense of belonging to a family. Because of the economic fragility of the family, these children may eventually opt for a permanent life on the streets’. UNICEF assessment of street children, 2012 defined Street children as those Children of the street actually live on the street (or outside of a normal family environment). Family ties may exist but are tenuous and are maintained only casually or occasionally. Therefore, Street girls may be defined in terms of UNICEF’s concept of boys and girls aged under 18 for whom ‘the street’ (including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home and/or their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised (Black, 1993). Generally, street girls are those girls who live, feed and work in street or sometimes work as sex worker. From above discussion, we can define ‘Street Girls’ as the younger group of women whose all-encompassing livelihood depends on street usually.

2.2 Connecting girls and Inspiring Future

Connecting girls may be referred to effective participation-socially, economically, politically and culturally by an individual girl or group of girls in all aspects of society. It relates to the capacity of girls to take decision actively in her family and community and requires social inclusion¹ is about having access to opportunities, options and choices in life and having the personal capacity, self confidence and individual resilience to make the most of them.

First of all, the success of connecting girls in all events will depend on how we will be able to connect girls’ in different sociable facts; connection in a manner of shallow, medium or depth. Not only participation in various events but also connection among girls themselves is required. Say for example, connection between school going girls and garments workers or connection between the authority of those events and participants are important. Secondly, the success of

¹ Social inclusion is opposite to recently used term ‘social exclusion’. It refers to effective participation, both socially and economically by an individual in all aspects of society.

connecting girls will depend on the level of participation². Participation can be defined to different tools for the public to express opinions - and ideally exert influence - regarding political, economic, management or other social decisions. In this case, if girls will be included in all the events of 8th March, we must take a look, how far they are participating. Only their number of presence can not be a measurement of girls' participation. In fact their gravity, agency and active participation are essential to be connected in those events. Finally, their decision making agency³ can put impact on their connection to the world.

In case of social connection of Street girls, we have to think their access, participation, inclusion process, decision making, challenges, opportunities and coping strategies in all aspects of societal facts. And in this paper 'Inspiring Future' means the reflection of connecting Girls in all strata of society. Therefore, their connection must inspire the future of Bangladesh. This is because if we want to bring equality and equity, we cannot ignore this little but a significant proportion of population. That means, in reducing gender discrimination, among women we must include this segment into mainstream society of women, so that all of them would get the same civil rights, treatment and justice like general Bengali women.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The core objective of the study is to understand the existing association between society and Street girls in the context of area of Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

Specific objectives may be distinct as:

- ✓ to realize opportunities;
- ✓ to recognize challenges;
- ✓ to discover the coping strategies of Bangladeshi street girls' in relation to society; and
- ✓ to find connecting drivers between mainstream society and street girls.

² Participation activities may be motivated from an administrative perspective or a citizen perspective. From the administrative viewpoint, participation can build public support for activities. It can educate the public about an agency's activities. It can also facilitate useful information exchange regarding local conditions. Furthermore, participation is often legally mandated. From the citizen viewpoint, participation enables individuals and groups to influence agency decisions in a representational manner J.J. (1979)

³ Agency means to define one's own goal and act upon them (kabeer 1999).

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is mainly based on the data collected from the street girls from Sohrowardi Park, Farm gate Footpath, High court area, footpath of Dhaka University and Ramna Park in Dhaka city, Bangladesh. Before conducting field survey, this study requires a lot of secondary source study. Different statistical reports, relevant research papers, books and many national and international journals were also reviewed for conducting this research.

The study uses in-depth interview, specific checklist and a questionnaire to collect necessary information. The information for this study was collected during 26th January 2012 to 15 February 2012 and 16 girls were randomly selected for this study with estimated ages ranging from four to eighteen years. Some information of local people and associated development organizations has also taken for this study. Data, information and experience analysis have been used in qualitative form that requires in-depth interview, and participant observation.

A pre-designed questionnaire was used to conduct in-depth interview. In this sensitive issue, rapport building is a perfect way to collect information-most of the time, talking with street girls and buying flowers from them. Therefore, it is easy to build a good relation, which is effective for having in-depth interview. Among respondents some cases were chosen to reveal the facts of street girls. to study these cases.

II. REVIEW ON LITERATURE AND DRAWING THEORETICAL CONNECTION

2.1 Literature Review

Review on literature has been divided into some parts; about international women's day's history, about situation of Bangladeshi girls as background study and recent scenario of street girls' situation in Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

2.1.1 A brief history about International Women's Day

International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900's. In 1908 great unrest and critical debate was occurring amongst women in New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights. In 1909, accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day (NWD) was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate NWD on the last Sunday of February until 1913. In 1910 a second International Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen. Clara Zetkin (Leader of the 'Women's Office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany) tabled the idea of an International Women's Day. She proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a Women's Day - to press for their demands. In 1913, International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since. For decades, IWD has grown from annually. For many years the United Nations has held an annual IWD conference to direct international efforts for

women's rights and participation in social, political and economic progresses. 1975 was nominated as 'International Women's Year' by the United Nations.

2.1.2 Current Situation of Girls in Bangladesh

UNICEF discussed about current situation, deprivation and exploitation of girls from diverse perspectives in Bangladesh. Girls are fed last, and less than their brothers. They are more vulnerable to trafficking, sexual abuse, rape, acid throwing and other forms of exploitation, including child labor and child prostitution. Many are married by age 15 and their families must pay hefty dowries. Dowry violence, such as murder and induced suicide, still poses real threats to girls. The Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey reported more than 2200 children committed suicide in one year – or about six per day. Of those six, four were female. Suicide is the biggest killer among this age group (UNICEF, 2005). Almost one third of adolescent girls also suffer from anemia (UNICEF, 2003). Nationally, 4.8 percent of girls aged 12-59 months were malnourished compared with 3.6 per cent of boys (UNICEF and BBS 2003). Consistent condom use among sex workers in Bangladeshi brothels is four percent. For street-based sex workers, it is two percent. Brothel workers have an average of 19 clients a week, one of the highest turnover rates in Asia (MDG progress report, 2005). Only 57 percent of girls aged 10-19 years have heard of HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, BBS Progotir Pathy 2003). Increasing tertiary opportunities for girls is expected to boost the mean age of marriage. Net primary school enrolment rates have achieved gender parity, at 81 percent for boys and 84 percent for girls (UNICEF, 2005).

2.1.3 Scenario of Street Girls in Bangladesh

Of an estimated 400,000 street children in Bangladesh, nearly 10% have been forced into prostitution for survival.⁴ We can assume that a great proportion of these street children are street girls. Conticini and Hulme (2006) argued there are important differences between the genders, disabilities and ages in the case of street children. The number of girls in street situations was estimated to be about one quarter that for boys. This difference is not necessarily because girls experience a lower degree of violence within their households. Rather, the practice of instilling an attitude of almost complete submission in girls from an early age (Blanchet, 1996), reduces the likelihood that 31 girls will confront abuse. Consequently, fewer girls leave their families to move to the street. In addition, girls usually have lower levels of knowledge about what life is like 'on the street' and, if they acquire useful knowledge, they are likely to find that sexual violence and sex work are likely to be a major component of life on the street. The 'downside' of life on the street is higher, perhaps much higher, for girls compared to boys.

⁴ US State Department (2005), quoting a 2002 report by Government news agency Bangladesh Shongbad Shongsta [online].

2.2 Theoretical base

2.2.1 Intersectionality as a Lens

Through intersectionality lens we may see, women are divided by race, class, cast, and ethnicity and by physical attributes. According to Kathy Davis (2008), 'Intersectionality' refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these intersections in terms of power. Dhali discusses intersectionality as:

'Intersectionality asks to reveal more data disaggregated by multiple factors such as age, status, ethnicity, religion etc. This disaggregated data tells the difference in the situation of women of one group from women of another, or between women and men of a particular class or race. This data also enable us to describe diverse women's realities more effectively and show us the consequences of the multiple form of the discrimination.' (Dhali, 2010:11)

Thus, Street girls can be seen through various perspectives with intersectionality lens. First of all, they are in women group but younger, they are poorest of the poor and finally they are out of the mainstream society of Bangladesh.

2.2.2 Human rights perspectives

Women's rights including girl's right are an indispensable factor of universal human rights by United Nations. Men and women have very different experiences - and the fact that women and girls often face gender-based discrimination that puts them at risk of poverty, violence, ill health and a poor education and deprive from basic human needs. The universal declaration of human rights announced by United Nations in 1948, where article two clearly stated:

'Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty'

Amnesty International's women's rights work encompasses a range of human rights as they relate to the equity needs of women, working at once to advance new rights and opportunities for all women and to combat the abuses of specific groups of women and girls (AMNESTY International, 2012). So, from human rights perspectives Street girls are fully excluded from enjoying declared universal human rights. We have to rethink their issues.

III. INS AND OUTS BEHIND BEING OF STREET GIRL

Most of the time, street girls have no selections. They are abandoned, orphaned, or rejected by their parents. Secondly, they choose to live in the streets because of mistreatment or negligence of the general people and employers. Street Girls also work in the streets because their incomes

are needed by their families. In a 1993 report, WHO offered the following list of causes for the phenomenon of street children (WHO, 2008) but those are also applicable for street girls: family breakdown, armed conflict, poverty, natural and man-made disasters, famine, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation by adults, dislocation through migration, urbanization and overcrowding, acculturation, disinheritance or being disowned. The orphaning of children as a result of HIV/AIDS is another cause that might be added to this list (African Orphans Project, 2008) and (UNICEF, 2008). From those causes some can be identified which are prominently applicable for Bangladeshi street girls.

3.1 Exploitation by adults

Family breakdown, the orphaning of children and disinheritance are the major causes in becoming ‘street girls’. For example, Momo⁵ has stepmother. Since her father got 2nd marriage, her mother with her children were abandoned. Same things were happened to other respondents. As a result, female oriented household has been increased. Most of the street girls are living either alone or with their mother. Another respondent told, her parents asked money frequently. But she was not capable in earning money. Therefore, she was not allowed to enter her home again. In most cases, physical assault occurs in home. Those girls were beaten by their father and they were not fed by elder brothers and father. They are dislocated from their family especially, from father’s house in their rural village.

3.2 Denial and Distress by poverty factors

In Bangladesh, most of the village people are poor. They have lack of employment opportunities and land properties as well. Economic instability pushes them towards urban migration. Among those poor people, women are the worst victim. They are pushed to urban migration with their children. Therefore, street girls are those children who are from the poorest of the poor. According to Moghadam, (2005) there are three contributing factors through which feminization of poverty that can be explained in the women-in-development and gender-and development (WID/GAD) literature: (1) the growth of female-headed households, (2) intra-household inequalities and bias against women and girls, and (3) neoliberal economic policies, including structural adjustments and the post-socialist market transitions. In this sense, the history of street girls reminds us that there is a growing tendency of expansion of female headed household. Most of the street girls are living with their mother only since their father died or abandoned them. Simultaneously, intra household inequalities push girls to become ‘street girls’.

3.3 Dislocation through trafficking

A briefing provided by the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP) highlights how ‘internal trafficking’ usually involves the exploitative activities of connected groups of men.

⁵ see annex, case study 1

Some respondents told that they are deceived by other persons, generally by their village friends. They were informed that they will be given job. Since they had no father, they belonged to very situation. It was quite impossible for their mother to feed them anymore. They were brought in Dhaka and those friends made them involved as sex worker. Thus, they are the victim of internal trafficking. Using flattery, gifts and other forms of coercion, potential victims are treated as ‘grown up’, while the perception of a friendship is instilled. Often a sexual relationship is developed. This will be paralleled by a process of manipulation through, for example coercion into drug use, enticement to go missing from home for short periods, and subsequent encouragement of family estrangement.

IV. EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES OF STREET GIRLS IN DHAKA CITY

4.1 Income prospects as the panacea of poverty

Street girls are earning money mostly from the informal earning sources and their income is not satisfactory. As a result, they are facing trouble to maintain their life and livelihood.

Figure 2: Occupational Status of street girls

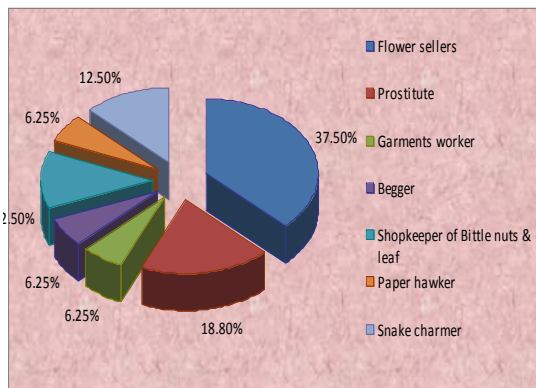
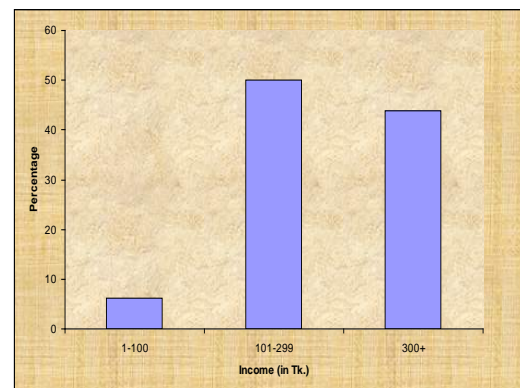


Figure 3: Daily Income of Street Girls



It is observed that majority of the respondents (37.50 percent) are flower sellers (Figure 2). Furthermore, 18.80 percent are prostitutes, 6.25 percent are garments worker, 6.25 percent are beggars, 12.50 percent are shopkeepers and 6.25 percent are paper hawkers.

Figure 3 shows different income status of the street girls. Five of every ten street girls have their daily income Tk. 101-299 whereas, only 6.25 percent girls earn less than Tk. 100. Furthermore, 43.75 percent of the girls have their daily income Tk. 300 and above.

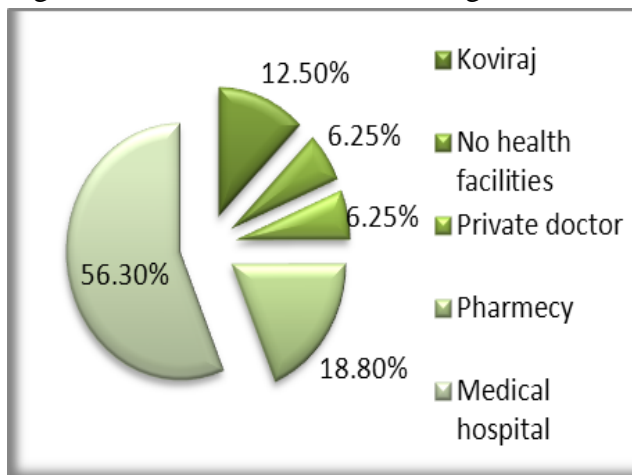
In Bangladesh, poverty affects general people from all perspectives. Not only are they poor from economic perspectives but also from social, political and cultural side are the affected. The

situation of street girls thus can be explained from feminization of poverty perspectives. If poverty is to be seen as a denial of human rights, it must be recognized that the street girls among the women suffer particularly— first on account of gender inequality, second on account of poverty. Therefore, programs to alleviate poverty require attention to gender inequality and Street girls’ human rights. Thus, income generation is the only way to struggle against the paw of poverty.

4.2 Health scheme and Food security for Street girls

A study by Hossain (2008) depicts more than 200,000 street children floating in Dhaka metropolitan area. Statistics say the terrible thing regarding health status of street children. More than 73 percent of street children in the city are the victims of physical, mental abuse and suffering from various degrees of malnutrition. Street children across the country are out of healthcare facilities. Among them, street girls are more deprived from any kind of health facilities.

Figure 4: Health facilities for street girls



Most of them do not go to doctor due to sickness. Sometimes they go to Medical hospital (56.3 percent) or Pharmacy (6.25 percent). Some who want to reduce health cost, go to private doctors during their staying at village home that consists 6.25 percent. Some of the respondents (6.25 percent) said that they never feel to go to a doctor; they always go to *Koviraj* for *Jharfuk*. Some of them are satisfied, some are not with their little demand and facilities.

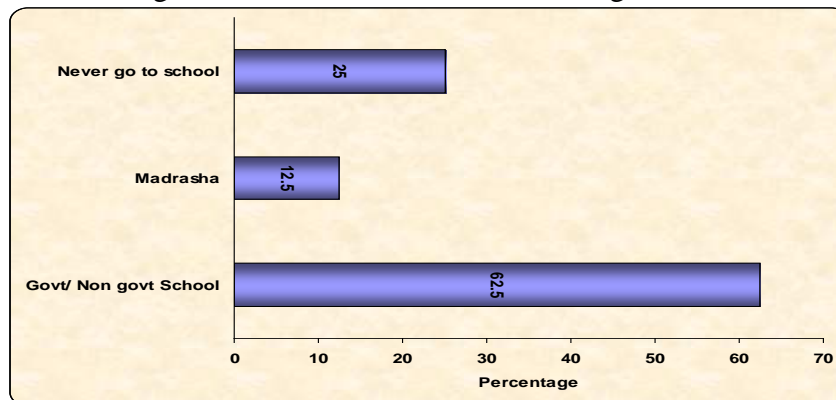
In case of reproductive health aspects, most of them know the proper age to get married but they got married in their early childhood. They are not entirely but partly informed about family planning methods, HIV/AIDS and hygiene from primary schools, campaigns by NGOs, parents, and peer groups and from their teachers. In this sense, compared to the past, these girls are now more aware of this issue.

In developing countries like Bangladesh, where food security can not be ensured for general people, Street girls are more vulnerable in this case. This study reveals, some street girls take food three times in a day, but others take one to two times in a day. Furthermore, they never concentrate on nutritional aspects.

4.3 Educational attainment is the pathway to development

School enrollment is very much lower for the Street girls as compared to the national level statistics. Some of them went to schools (62.5 percent) and Madrasha (12.5 percent) for a few times, others (25%) never got the opportunities to do so. Poverty is the root cause behind their drop out rate. Some parents want them to earn money. Thus, they are engaged in income generating activities. Due to early marriage, married Street girls left schools too. One of the respondents, Mili goes to a school ‘*Brikkho Maya*’. This school is run by some students of Dhaka University in Lalon Chatter. Another respondent studied in class-v in her village. Now she lives in Dhaka city with her sister and together they go to the School of Incident, Bangladesh where they are being trained on parlor, swing and about hygienic activities.

Figure 5: Educational status of Street girls

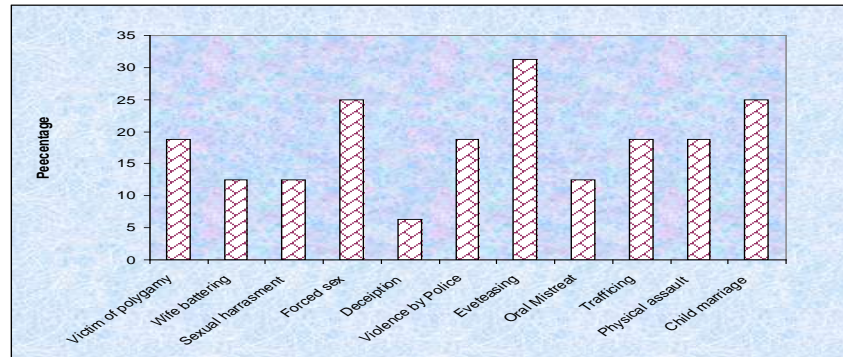


4.4 Violence⁶ against Street Girls

Despite many international obligations, Women and girls suffer from violent attacks in the domestic and community spheres, including rape, murder, eve-teasing and acid throwing on them. The authorities seldom order a judicial inquiry into such attacks. This is a common scenario of the mainstream women in Bangladesh.

⁶UN Resolution 48/104 defines violence against women as ‘*any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life*’. The Beijing Platform for Action retakes the above definition and stresses that “in all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture” (PFA, 1995). Violence has multi-dimensional forms that start from verbal abuse to trafficking of women.

Figure 6: Distribution of street girls according to violence



Note: Respondents are allowed to multiple response so the total percentage is more than 100

On the other hand, Street girls accumulate numerous experiences of violence from an early age in different range of environments. Their high risk of exposure to multiple abuses is consistently overlooked in policy development and service delivery. This figure shows frequency of different types of violence. Most of street girls face sexual harassment on streets. Frequently they are teased by passerby. One of the respondents (case-2) suffered a lot during sex work. She was beaten, deceived and forced during intercourse with customer (Khodder). Some Street girls are beaten by their husband, though they think this is very general expression of love and part of household. One thing must be added that these girls are victim of child marriage. Sometimes shopkeepers, students beat and pushed them away. Polices destroy their shelter from park in order to clean parks (Figure 6).

4.5 Deficiency of fundamental needs limits their going forward

In all developing countries including Bangladesh, Street girls are not entitled⁷ to capture social indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, school enrollments, access to basic health services, access to land or employment, time-use, average age at first marriage, the sex ratio, and the magnitude of prostitution. Most of the respondents claimed that they never get government or non-government help (like blanket). Furthermore, about seven of every ten respondents have not access to various social institutions (Table 1).

Table 1: Access to fundamental needs

Access to	yes	No
water	75%	25%
sanitation	62.5%	37.5%
Social institutions	31.25%	68.75%

⁷ Entitlements have been defined by Sen (1984, p. 497) as “the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces”

Beyond human development Street girls are leading a humiliating life where they always live under poverty line. Street girls have no option and choices. In some cases many youth prefer homelessness to cruel treatment in shelters. They told, ‘*Road is more than enough since we do not need to live under anyone*’. But in reality, they are bound to take one option from both the worst situations. Thus their Human poverty can be defined as “more than income poverty – it is the denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life” (UNDP 1997, p. 2).

4.6 Coping strategies of Street girls

Prospects start where struggles endure in existing condition. Understanding street girls’ exposure, prospects and coping strategies are the key to developing integrated preventive and protective policies and services which may improve their vicinity. Their unique coping management systems include bargaining power, income prospects, physical strength, unity etc.

Street girls live on street. They have to cope up with road along with poverty, violence, patriarchal social structure, crime, and punishment, state and dark nights. Sometimes the street becomes the main coping strategy for them. Those street girls prefer street to the cruel treatment of shelter, homes, step fathers or mothers, families and domination. So they are living on the streets without living under anybody. Income generating activities are other needles of exploring passageway of livelihood. Girls are fighting against hunger and unbearable poverty with their little but substantial earnings.

4.8 A brief assessment between mainstream society and street girls:

It is essential to recognize that Street girls are the most disadvantaged proportion and they do not get minimum level of living standard. We can assume that it will take time to assimilate them into the mainstream society. Until then, our government and international authority must take attempt to ensure their basic human rights to live as the respected segment of entire population. For this reason, a brief comparison between mainstream society and girls must be drawn.

In education sector, in 2002 nearly 50 percent girl students increased. At the same time, total dropout rate lowered from 60 percent to 33 percent (Ahmed, 2003). In contrast of this study, most of the street girls do not go to schools. Poverty is the root cause behind this drop-out rate.

Without taking account of education of street girls, it is very difficult to achieve the MDGs targets.

Programs extending micro-credit to large numbers of rural women also have contributed to greater economic power for them. However, women still fill only a small fraction of other wage-earning jobs. In recent years, about 15 percent of all recruits into government service have been women. Forty-three percent of women work in the agriculture, fisheries, and livestock sectors, but 70 percent of them are unpaid family laborers. Many women work as manual laborers on construction projects as well, and constitute nearly 25 percent of all manufacturing workers.

Women are also found in the electronics, food processing, beverage, and handicraft industries.⁸ Though child labor is forbidden, street girls have to do work for their livelihood. There is no certainty of their work at high risk exposure. In our country, it is observed that majority of the respondents (37.50 percent) are flower sellers.

In case of food security, While Bangladesh is nearly self-sufficient in rice production; food security remains an elusive goal. Currently, an alarming 43% of children under-five in Bangladesh are stunted due to continuous malnourishment as a result of poor feeding habits and lack of access to nutritious foods. The average Bangladeshi diet lacks diversification with 75 percent of calories consumed from rice. Bangladesh has increased its food grain production over the past 28 years, from 11.8 million metric tons in 1974 to more than 39 million metric tons in 2003. Also, 30 percent of the population consumes fewer than 1800 kcal per day and 45 percent of women have low body mass index (< 18.5) (*FAO Statistics Database, October 2005*).

Similarly, Street girls are more prone to vulnerable position in case of violence, health status, shelters, access to water, sanitation and others therefore, all basic human rights rather than general Bengali men and women since they are overlooked always and never be targeted.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In case of social association of street girls-their access, participation, inclusion process, decision making, challenges, opportunities and coping strategies are crucial in planning interventions. 8th March, International women's day calls for connecting girls in all events to inspire future of the whole world. This reflection of connecting girls cannot be ignored any singular proportion that means connection of street girls. Therefore, their connection must inspire the future of Bangladesh through reduction of gender discrimination; among women we must include this segment into mainstream society of women, so that all of them would get the same civil rights, treatment and justice like general women of Bangladesh.

Probable aftermath of this research work should not be confined in limited scope. We wish this work will be fruitful in taking further step by government and development organization through mainstreaming and giving equal rights to this neglected portion of our society. In first case, according to core and specific objectives, we have found various perspectives in understanding the existing association between society and Street girls. In case of opportunities, previously, they were fully denied from academic thought, action program or from policy making. Recently, we may find reflection of Street girls' issues in some policy and action measurement. In reality at the end of the study, we understand, neither they enjoy citizen rights including fundamental needs, nor are they entitled to be connected in mainstream society. Existing Policies, laws, rules, regulations and rehabilitation system do not favor those street girls. Their issues, advantages, disadvantages are not taken separately to be concentrated properly. In facing such challenges, for

⁸See details on <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/womensit/bd-w-sit.pdf>

example social insecurity and lack of fundamental rights; Street girls including other people of street have find their own coping strategies. Finally, in searching the connecting drivers between mainstream society and Street girls we may find in reality, yet there is no improvement of street girls' vulnerable circumstances though lots of measurements have been taken by government, NGOs, civil society and women's organizations. At the end of the day-we may say, the message of the study is to protect Street girls we have to address exclusion from any events and access to societal facts through recognizing street girls' agency by ensuring their meaningful participation in planning design, Provision and services. Therefore, connecting Street girls in all aspects and events can inspire to build a equal and sustainable society in Bangladesh.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

Principally, state intervention concentrates on Pavement Dwellers⁹ not specifically on street girls. Some of these are against and some are behalf of pavement dwelling. To assimilate street girls into mainstream society, we must ensure to provide minimum level of living standard through taking several initiatives. These are some policy recommendation to integrate them into the mainstream society. Here, pathway is divided into five segments; measurement through Constitution and international declarations, Prevention measurement, protection interventions, rehabilitation systems and streamlining of society.

Protection interventions:

Policy makers, community leaders and service providers must work to secure a social protection system with a wide variety of options for supporting Street girls who have experienced multiple abuses and created a variety of coping strategies. Police and staff at all levels need adequate training. Sanctions should be imposed against individual officials who infringe girl's rights. Legal aid should similarly be provided to press successfully for resolution of accusations of violence against street children. Street girls should be supported to build positive support networks to reduce their exposure to violence in dynamic and insecure environments. All together Mobile health facilities, toilets and sleeping shelters can be built. There are some existing interventions:

- ✿ The Department of Women and Children's Affairs is also running Women's Support Centers and shelter homes in Dhaka and in 6 divisional headquarters to provide shelter and other support facilities, i.e. food, medicine, clothes, legal aid, rehabilitation, vocational training and financial assistance for establishing them as self-employed persons.
- ✿ One stop crisis centre for victim women of violence.

⁹ Pavement dwellers are those people who sleep on the streets, railway terminals and platforms, bus stations, parks and open spaces, religious centers, constructions sites and around graveyards and other public places. They are poorer than the slum dwellers that reside on the pavement or sidewalk of the cities. Sometimes they become this by choice, some of them are seasonal migrant (BDI, CUP and CWWB 2012).

- ✿ Bangladesh has a number of special laws, specifically prohibiting certain form of violence against women including the Penal Code, 1860, the Anti-Dowry Prohibition Act (1980), the Cruelty to Women Ordinance (1983), the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (1993;), and the Prevention of Repression against Women and Children Act (2000).
- ✿ The adoption of MDGs, PRSP and gender budgeting.

Rehabilitation system:

Rehabilitation system must be strengthening at any cost. This is because those Street girls, who want shelters, may have no family or other space. But if they are allocated rehabilitation with employment opportunities, they would leave their uncertain life of streets and sustain in mainstream society with a respectable life. Government must increase the number of shelter home besides existing shelter. In addition, though NGOs are working for street children, they must be more aware gender specific violence occurs on street. Specially, they have to concentrate on street girls and their equal rights with security. They can provide vocational training system through which street girls can live their own life independently. Some existing measurements are as follows: Department of social services (DSS) operates six Sorkari Ashroy Kendra (vagrants home) in the different areas, protection children at risk (PCAR), day care centre and Sarkari Shishu poribar.

Streamlining of society:

Policies need to prepare and support people for parenting and ban all violence in the home. To achieve reunification, initiatives must be taken. Employment opportunities must be created, so that no parents want to leave their children. At the same time, Gender violence should be eradicated from family. This is because Many times girls are abandoned by family for their gender identification. Poverty and inequality in wider society need to be addressed to prevent girls from needing to work or survive on the streets. Thus, Reallocation of resources and protect excluded families from external shocks must be implemented. Education for all must be ensured through initiative of Compensation and subsidize for those street girls. In this case, children and girls can be given allowance. Therefore, they would not live on streets in search of work. Therefore, renewal of society and establishing social safety net is essential in connecting street girls to a better future of all strata of society in Bangladesh.

Prevention measurement:

More research work must be done on several issues of street children and girls. As a result, we would bring some way out in this regard. We can take effort in policy building and advocacy. Internationally lobbying capacity must be emphasized. To prevent becoming Street girls from mainstream people, rural development is an essential point. In rural area, government should explore employment opportunities so that urban migration can be stopped. Several initiatives have been taken to stop becoming Street girls by government. But those steps do not articulate about rehabilitating those girls. To prevent from being Street girls, we must make sure their rehabilitation. Some existing interventions are follows:

- Bengal Vagrancy Act 1943 which was formulated to prevent migration of rural famished people to provincial capital Kolkata while Bangle Famine of 1943 struck in pre- divided Bengal.
- Vagrant and shelter less persons (rehabilitation) act 2011.
- Dhaka metropolitan police ordinance 1976 resist pavement dwelling in Dhaka. Begging, prostitution, footpath based small business like tea or cakes selling are considered as punishable crime under this ordinance.

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Annex: 2

Case: 1

‘Pora likhar iccha ase; kintu akhon ar shujog nai’ (I wish I could read; but I have no Chance)

Name: Momo (pseudonym)

Age: 13

Marital Status: Unmarried

Home district: Borishal

Momo lives in footpath mostly. Some times she lives with her sister. Her father married second time. That is why; she never goes to her village. In her village, she went to Madrasha. But her step mother stopped her study. Now she is selling flowers in Dhaka city. She earns 150 to 200 taka daily. She saves her money to one of the shopkeepers. That person is reliable according to Momo. On street, everyday she faces various problems. Basically, taking bath, feeding and sleeping are very problematic in street life. She has no such space. Previously, they were ignorant about reproductive aspects. Now, they are aware of HIV/ AIDS and contraceptive use from campaign of NGOs. In case of exploitation and violence, they are vulnerable to surroundings but they found very helpful polices. When any VIP or Ministers come, police inform them to withdraw their household form streets. After that, they can again live like before. Most of the street girls live unitedly in the streets to prove them strong enough. So, people from outsider cannot harm them and their joint living protect them from various unwanted calamities. Momo wants to be a garments worker. But she did not get chance as she is not educated. Even non government schools do not admit them as they are now elder than other street children. That is why, she wants training session to get chance in garments sector. In case of rehabilitation process, she wishes for one room in the slum area which she thought enough for her.

Case: 2

***‘Eka thakai valo! lakh taka Jomay Dokan dibo, Goru sagol palbo’.* (It is better to live alone. after saving One Lakh taka; I will buy cow, goat and a shop).**

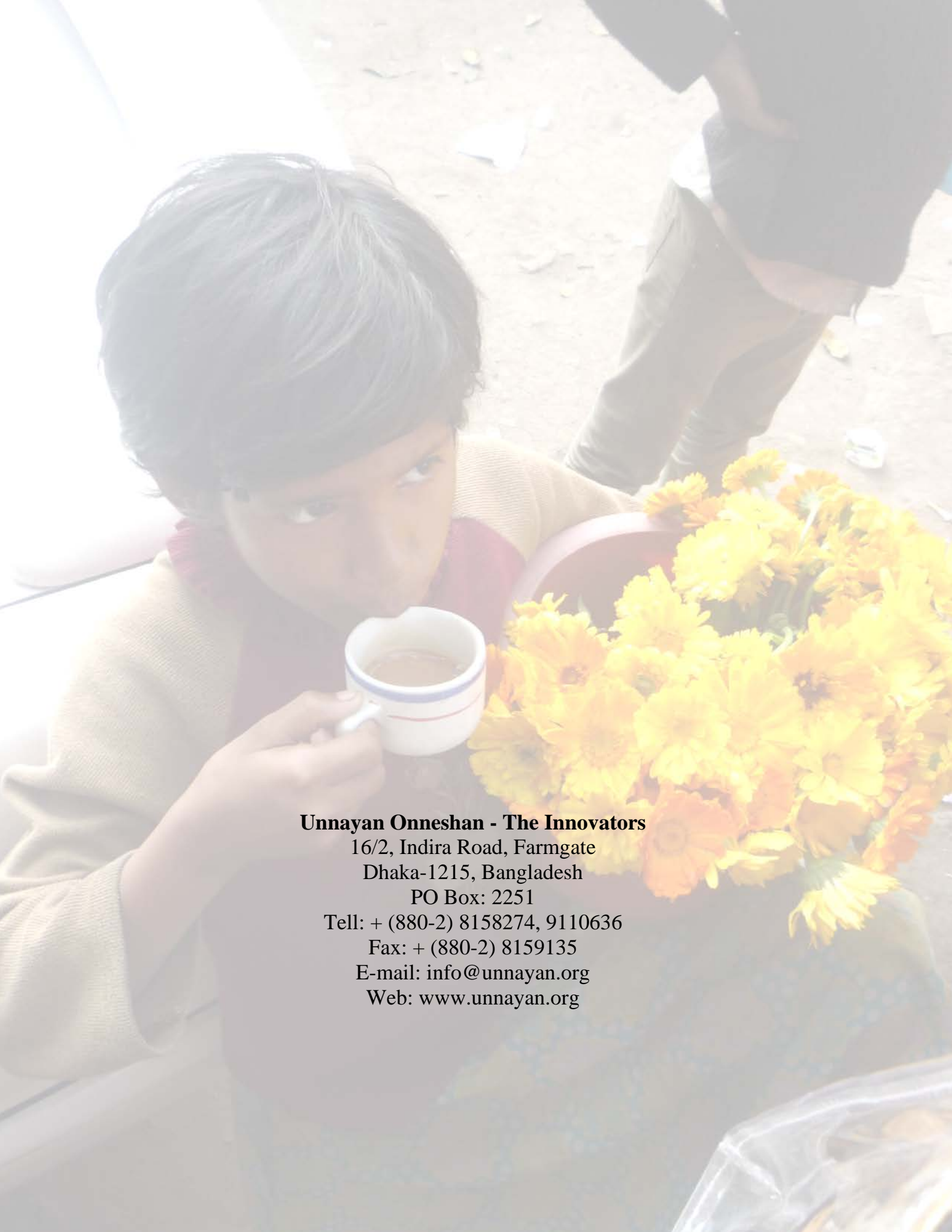
Name: Lima (pseudonym)

Age: 18/19

Home district: Sonargoan

Marital Status: Married

I found her in Farmgate Park. Basically she lives on footpath here. Her family consists of mother, two brothers and sisters in her village. But she broke up relation with them as they want money from Lima. They think as other women are sending money to home, then why she is not doing so! According to Lima, she is leading an ultra poor life here not to capable of sending money. While she was describing her history, she let me know how she was involved in sex work. Again, I saw the repetition of deception. She was deceived by her friend and sold in Sylhet. She is a victim of regular violence. Not only customers but also polices are the oppressor. They arrest them regularly and make force to engage them in sex work. Sometimes they do not pay money too. Six months ago, she got married. But her husband has 1st marriage before. Frequently, he goes to his first wife. Lima knows, he will leave Lima since he is going to get a job. He is not going to be her breadwinner furthermore. Now she is already habituated to live her lonely life and wishes to live a healthy life.



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