“YOU ARE NEVER TRULY FREE”

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Rehabilitation,
Reintegration and Advocacy for Survivors of Sex Trafficking

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how social stigmas related to sex work and sexual activity in India contribute to the creation of environments conducive to gender discrimination and the erosion of female rights. It seeks to understand, through the work of anti-trafficking staff and the lived experience of sex trafficking survivors in Kolkata, how this subsequently impacts survivors' ability to be successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into their communities. Human trafficking directly limits the human rights and freedoms which development aims to facilitate and realise; it is fundamentally a development concern. Violations of human rights are a cause and a consequence of trafficking in persons, making their universal promotion and protection relevant to anti-trafficking. Females constitute 80 per cent of all sex trafficking victims, demonstrating that it is a significantly gendered crime. India is home to 40 per cent of the estimated global slave population, and operates as a destination, transit and origin country for all forms of human trafficking.

This research involved semi-structured interviews focused on experiences and understandings of social stigma with eight staff of the anti-trafficking NGO Sanlaap, one staff member of a partnering Government-run shelter home, and one focus group with eight sex trafficking survivors. Data were analysed thematically through concepts of human rights, social stigma, gender discrimination and vulnerability.

The results indicated that prioritising the protection and promotion of their human rights was integral to Sanlaap's success in rehabilitating and reintegrating survivors. This research, therefore, reinforces conceptual links between human rights violations and sex trafficking, and argues that preventative action needs to have a more central role in current anti-trafficking efforts. The results demonstrate that stigma is a manifestation of power, which enables the subordination and displacement of vulnerable groups, reinforces inequality and power imbalances, and continues to undermine survivor rights to reintegration. This study also highlights where there is a need to advance discourse about cultural rights and sexuality within anti-trafficking work in India, and to implement broader approaches to women's development as part of sex trafficking prevention strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In our globalising world, trafficking in human beings—especially women and children—has increased in both magnitude and reach and has become a major modern human rights concern (Heyzer, 2002). Victims of human trafficking have been characterised as the new slaves of the twenty-first century, and this crime—which thrives on human dejection—obliges individuals to submit their body and will to doing something with no regard for their wishes (João Guia, 2015; Sarkar, 2014; Troshynski, 2012). The human and economic costs of human trafficking take an immense toll on individuals and communities; by conservative estimates, the cost of trafficking in terms of underpayment of wages and recruiting fees is over US\$20 billion, and the costs to human capital are probably impossible to quantify (World Bank, 2009). It is posited that within India, the problem of sex trafficking is the result of a range of mutually reinforcing factors, including widespread poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities, entrenched gender discrimination, displacement¹, the demand by men for young girls and virgins (in part due to fear of HIV/AIDS associated with older or sexually active women), and the sheer profit to be made from the exploitation of vulnerable children (Sarkar, 2014).

Violations of human rights are both a cause and a consequence of trafficking in persons, making the universal promotion and protection of human rights particularly relevant to the fight against it (Weitzer, 2011). Research indicates that where their human rights are not honoured, and without viable educational or economic alternatives, rescued survivors of sex trafficking often return to sex work (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Kara, 2009; Pandey, Tewari & Bhowmick, 2013). Many survivors view the trade as their only means of survival, despite the inherent experiences of violence and exploitation (Crawford & Kaufman, 2008; Wickham, 2009). It has been proposed that individuals, organisations and political institutions who seek to make meaningful progress in the fight against sex trafficking should emphasise human rights, prioritising their preservation, and fostering rights-enhancing environments which protect, value and provide equality for girls and women (Chuang, 2006). In conservative communities, trapping factors, such as social attitudes and stigmas, can make gaining social acceptance a difficult process for these survivors, as their involvement in sex work has violated cultural norms and expectations about femininity and purity (Goffman, 1963; Sanders, 2008). Social stigma erodes human rights by reproducing discriminatory practices and beliefs (Aggleton et

¹ Displaced people, both internally and externally, are often in desperate situations, have insufficient or no support networks, and face dire poverty. Therefore, they may be more likely to take chances and risks in order to find employment or to get to safety in a different country. These vulnerabilities make them prime targets for human trafficking and susceptible to human trafficking snares and schemes (Benadum, 2015).

al., 2005). These trapping factors are also a significant contributor to the continued perpetuation of sex trafficking, and studying their influence is important as they restrict survivors from other meaningful opportunities, encourage their social exclusion, enable their re-victimisation, and once again render them increasingly vulnerable to exploitative practices (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015; Heyzer, 2002; McCarthy, Benoit & Jansson, 2014). However, examinations of the sources and consequences of pervasive, socially shaped exclusion from social and economic life are rare (Link & Phelan, 2001). Therefore, there exists an important opportunity to explore, highlight, and understand the lived experiences of stigmatised individuals (Hatzenbuehler, 2017; Link and Phelan 2001; Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011).

1.1 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVE

The objective of my research is to explore the perspectives of sex trafficking survivors, and staff working in anti-trafficking in India to understand how social stigma affects and influences the manifestation, perpetuation and maintenance of the practice of sex trafficking. This research has a secondary aim of identifying how human rights are situated within anti-trafficking advocacy, and whether rights-based approaches to anti-trafficking can encourage a greater emphasis upon prevention strategies, and more effective management and resolution of the problem.

By interrogating the role of social stigma from survivor and staff perspectives, this research can advance understanding of how powerfully stigmatising beliefs affect vulnerability, victimisation, and re-victimisation. Ultimately, this could identify more effective ways of protecting and resettling survivors and other vulnerable girls and women, and therefore help to guide anti-trafficking strategy and advocacy in India.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve my research aims and objectives, I have focused on the following research question to guide my thesis:

- How is social stigma manifested and addressed by staff working to rehabilitate survivors of sex trafficking in Kolkata, India?

The research also examines the following sub-questions:

- How does social stigma related to sex work in India influence anti-trafficking initiatives?

- Can addressing social stigma related to sex work act as a preventative measure that supports anti-sex trafficking initiatives in India?

1.3 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis begins with this introductory chapter, which outlines the research focus and frames the research context.

This is followed by a literature review in Chapter Two that identifies human trafficking as a significant development challenge that violates numerous human rights and freedoms. This chapter frames the scale of the problem in India and explores the multiple structural inequalities and gendered social and cultural norms, and their stigmatising expressions, which perpetuate trafficking in this context.

Chapter Three outlines the research approach, describes my qualitative research methodology, and discusses my ethical considerations, positionality, and the identified limitations of my research.

Chapter Four presents my key findings, drawing on my three research questions. I identify the primary social and cultural constructions of female identity within India and how this generates social stigma. I additionally explore how sex trafficking survivors are situated within, and navigate, these social norms, and I expand upon how this influences Sanlaap's rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration² and advocacy work.

In Chapter Five I elaborate upon the implications of my findings in relation to current debates about sex trafficking in the development context. Within this chapter, I discuss how critical human rights are to anti-trafficking, the impact of social stigma in limiting survivors' aspirations for life beyond sex work, how stigma is addressed by Sanlaap staff in their rehabilitation and reintegration work, and how survivor empowerment and community education is integral to transforming stigma and discrimination to enable successful survivor resettlement. I also highlight challenges surrounding female sexuality and gender inequities within India, and how these could be addressed within broader approaches to anti-trafficking.

² The terms 'rehabilitation', 'reintegration', and 'resettlement' are used within sex trafficking literature to describe the processes of trauma counseling, educational or vocational training, return to family and community, and the social acceptance of sex trafficking survivors. The research participants also used these terms during the interviews and focus group to reflect the same processes. Although these terms have legitimate purpose in describing and discussing the reality of survivor experiences, it is important to acknowledge that they may also give rise to the connotation that a survivor is required to go through these processes in order to regain acceptance as an act of social conformity—rather than to be empowered to determine her own definition of fulfillment and worthiness following her rescue. Although my research uses these terms extensively, such use is in alignment with rhetoric seen in the literature and amongst practitioners that describes the processes that typically follow survivor rescue. The use of these terms is not intended to imply that conformity to social attitudes is a requirement for her ability to have a place within her society, or to make judgments about her identity or worthiness.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis by reiterating the key points covered throughout this research to highlight the interaction of human rights, stigma and discrimination in effective and successful anti-trafficking work and prevention. It identifies how this research could be used to better support future engagement and potential opportunities for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to address my research question about the role of social stigma in the rehabilitation of trafficked women (and in trafficking prevention), it is necessary to explore the broad literature on trafficking. It is also important to consider how stigma, discrimination and vulnerabilities intersect in India and to consider how a human rights-based approach [HRBA] to development might address these intersecting issues.

Within this chapter, I consider the global scale and impact of human trafficking, and particularly how it relates to and influences both human development and the global human rights agenda. I examine the international human rights legal protections aimed to counter trafficking at the macro level, how they support and influence domestic government policies and priorities, and whether they are meaningfully impacting change within India to end the practice of sex trafficking. I also examine the multiple intersecting and complex social, cultural and religious factors that contribute to making girls and women vulnerable to discrimination within India, and how these manifest as social stigmas that can perpetuate the subordination and exploitation of Indian women through practices such as sex trafficking. In order to identify and understand the root causes of the social stigmas that impact sex trafficking survivors, I particularly focus on evaluating gendered cultural and social norms regarding identity and acceptance, and how these reproduce gender inequities that influence the social, physical, bodily and sexual freedoms of Indian girls and women across class and caste hierarchies. This chapter also explores the relationship between human rights and cultural rights, particularly in the context of gender inequalities in India.

The literature discussed within this chapter has been instrumental to my research and has been organised based on key themes. This has provided a foundational understanding of human rights theory, human trafficking and sex trafficking—both globally and within India—the social and cultural environment of India, and how trafficking and development are powerfully interrelated. It has also shown where there continues to be a lack of research and understanding on causative factors and preventative measures for sex trafficking and re-victimisation.

2.2 HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND DEVELOPMENT

Although trafficking and development have predominantly been treated as very separate policy areas, and assessments of the development impacts of counter-trafficking programmes are still in their

infancy, human trafficking is fundamentally a development issue (Laczko & Danailova-Trainor, 2009). The Human Development paradigm (as defined by ul-Haq, 2003) emphasises four essential pillars: equality, sustainability, productivity, and empowerment. It focuses on the creation of environments within which individuals can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; ul Haq, 2003). Development is thus about the provision of human freedoms³, and expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2000). Trafficking in persons directly limits such human choice, challenges the development of equitable, more prosperous societies and economies, and works strongly against the reconciliation of political interests with humanitarian and human rights obligations (UNODC, 2008).

Human trafficking erodes development efforts and subverts legitimate economic growth and has wider implications for human development as its broad and interrelated impacts cumulatively threaten and undermine the health, safety, and security of all the nations it touches (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012; Laczko & Danailova-Trainor, 2009; UNODC, 2008). Common development dimensions, such as poverty, social exclusion, gender inequality, unemployment, lack of education, weak rule of law, and poor governance are strongly linked to vulnerability to trafficking; the problem of trafficking cuts across these numerous development concerns, and thus has relevance for practitioners throughout the development community (World Bank, 2009).

However, efforts to progress human development have given little emphasis to the fight against trafficking, and policies to tackle trafficking tend not to be linked to wider measures to promote human development (Laczko & Danailova-Trainor, 2009). Global efforts to combat trafficking in persons have focused mainly on the criminalisation of trafficking and the protection of borders, and often neglect strategies to address various development dimensions and promote sustainable, long-term development as an integral component in the fight against human trafficking (UNODC, 2008; World Bank, 2009). Therefore, it has been argued that by acknowledging gender inequities and deconstructing the role of the structural factors that sustain them, we are able to refocus anti-trafficking efforts towards prevention strategies as a legitimate and pertinent advocacy approach

³ Amartya Sen has argued persuasively that development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance, or overactivity of repressive states. The achievement of development ultimately requires the free agency of people, so long as that agency does not impinge in an unjust way on the freedoms of others (Sen, 1999).

through which to curtail trafficking in persons, and thus simultaneously advance human development (Laczko & Danailova-Trainor, 2009).

Through the application of a more inclusive human rights framework—such as the HRBA (Bravo, 2007)—international bodies, governments, and NGOs are able to take an approach which recognises that trafficking is not simply an international problem shaped by international forces, but a crucial domestic concern which is equally shaped by the nuances of domestic factors in both origin and destination countries (La Strada International, 2008; Sarkar, 2014; UNODC, 2015; Wasileski & Miller, 2012).

2.3 HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Trafficking in persons involves underage persons or adults subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of deliberate exploitation for economic benefit; it is an egregious violation of the values and virtues of fundamental human rights (Sarkar, 2014; Weitzer, 2011). Although it is inherently difficult to obtain accurate trafficking statistics, due to their intrinsically covert and unverifiable nature, the International Labour Organisation [ILO] has cited worldwide figures of more than 21 million people exploited in contemporary forms of slavery, with several million of those forced or tricked across borders (ILO, 2014). Furthermore, the United Nations estimates that approximately 12.3 million people are held in conditions of forced labour and trafficking for sex slavery at any given point in time, and the ILO estimates that anywhere between 700,000 and four million women and children are trafficked internationally each year into illegal sex and labour industries (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012; ILO, 2014; U.S. Department of State, 2009). There is increasing evidence that the large majority of the estimated 5.5 million global child victims of the trafficking industry are sexually exploited (Castles & Miller, 2009; Equality Now, 2017). Females constitute 80 per cent of all victims, demonstrating that sex trafficking is a significantly gendered crime, and an undeniable act of pervasive violence against women (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012; GAATW, 2010; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009). A legal definition of trafficking has been set forth in Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children [the Palermo Protocol], which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It stands today as the accepted international definition of trafficking (World Bank, 2009; Huda, 2006). The definition states:

For the purposes of this Protocol:

- (a) 'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of the victim of trafficking in person to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

(UN General Assembly, 2000, p. 2).

Although the definition outlines numerous elements of trafficking in subparagraph (a), only one of these must be present in any given case for the act to constitute trafficking under the Palermo Protocol (Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011; Huda, 2006). Furthermore, subparagraph (b) allows the definition of trafficking to recognise the way that positions of vulnerability and relative power imbalances can turn an otherwise legitimate offer of employment into an instance of trafficking. The Palermo Protocol therefore allows for the possibility that a person may be a choosing agent and a victim of trafficking concurrently (Allain, 2014; Einarsdóttir & Boiro, 2014; Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011). In doing so, the Protocol theoretically transcends the sharp dichotomy between women-as-victims and women-as-agents often cited in discussions of sex work (Einarsdóttir & Boiro, 2014; Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011; Shoaps, 2013).

It is important to note that within this research, sex work that is a result of sex trafficking is differentiated from participating in the sex industry willingly, whereby women choose to positively exercise their agency to benefit from sexual commerce (Weitzer, 2011; Butcher, 2003). This research has therefore not examined the validity of political or ideological arguments presented against elective sex work by the Oppression Paradigm⁴ (Weitzer, 2011), which holds a monochromatic perspective of sex work as inherently based upon abuse, victimisation, and men's patriarchal right of access to women's bodies, which is argued to thereby perpetuate female subordination (Farley, 2004; McCarthy, Benoit & Jansson, 2014; Pateman, 1999; Weitzer, 2011). Whilst I personally believe such a perspective is incongruent with honouring the human rights and freedoms of women within agentic

⁴ The Oppression Paradigm defines prostitution as inherently exploitative and harmful to workers, due to the particularly vicious institution of inequality of the sexes (Farley, 2004). Oppression theorists insist that prostitution is by definition a form of violence against women, irrespective of whether outright physical violence is involved; the distinction between coerced and voluntary prostitution is regarded as a fallacy—according to prohibitionists, some type of coercion and domination is always involved (Weitzer, 2011).

sex work, there is validity to the Paradigm's central tenet that sexual commerce rests on structural inequalities between men and women, and that patriarchal privilege and male domination are intrinsic elements of the supply and demand of sexual commerce (Chuang, 1998; Weitzer, 2011; Weitzer, 2010). These concepts have influenced my research by articulating why there is a market for commercial sex, and how this affects the demand and supply of trafficked girls and women. However, my primary aim within this research is to understand and highlight the complex and nuanced social, cultural and structural processes that exist behind the presence and representation of trafficked girls and women within sexual commerce, emphasising the Protocol's movement away from the victim-versus-agent dichotomy. This distinction must be made in order to further the intent of this research to formulate an understanding of causative factors that will support the elimination of sex trafficking, which is independent from any moral crusades against prostitution (Jeffreys, 2009; Kiraly & Tyler, 2015; Weitzer, 2011).

The Palermo Protocol, UN conventions and treaties⁵, aid conditionality policies, and human rights network campaigns have inspired dozens of countries to prohibit and police trafficking in persons. There are educational, law enforcement, and victim assistance efforts in sending and receiving countries; via regional programs in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia; and through global bodies such as the International Organisation for Migration [IOM], the ILO, and UNICEF (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012). However, regardless of these efforts, human trafficking continues to be a thriving trade. Despite legal rhetoric and domestic and international anti-trafficking efforts, human trafficking has become the world's fastest-growing criminal enterprise (State of California Department of Justice, 2017). Human trafficking was estimated by the ILO in 2014 to generate US\$150 billion in annual criminal profits, making it the second largest source of illegal income worldwide after drug trafficking (ILO, 2014). Particularly, the selling of young women is one of the most lucrative criminal activities in the world, as there exists an ever-increasing demand for international sex tourism and the commercial sex industry (Belser, 2005; ILO, 2014; Shelley, 2010; Timoshkina, 2012; Troshynski, 2012). Furthermore, while it is estimated that only 22 per cent of victims are trafficked for sex, sexual exploitation earns approximately 66 per cent of the global profits of human trafficking, yielding a return on investment ranging from 100–1000 per cent (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2011).

⁵ Refer Appendix G: Relevant International, Regional, And Domestic Treaties And Laws, in which I have collated key components of the legal frameworks that support the anti-trafficking movement globally, and within India and Asia.

Human trafficking has multifaceted dimensions, characterised by emergent behaviour⁶, network relationships, high degrees of resilience, and a remarkable degree of adaptability in response to law enforcement efforts to interfere with the business (Sarkar, 2014). This complexity of factors, when coupled with the magnitude of the financial benefits and the low risks involved for those who stand to make the greatest gain—traffickers, corrupt officials, and employers—make the prevention of trafficking especially problematic (Heyzer, 2002). The burden of slavery in the twenty-first century therefore continues to permeate societies globally, despite inherent obligations under important international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, the Palermo Protocol, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Lee, 2011; Sarkar, 2014; UNODC, 2009).

However, these international human rights treaties have been criticised as flawed by design in their inability to make ratifying governments meaningfully accountable for their commitments, as government violation of various human rights is epidemic globally (Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005; Smith-Cannoy, 2012). These treaties have been argued to lack the powerful institutional mechanisms which are necessary to monitor and enforce the international human rights legal system, therefore offering governments strong incentives to ratify human rights treaties not as a serious commitment to implement respect for human rights in practice, but at best as a symbolic gesture and at worst as a façade (Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005). Despite the plethora of legal and international responses to human trafficking, it is posited that their current ineffectiveness reflects a deep reluctance of governments to address the root causes of the problem, overlooking the broad socio-economic realities that drive trafficking in human beings such as poverty, structural or interpersonal violence, discrimination, and gender and economic inequality (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012; Chuang, 2006; Marks, 2011; UNODC, 2015). Moreover, treaty ratification confers human rights legitimacy upon governments and this has been argued to make it difficult for others to pressure them for further action (Hafner-Burton, 2013; Mayerfield, 2016).

The failure of these treaties to effectively address and remedy the problem has also been argued to be bolstered by the tendency of the anti-trafficking movement to primarily frame human trafficking as a concern of national safety and security of domestic borders (Bravo, 2007; Pati, 2014). Globally, our

⁶ A characteristic of complex systems such as human trafficking, where they are able to spontaneously change, adapt, or self-organise without any form of centralised control. This occurs when interactions and feedback loops between the component parts of a system spontaneously result in the emergence of a new structure and new behaviours (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017).

anti-trafficking responses have predominantly focused on short-term interventions through prohibition, policing and prosecution, with comparatively little effort on prevention (Brysk & Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012; Kaufman & Crawford, 2008; Laczko & Danailova-Trainor, 2009; Palmiotto, 2014). Bravo (2007) argues that the continued growth of the problem and our failure to truly resolve it stem from an inadequate understanding that human trafficking is first and foremost a human rights violation. When viewed through a human rights lens, it enables an acknowledgement that those who are unable to claim their human rights, or those whose human rights are not respected or championed, are the most vulnerable to exploitation. Thus, it is proposed that honouring and promoting the human rights of men, women and children must be integrated into efforts to meaningfully eliminate human trafficking (Bravo, 2007).

2.4 FEMINIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS

The primary conceptual framework used in analysis throughout this research is that of the HRBA to development. HRBAs rest upon the belief that human development is enhanced when we use human rights as a foundational framework (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2006). Therefore, our international human rights treaties are not merely aspirational documents—they are the guiding principles through which to ensure equal freedom and security for all individuals and peoples (Braniff & Hainsworth, 2015). HRBAs promote the realisation of human rights as the ultimate goals of development, recognising people as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients of commodities and services (Gready & Ensor, 2005; Onazi, 2013).

Development and human rights are interdependent, parallel disciplines, which address similar problems and share similar views (D'Hollander, Marx and Wouters, 2013). The HRBA identifies that poverty arises because of the marginalisation and discrimination associated with the violation of people's inalienable human rights (Joseph, 2009). Human rights are inherent—by virtue of being born human—and thus, the poor are equal rights holders who are entitled to the enjoyment of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights (ActionAid, 2010). HRBAs to development therefore endeavour to ensure human rights are universally honoured, empower marginalised groups, focus attention on social and economic inequality, and boost both state and donor accountability, aiming to generate sustainable solutions to poverty and exclusion (ActionAid, 2010; Kindornay, Ron &

Carpenter, 2012). These objectives therefore make the HRBA to development well aligned with the goal of this research to address the discrimination and inequality that stem from stigmatisation.

The HRBA to development was first articulated in development circles in the mid-1990s, and saw the merging of two previously distinct strands of foreign assistance and global policy—“human rights” and “development”. This combined the principles of internationally recognised human rights with the aims of poverty reduction and was also predicated on more complex understandings of the causes and consequences of poverty (Kindornay, Ron & Carpenter, 2012; Archer, 2011). Rights-based development experts began urging development practitioners to assess human rights conditions before formulating their plans and projects; identify rights-holders and duty bearers in prospective projects; ensure local participation in project planning and implementation; create and strengthen mechanisms of citizen-government accountability; reduce discrimination against marginalised groups; focus on development processes, in addition to outcomes; and, most importantly, engage in local and international advocacy efforts to promote the rights of vulnerable groups (Braniff & Hainsworth, 2015; Kindornay, Ron & Carpenter, 2012). A range of supra-state organisations such as the United Nations are notable for articulating HRBAs, but HRBAs are also advanced by a range of international, regional, national, and local development actors (Gready, 2013).

Ultimately, a HRBA works towards strengthening the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims, and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations (OHCHR, 2006; OHCHR, 2010). This research seeks to interrogate stigma and its associated discrimination as a human rights violation, and to gain an understanding of how stigma can limit the assertion of rights, and how victims are empowered or can empower themselves within those stigmatised environments which seek to disempower them. The use of a HRBA to development is particularly important in this research, as trafficking in persons directly limits human choice and freedoms, which negatively impacts the goals of sustainable human development (UNODC, 2008).

This research is also being conducted through the use of feminist standpoint theory. Feminism and feminist research are concerned with understanding the specific ways that women are oppressed and systematically disadvantaged due to their gender. Feminist standpoint theory is one way of incorporating feminist theory into research, and specifically, it considers women’s lived experiences as material for research, and highlights the importance of the abundance of women’s perspectives and the diversity of their experiences (Hartsock, 1983; Hawkesworth, 1999). Feminist standpoint theory presupposes multiplicity and complexity, accepts plurality as an inherent characteristic of the human

condition—thus rejecting the universalising of women’s experiences—and places relations between political and social power and knowledge centre stage (Harding, 2004; Hawkesworth, 1999). Feminist standpoint theorists make three principal claims: (1) knowledge is socially situated; (2) marginalised groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalised, and; (3) research, particularly that focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalised (Harding, 2004).

Feminist standpoint theory ultimately posits that women occupy a specific standpoint from which they are able to contribute knowledge, and they must therefore be enabled to share their lived experiences in order to allow others to truly understand them. The concept of the ‘standpoint’ encapsulates the intention of standpoint theory to argue for “women’s place” as a starting point for enquiry, and Harding (1993) contends that initiating research from women’s lives generates less partial and distorted accounts not only of women’s lives, but also of men’s lives, and of the whole social order.

Standpoint theorists posit that knowledge emerges when those who are marginalised and relatively invisible from the vantage point of the epistemically privileged become conscious of their social situation with respect to socio-political power and oppression and begin to find a voice (Kenny & Kinsella, 1997). This process of self-definition, in terms of a standpoint, provides a starting point for the self-assertion of one’s own identity, challenging those identities imposed by conventional stereotypes that form part of hegemonic ways of thinking from the point of view of the socially and politically dominant (Hill Collins, 1990). This assertion of identity—of who one is—adds to a body of knowledge about how one’s life is and how one experiences the world. Those social constructs challenge and debunk myths about us, about our relationship with the world, and about our relationships with others in that world that have heretofore been taken to be true (Harding, 2004; Hill Collins, 1990; Hill Collins, 2004). The epistemic process whereby a standpoint emerges enables the occupants of that standpoint to gain an element of power and control over knowledge about their lives; in becoming occupants of a standpoint, they also become knowing subjects in their own right, rather than merely objects that are interpreted and known by others (Harding, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory is also reflective of the social constructionism epistemology, which understands meaning to be socially constructed through experience and interpretation (Lock & Strong, 2010; Loseke, 2011).

Feminist and rights-based approaches to sex trafficking are at times complementary, but they can also present strongly opposing views, particularly in regards to a woman's agency versus her oppression in sex work (Weitzer, 2011). They have been chosen for this research as frameworks for analysis as the simultaneous harmony and contention between these two approaches will provide a rigorous framework through which to analyse and interrogate the proposed research questions, particularly as they emphasise individual empowerment, experience, knowledge and interpretation.

2.5 HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDIA

Trafficking in human beings, especially in women and children, has become a matter of serious concern in India (Sarkar, 2014; UNODC, 2014). The Constitution of India explicitly prohibits trafficking of human beings, and India has ratified all major international laws and conventions pertaining to the prevention of human trafficking⁷ (UNODC, 2011). Yet combating human trafficking in India is challenged by a lack of political will, necessary legal instruments, and serious national anti-trafficking initiatives (Amahazion, 2015; Lock & Strong, 2010; Sarkar, 2014; States News Service, 2011). The inability of the Indian Government to take effective action against this crime has been criticised as a sin of condonation; the State remains indecisive, is typically indulgent towards the perpetrators and indifferent towards victims, and police, judicial and civic authorities utilise selective intervention—often content to leave what is a socioeconomic problem and a crime to families, local chieftains, and caste and village *panchayats*⁸ to address (Dutta, 2011; Chatterjee, 2008; Kumar, 2006).

Explored below are some of the critical contextual factors in India that may have given rise to and sustained the country's extensive sex trafficking trade.

2.5.1 INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES

There exists a powerful longstanding historical notion in India of woman as devoid of independence and agency, rather existing traditionally as property (Kannabiran, 2009). Whilst this mentality can manifest across all class and caste hierarchies, the subjugation of women is deepened by conditions of being low caste and/or class in India (Holmes, Sadana & Rath, 2010; Livne, 2015). Haugen and Boutros (2014) highlight that the poor in developing countries often live in a state of de facto

⁷ Refer Appendix G: Relevant International, Regional, and Domestic Treaties and Laws.

⁸ A village council or self-government in India (Merriam Webster Online, n.d.).

lawlessness. Wealthier, more powerful aggressors can purchase their way out of any illegalities, whilst their victims often have little means to ensure their fundamental human rights are observed, nor to fight for the justice they deserve when those rights are violated (Haugen & Boutros, 2014; Mathew, 2014). In India (as in many other nations with fragile governance and significant inequalities), high corruption, insufficient law enforcement, and sluggish judicial institutions foster the perfect environment within which money often wields greater power than moral responsibility (Haugen & Boutros, 2014; Raj Kumar, 2011; Sen, 2009). Additionally, the Indian caste system is a system of discrimination and oppression that has permeated Indian society over centuries, and although illegal according to the Constitution, it has morphed into a cultural validation of discrimination against various communities and individuals who are deemed to be inferior (World Bank, 2004). Such enduring economic, cultural and societal inequities foster greater discrimination in India, and in the intersectionality of identities associated with class, colour, caste, ethnicity, religion, economic standing, and marital status, these inequities create multiple vulnerabilities for Indian girls and women (Dey & Orton, 2016; Haq, 2013).

The consequences of these interconnected vulnerabilities are frequently compounded by poverty, illiteracy, lack of education, and low social standing, and girls and women can become branded as fair game for exploitation, thus perpetuating their experiences of violence, victimisation and re-victimisation (Sarkar, 2014).

2.5.2 GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Gender discrimination is recognised as a fundamental denial of human rights (Heyzer, 2002; Ross, 2013). Regardless of their class, women and girls in (particularly but not exclusively) developing countries can live in intrinsically volatile environments in which their female identity inherently places them in varying degrees of inferiority and vulnerability (Wickham, 2009). Gender discrimination and female subordination are deeply ingrained within India's predominant patrilineal family system (Dube, 1988; Heyzer, 2002; Srinivasan, 2004), and are evident in many of India's enduring cultural practices, including son-preference and female infanticide, bride-burning, *sati*⁹, spousal and non-spousal violence, income inequalities, rape and molestation, reification of women as objects of sexual gratification, and sex segregation (Kannabiran, 2009; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Misra, 2006; Sen, 2001). These practices sustain the lowering of females' social value, and thus perpetuate their

⁹ The act or custom of a Hindu widow burning herself to death or being burned to death on the funeral pyre of her husband (Merriam Webster Online, n.d.).

susceptibility to stigmatisation and other discriminatory practices. Any one of these cultural practices and perspectives could contribute to the erosion of the human rights of Indian girls and women, and contribute to an environment within which they may subsequently become vulnerable targets for exploitation.

It has been argued that an Indian woman can be marketed and degraded as commodity, and simultaneously worshipped as goddess (Sanlaap, 2006). This illustrates the curious and challenging contradictions and complexities in navigating life as a female in India, which have not yet adequately been connected with or explored within sex trafficking discourse. Misra (2006) highlights that in the pantheon of Hindu icons, there exist a few powerful and empowered feminine *shaktis*¹⁰—such as Durga and Kali—yet there are comparatively hundreds of androcentrist and paternalist iconic figures in possession of power and influence that is unknown to their feminine counterparts. The religious and cultural history of India teems with figurations of women as second fiddle to a Lord, and when denied their own ontology and autonomy, they are ultimately rendered in an image of obedience, servitude, and insignificance (Banerjee, 2003; Misra, 2006; Ray, 2000). Rooted in Hindu mythology, perceptions of the Indian woman as goddess place her upon a pedestal, in which her role is to exemplify a particular form of socially constructed femininity, and embody desired traits of deference, chastity and purity (Sinha, 2015). In lived experience, the existence and preservation of those traits symbolise the honour of her family's ability to raise a godly woman, and that honour is thus fiercely protected through the restriction of her mobility, independence and freedoms (Agustin, 2007; Fontanella-Khan, 2013; Ray, 2008). Yet, in her figurations as the goddesses Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Shakti, the Indian woman is an ideal, and is disconnected from the realities of the homes, streets and communities where men and women live and act (Sinha, 2015). Honouring the diversity of women's identities and experiences that occupy the spaces between the pedestal and actuality, between veneration and repudiation, has not happened, and the Indian woman exists within the impossible space where she is framed—by patriarchal discourse—as concurrently priceless and worthless (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Misra, 2006; Ray, 2000; Sinha, 2015).

Grassroots social movements in modern India—particularly amongst Generations Y and X, who accept and prize diversity—have begun to challenge the traditionally and culturally restrictive views society maintains of girls and women, and their personal freedoms (Erickson, 2009). However, these reductive frameworks have been taught and upheld for centuries, and generations of deep-rooted

¹⁰ The female principle of divine energy, especially when personified as the supreme deity (Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d.).

prejudice, stigma, and discrimination must be surmounted (Samarasinghe, 2008; Segran, 2010; Singh, 2008). Three crucial ways in which gender discrimination is manifested in India and how they impact the vulnerability of Indian girls and women are discussed in the following sub-sections.

2.5.2.1 Patriarchal Norms

Ray (2008), in her study of trafficked and non-trafficked female sex workers in Indian brothels, found that the trafficked subjects came from very patriarchal communities, with intense gender discrimination and powerful social networks that ultimately reinforced these structures, which she identified as a significant difference to the non-trafficked women who were studied as part of her research. She therefore posits that the acceptance and protection that was not afforded to these trafficked women by their communities failed to insulate them from their ingrained, situational gender-based vulnerability to trafficking (Daniel-Wrabetz & Penedo, 2015; Ray, 2008). In India patrilineal family systems are dominant within many of its lower class and rural communities; son preference thrives, while families often perceive daughters as an economic liability (Srinivas & Ladumai, 2014; Guérin & Kumar, 2017; Kambhampati & Rajan, 2008). Patriarchal gender values upheld by these communities create and sustain notions of the girl as a burden, as cultural traditions stipulate that families are obliged to marry her off well, ensure her pre-marital sexual purity, and provide substantial marriage expenses—especially those related to the enduring customary practice of dowry (Heyzer, 2002; Ray, 2008). Poor households cope with this in various ways: if an opportunity presents itself, families are willing to hand over girls and women for work (Herzfeld, 2002), give them in marriage to strangers who make no monetary demands, thus alleviating any financial burden (Ray, 2008), or sell them into prostitution as their sexuality has a market value (Heyzer, 2002). Most of these decisions are often made with little thought for the rights or future welfare of their daughters (Chuang, 1998).

A study conducted by the University of North Bengal, which focused on the northern districts of the Indian state, has linked the practice of marriage of girls to strangers with India's sex trafficking trade, as a trafficker can easily appeal to a family's financial desperation by posing as a gracious groom who requires no dowry (Maitra, 2006). The inherent risk of such a practice is bolstered by the common loss of interest in a girl's welfare following her marriage, as many Indian families view a daughter's marriage as the terminal point of their familial responsibility and relationship (Maitra, 2006; Ray, 2008). Following this, the family often believes it has no obligation or duty towards her, and after a dowry payment has been made, if she returns to their house again—whatever be her compulsion for

doing so—the act of her return is at best an undesirable burden, and at worst an unforgivable and even punishable sin (Ray, 2008). Research has shown that a victim who was trafficked into the sex trade through a false marriage is usually therefore too terrified of the shame and implicit burden of returning to her family and will often choose to rather remain in or return to the sex trade (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009).

2.5.2.2 Economic and Educational Discrimination

Operating as both a precondition and a consequence of limited economic opportunities, poverty is a common factor blamed for the success of sex trafficking around the world (Gaudin, 2011). Many young women are vulnerable to trafficking due to the lack of economic opportunities, and in India, this is powerfully linked to the influences of son preference and sexist values surrounding the burden of female children (Heyzer, 2002). Economic theory predicts greater gender discrimination in poorer households and those living below the poverty line, where decisions regarding the allocation of scarce and precious resources are more contentious and consequential (Gaudin, 2011). The expense of sending a girl child to school—when combined with females' comparatively lower employment opportunities and earning potential—means that families are often reluctant to invest in her education (Dollar & Gatti, 1999). Parents additionally expect more direct benefits from investing in sons because they would provide for parents in their old age, while the daughter would traditionally marry and leave to join her husband's family and the returns on her education would therefore accrue to that family (Ray, 2008).

Restriction from education can mean that these girls and women lack experience and knowledge, which therefore makes them dependent upon others who could take advantage of them. They may lack information that prevents them from being aware of the existence and dangers of sex trafficking, and they may also lack the necessary knowledge to make well-informed migration and employment choices when facing harsh economic realities and limited employment opportunities (Ray, 2008). Furthermore, neglecting her education places a girl at a disadvantage for future labour force participation, which ultimately has significant consequences for her ability to gain economic independence (Lokshin & Mroz, 2003).

The resulting economic instability often forces women to seek work in the exploitative unregulated sector and, with little financial security and even less protection, young women can fall prey to sophisticated and violent organised crime operations (Agustin, 2007; Herzog, 2008; Ray, 2008). The

gender disparity seen in the over-representation of women in trafficking survivors is often attributed to the 'feminisation of poverty', arising from the failure of existing situational structures to provide equal and just education and employment opportunities for women (Chuang, 2006). Many analysts refer to this feminisation of poverty as the reason for women's particular vulnerability to traffickers and re-victimisation, and gender discrimination in education and employment has been identified as a direct contributor to this reality in India (Agustin, 2007; Dutta, 2002; Herzog, 2008; Rajagopal, 2003; Ray, 2008). The systematic perpetuation of poverty and discrimination evident in India clearly demonstrates an historical, enforced, male privilege that has strategically subordinated women, and subjected them to stigmatising beliefs that erode their rights or weaken their ability to claim them (Ray, 2008). Ultimately, this entrenchment of sexist ideology and gender discrimination contributes to the feminisation of the poor, who continue to exist as a vulnerable population that can be easily exploited (Herzog, 2008; Ray, 2008).

2.5.2.3 Gender Socialisation

In addition to gender discrimination in the economic and educational spheres, gender socialisation also makes females vulnerable to trafficking. The cultural theory of gender discrimination states that non-economic factors such as cultural perceptions and attitudes about gender-specific roles have a significant influence (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Ray, 2008). Although the social construct of girl-as-burden can mean she is denied education and economic opportunities by her family and community, the internalisation of social norms to sacrifice her own interests and welfare to help support her family may lead a girl to readily deny herself these opportunities, rather preferring to place the prosperity and happiness of her parents and siblings above her own (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Ray, 2008). This is especially valued in India, where female subservience is seen as a desirable feminine quality, cultivated and taught by both male and female role models (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Sharma, Reader & Gupta, 2004; Sharma, 2005). As a girl sees others fail to protect or value her body and rights, she may internalise this example and come to believe that her own being is not worthy of protection, agency, or fulfilment. Therefore, where she seeks to support her family or feels a responsibility to alleviate them of her burden, she may be willing to place herself in situations where her economic desperation, lack of knowledge of criminal activity, and her low skill set make her a prime target for exploitation (Ejalu, 2006; Sharma, 2005). Conversely, where these expectations of self-sacrifice stem from her family, this may lead a girl to run away from the prospects of being sold into bonded labour, child marriage, the dangers of high maternal mortality, and the trauma of high infant mortality (Heyzer, 2002). However, as she may do so without any means to support herself, this often leaves her

vulnerable to traffickers who bring false promises of employment opportunities and a better life (Ejalu, 2006; Heyzer, 2002).

Gender inequities, the feminisation of poverty, and patriarchal norms combine to create a situation of unequal bargaining power and vulnerability for girls and women, which fuels the practice of sex trafficking in India (Chuang, 1998; GAATW, 2010; Ray, 2008). Gender discrimination in the Indian context is thus linked to vulnerability to trafficking by lowering the social value of women, lowering their level of human capital, and undermining their capability to cope successfully with crises (Ray, 2008). The marginalisation of girls and women is reproduced by powerful patriarchal belief systems and practices that limit them to subordinate positions (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015). Therefore, the low level of investment by their caretakers in their well-being, the low priority given to a girl's education, practices such as child marriage and dowry, patriarchal norms upheld by families and communities, and the punitive behaviour towards females who are unable to conform to these norms are all manifestations of gender discrimination that result in outcomes such as vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation (Ray, 2008; Rajagopal, 2003; Sharma, 2005). Furthermore, even when survivors are provided with rights-protective treatment and aftercare, they often face the same socioeconomic conditions that rendered them vulnerable to discrimination and abuse in the first instance, conditions which are upheld and perpetuated by stigma, and which subsequently render them vulnerable to re-victimisation (Chuang, 2006).

2.5.3 VULNERABILITY TO TRAFFICKING

Vulnerability refers to a condition resulting from how individuals negatively experience the complex interaction of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors that create the context for their communities, which ultimately fail to ensure equal opportunity and protection to all members of a society (UNODC, 2008). In development literature, vulnerability does not refer to lack or want, but rather to exposure and defencelessness, to one's susceptibility to criminal conduct and negative situational conditions (Chambers, 1995; UNODC, 2008). Therefore, vulnerability is not a static, absolute state, but one that changes according to context, the efficacy of surrounding social capital, and the capacity for individual response (Bebbington & Foo, 2014; Nef, 1999; Williams & Menestral, 2013).

The European Commission, in their *EU Strategy Towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings* report (2012), highlights that gender plays a significant role in shaping a victim's 'vulnerability factor',

which is further impacted by a multitude of environment-specific influences, including poverty, lack of democratic culture, gender inequality and gender-based violence, lack of social integration, lack of opportunities and employment, lack of access to education, and discrimination.

Daniel-Wrabetz and Penedo (2015, p. 3) posit that vulnerability is constituted of three predominant applicable vulnerabilities, which ultimately contribute to the creation of environments within which human trafficking thrives:

1. *Personal [pre-existing] vulnerability*: e.g., a person's physical or mental disability, youth or old age, gender, pregnancy, culture, language, belief, family situation;
2. *Situational [created or maintained] vulnerability*: e.g., legal status in one given territory or social, cultural or linguistic isolation;
3. *Circumstantial [created or maintained] vulnerability*: e.g., a person's unemployment or economic destitution.

In India, at the family level, personal vulnerabilities exist where gender discrimination is manifested in the preference for male children and the culture of male privilege, which deprive girls and women of access to basic and higher education, skills training, health services, and other basic resources necessary for survival (Chuang, 2006). At the societal level, situational vulnerabilities mean women face discrimination through uneven division of wage labour and salaries, citizenship rights and inheritance rights, as well as certain religious and customary practices which, reinforced by state policies, further entrench and validate discrimination, and perpetuate the cycle of oppression of women (Chuang, 2006). Furthermore, gender status contributes to females' structural vulnerability (Daniel-Wrabetz and Penedo, 2015). Finally, the interplay of both personal and situational vulnerabilities establishes and perpetuates the existence of circumstantial vulnerability at a particular point in time (Chuang, 2006).

It is argued that the creation of a market like sex trafficking in India is rooted in misogyny (Herzog, 2008). There is an historical, invasive, and persistent sexist ideology that has tainted the way many Indians think about women, their bodies, and their work, which subjects them to stigmatising beliefs and thereby heightens their vulnerability. When the existence of such beliefs is combined with gender-based discrimination and violence, these practices enable the maintenance of a woman's second-class status, increase her social burden, and perpetuate her exploitation (Haq, 2013).

2.5.4 SEXUALITIES

2.5.4.1 *Female Sexuality*

Understanding the expression and acceptance of female sexuality within India is integral to acknowledging how these perspectives impact and shape the manifestation of stigmatisation. Although female sexuality and sexual empowerment are being profoundly reshaped in modern India (Maharatna, 2013), McFadden (2001) highlights a cultural tradition of sexual repression, where cultural taboo surrounds premarital or extramarital sex that is engaged in for purposes of pleasure and without the intention to reproduce. Such sex is therefore perceived as promiscuous, deviant, and culturally unacceptable (Paul et al., 2015; Puri, 2002). The notion of sexual repression, depicted by the ‘conspiracy of silence’ metaphor (Puri, 2002), is the primary discourse of sexuality in contemporary India, and it has been proposed that the middle class, especially, is profoundly uncomfortable with sexuality as a direct result of sexual repressiveness (Nair & John, 2000).

This sexual repression is evident even within an institution as fundamental as India’s education system, where comprehensive sexuality education [CSE] faces strong opposition (Das, 2014). Public discussion of topics of a sexual nature are widely considered as taboo in Indian society, therefore acting as a barrier to the delivery of adequate and effective sexual education to Indian adolescents (Ismail, Shajahan, Rao & Wylie, 2015). Fundamentalists of various religious affiliations make it difficult to discuss CSE, its content, who should be providing it, and through what mechanisms. Furthermore, these arguments often also stop progressive members of political parties from taking a firm stand in favour of CSE (Das, 2014).

Believed by some to be a corrupting force that will encourage youth to engage in promiscuity, experimentation, and irresponsible sexual behaviour, CSE has been widely demonised amongst parents, teachers and politicians as a mechanism through which to spoil and undermine ‘Indian values’ (Tripathi & Sekher, 2013). Some opponents argue that CSE is a Western import which attempts to homogenise culture, and which has no place within India’s rich cultural traditions, pitting sexuality against the social, religious and moral ethos of India (Das, 2014; Tripathi & Sekher, 2013). Six states have thus far rejected the central government’s sex education programme, with the provision of CSE banned in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka (Ismail et al., 2015; Tripathi & Sekher, 2013). However, although these initiatives may be inconsistent with the national curriculum, there is evidence that there is growing emphasis upon the importance of delivering CSE to India’s adolescents, as some education institutions within these states

still administer independent sex education and sexual health programmes ('The Birds, the Bees and the Taboos', 2007).

Sexual respectability is an important element of traditional Indian cultural and religious values; it is shaped by social anxieties of women transgressing the boundaries of what is considered sexually appropriate, including fears that women will violate the rules of premarital chastity, or that they may jeopardise their socially-ascribed sacred status as virgins (Puri, 2002). Although sources of sexual stigma and prejudice are present within both spiritual and nonspiritual settings, religious organisations are one of the societal institutions with high rates of sexual stigma (Herek, Gillis & Cogan, 2009), and many religious texts condemn and stigmatise sexual behaviour, including premarital sex, masturbation, and homosexuality (Herek, Gillis & Cogan, 2009).

Historically in India, women have not been seen as active sexual agents, capable of desiring and being desired (Narayanan, 2014; Puri, 2002). Rather, they have been viewed as passive owners of sexually provocative bodies that invite the male gaze—a vulnerability which therefore leaves them requiring protection from external threats to their bodies, sexualities and sexual impulses (Bose & Bhattacharyya, 2007). Although a woman is subject to social expectations in India of purity before her marriage, the oppression of sexual respectability still endures following it, where her sexual activity should only exist to serve the purposes of either procreation or the provision of sexual satisfaction to her husband (Puri, 2002).

Sexual respectability and femininity in India are powerfully interconnected beliefs, which are central to the national culture (Sinha, 1995). Normative prescriptions of premarital chastity appear to not only shape women's narratives on sexuality, but they are overtly linked to the premise of national cultural identity (Puri, 2002). Sexual intercourse prior to marriage enables the explicit and irrevocable repudiation of the ascendancy of the hymen, after which a woman is no longer sexually chaste; as her identity as an Indian woman is deeply tied to her chastity, the loss of it therefore has profoundly negative consequences for her life and prospects, and thus, for many, premarital unchastity is unthinkable (Parameswaran, 2002; Puri, 2002). Puri's (2002) study and exploration of Indian female sexuality highlighted a pervasive belief among subjects that by mandate of her cultural upbringing or being Indian, sex and sexual exploration belongs solely within the institution of marriage, and to violate this principle is to be an inherently immoral woman. Although these beliefs are rooted in historical tradition, there remains a contemporary importance of premarital chastity for women in India, even as the country becomes increasingly modern (Parameswaran, 2002; Puri, 2002).

Ultimately, aspects of female gender identity in India—sexual respectability, marriage, motherhood, menstruation and fertility, and deference—enable the appearance of a stable identity of womanhood, which is revered, reinforced, and reproduced (Nair & John, 2000). This enables continued social control, which is routinely enacted through long-held traditional definitions and normative prescriptions of what is natural and normal in regards to femininity (Puri, 2002). Thus, where Indian girls and women are unable to comply with this identity—especially in regards to their sexuality and chastity—they experience the consequential actions of stigmatisation, discrimination and social exclusion, and they are restricted from being seen as worthy of their Indian identity. Whilst these actions serve as a means to punish them for their transgressions, they additionally set an example to other Indian girls and women as to the consequences of failing to uphold and honour the expectations of their roles as Indian females. This stigma and discrimination thereby ultimately has the power to regulate the bodies, actions, sexualities and gender identities of Indian women (Puri, 2002; Thapan, 1997; Thapan, 2001).

2.5.4.2 Male Sexuality and Indian Masculinities

Understanding men and masculinities is a critical component in development efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment (Wanner & Wadham, 2015), and in addition to understanding dominant cultural ideals of femininity, it is also important to recognise and explore the normative framework of masculinity within India. Social, cultural and patriarchal beliefs regarding male dominance and sexuality influence which male behaviours are encouraged or inhibited (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Within India, social norms regarding sexuality vary by gender, and while exploration of female sexuality is largely suppressed or criticised, male sexuality is commonly accepted or justified—even within more conservative communities (Colaco, 2010).

Patriarchies are sustained in religious and spiritual traditions (Seidler, 2006), and these norms can be seen in India as significantly influenced by Hinduism, where masculinity is emphasised through representations of the father, soldier, and warrior, and femininity is embodied in representations of the chaste and virtuous wife and mother (Banerjee, 2005). Indian masculinities, particularly, emphasise the woman's body as property, and conquering the female body is a symbol of male success in asserting his dominance and power over women (Joseph & Black, 2012). Sexual objectification and aggression are hence integral components of culturally accepted masculinity (Banerjee, 2005). Conversely, these masculine social norms also emphasise the absence of supposedly "feminine traits"

such as emotion and fragility, and rejection of and self-control in the management and silencing of such traits is valued within Indian masculinities (Seidler, 2006).

Therefore, traditional normative social frameworks value the expression of masculinity in the forms of heteronormativity, male superiority, power, and autonomy (Banerjee, 2005; Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2017). Virility and strength are also prized, thus creating justifications for male freedom in sexual exploration, as engagement in sex can be viewed as a manifestation of masculine power (Banerjee, 2005; Joseph & Black, 2012). Unlike women, Indian men are widely permitted—if not openly encouraged—to engage in nonmarital sex for the sake of gaining ‘experience’ and learning to be sexual decision makers, the latter of which is integral to enabling them to uphold the power and dominance that is expected of their identities within heterosexual relationships (Colaco, 2010). Within patriarchal cultures, power is often something men can take for granted in their relationships with women, creating an inherent sense of entitlement (Limmer, 2010; Seidler, 2006). This behaviour is further justified by representations of healthy sexual men as desiring consumers of sex (Joseph & Black, 2012), and the association of successful masculine gender identities with sexual voraciousness to satisfy the male ‘biological need’ for sex (Sanders 2008). This is contrasted by equations of female gender identities with purity and respectability. Within Indian culture, which emphasises codes of honour, individual behaviours can reflect on family names, and males have authority in protecting this honour, particularly as it relates to female virtue within their family (Seidler, 2006). However, Indian males are themselves rarely held to these standards, and they therefore enjoy much greater freedom of movement outside the household, autonomy in decision-making over their lives and bodies as compared with Indian females, and less familial and social discrimination and exclusion (Colaco, 2010). Fundamentally, a cultural basis for discrimination against the sexualities of heterosexual Indian males rarely exists, despite the fact it is central to the cultural identity and acceptance of Indian females. This contrast illustrates the critical gender inequities that exists between masculine and feminine sexualities within India, and how they create an environment within which the rights and freedoms of Indian girls and women over their bodies and choices is restricted and actively policed. This has enormous consequences for their social acceptance and participation.

2.5.5 SEX AND STIGMA

Goffman’s (1963) influential text defines stigma as an attribute that is deeply discrediting, and which reduces the stigmatised person from a ‘whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one’, disqualifying them from full social acceptance. Link and Phelan (2001) conceptualise stigma as a

process involving a number of interrelated elements including labelling, connecting labelled individuals to negative stereotypes, separating labelled individuals [‘them’] from the rest of the populace [‘us’], status loss and discrimination against labelled individuals, and the subsequent inequality of outcomes. Stigma has also been described as a dynamic process of devaluation that significantly discredits an individual in the eyes of others, where certain attributes are seized upon and defined by others as unworthy (Aggleton, Wood, Malcolm & Parker, 2005; Goffman, 1963). Stigma is linked to power and domination throughout society as a whole, creating and reinforcing inequality whereby some groups are made to feel superior and others devalued (Aggleton et al., 2005).

Stigma is constituted by two significant attributes—*enacted stigma*, which involves episodes of discrimination against people with the stigmatised condition on the grounds of their social and cultural unacceptability, and *felt stigma*, which involves both the shame associated with membership of the stigmatised group, and the fear of encountering enacted stigma (Scrambler, 2004). Stigma-based rejection sensitivity describes the psychological process through which some individuals learn to anxiously anticipate rejection because of previous experiences with prejudice and discrimination toward their group (Hatzenbuehler, 2017; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis & Pietrzak, 2002). Stigmatisation is a dynamic rather than static social process encountered in daily interactions between those being stigmatised and those who stigmatise them (Alonzo & Reynolds, 1995; Parker & Aggleton, 2003).

Stigmatising assumptions function at the point of intersection between culture, power and difference, and are central to the constitution of the social and moral order of a society (Krusi et al., 2016; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Those who engage in sex work are often viewed as polluting that order and are thus widely subjected to these processes of stigmatisation (Krusi et al., 2016; Scambler and Paoli 2008; Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011). Although similar patterns are seen globally (Benoit, McCarthy & Jansson, 2015; Paulson, 2008; Scrambler, 2004), sex work is particularly stigmatised within India (Krusi et al., 2016). Historically, the stigma related to sex work is rooted in women violating the norms of acceptable femininity, which include morally ‘correct’ sexual behaviours and the preservation of a woman’s ‘honour’ (Koken, 2012; Pheterson, 1993; Roberts, 1992).

Therefore, in contexts where sexual purity is the insignia of ideal womanhood, such as that evident within the culturally traditional communities of India, non-conformity to prescribed sexual codes results in enacted stigma and felt stigma associated with a complete loss of self-worth (Daniel-Wrabetz & Penedo, 2015; Heyzer, 2002). In India, the importance placed upon females guarding their sexual

purity means that the violation of it, even when it is as a result of force or violence, is commonly deemed to be the fault of the victim—not the abuser, rapist, or trafficker. The victim is therefore seen as fundamentally complicit in the crime (Savani, Stephens & Markus, 2011). Sexual exploitation in conservative communities can be met with immense shame and can subsequently lead to discrimination in the form of social ostracism for trafficked girls (IOM, 2006). Thus, reintegration is often one of the greatest challenges for these individuals because of the stigma and moral condemnation attached to the sex trade (Jayasree, 2004; Wickham, 2009).

Multidisciplinary research regarding stigma—across the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science and social geography—has tended to be strongly theoretical, and it has been argued to privilege the opinions and theories of researchers without paying due attention to the words and perceptions of those who are stigmatised (Link & Phelan, 2001). Examinations of the sources and consequences of pervasive, socially shaped exclusion from social and economic life are far less common (Link & Phelan, 2001), and hence, there remains room to explore, highlight, and understand the lived experiences of stigmatised individuals (Hatzenbuehler, 2017; Link and Phelan 2001; Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011).

2.5.5.1 Cultural Representation and Stigmatisation of Sex Work

Mass media is formative in its power to influence and impact public perception, and to thus shape cultural norms and traditions (Maier, Gentile, Vogel & Kaplan, 2014). The media significantly shapes our ideas and how we relate to those around us (Baun, 2009). In order to understand how stigmatisation of sex trafficking survivors is perpetuated within India, it is important to evaluate how sex work is situated within Indian media and cultural representations, and how this influences the social acceptance or exclusion of sex workers. In India, the social category of ‘prostitute’ has been subject to profound and sustained symbolic and material exclusion (Cornish, 2006), and the highly discrediting and tainting social labels which are given to sex workers—who are often viewed as deviant and in possession of a ‘spoiled identity’—can result in discrimination and social isolation (Goffman, 1963; Liu et al., 2011).

In the dominant Indian cultural framing of feminine identity, women who position themselves so as to attract male attention and a sexualised male gaze are depicted as women of ill repute, and they are inherently bad almost by definition (Booth, 2007; Pheterson, 1993). Symbolically, women who sell sex are marginalised within Indian popular culture, represented in numerous Bollywood and cultural films as objects of men’s insatiable lust, but who are to be ultimately rejected in favour of the chaste,

virtuous woman. Whilst historically the *tawaif*¹¹ lived largely free of discrimination, enjoying social prestige and autonomy, in her imagined cinematic form she is plagued by stigma and denigration (Ward, 2008). Her status as a ‘whore’, and the violation or inexistence of the puritanical virtues prized by traditional Indian culture is equated with her being unworthy and insignificant. While heroines can expect marriage to their heroes at film’s end, the *tawaifs* conventional fate is heartbreak, abandonment, or death (Booth, 2007; Cornish, 2006). As one film hero, Devdas, explains to one *tawaif*, Chandramukhi, ‘A woman is a mother, a sister, a wife, or a friend; and when she is nothing, she is a *tawaif*’ (Booth, 2007). The reflection of this stigma and devaluation of sex workers within a cultural icon as significant as India’s film industry, an institution and consumed artefact that reaches India’s masses, is profound (Ansari, 2010). Bollywood film, specifically, reaches the urban middle and working classes like no other cultural product (Virdi, 2003). Rajadhyaksha and Willeman (1999) posit that Indian cinema has mobilised influential paradigms for notions of what it means to be ‘Indian’ and has constructed key terms of reference for the prevailing cultural hegemony. Hence, Bollywood not only represents an Indian nationhood but is also a meaning-creating apparatus that takes part in constructing society (Ward, 2008). Denigrating depictions of the *tawaif* therefore reinforce and perpetuate the practice of devaluing, discriminating and isolating the women of the sex trade in reality (Gopal & Murti, 2011; Ward, 2008).

2.5.5.2 *The Consequences of Social Stigma: Social Exclusion*

Stigmatisation and discrimination against social groups raise obstacles for the successful participation of their members in society. Stigmatising assumptions of sex workers, coupled with power imbalances between sex workers and other community members, encourages discrimination and social exclusion, and enables the displacement of these women from their societies (Krusi et al., 2016; Pheterson, 1993). The social exclusion that often results from these embedded stigmatised assumptions deprive sex workers of the opportunity to engage as citizens, and they can additionally lead to the denial of their citizenship rights to police protection, legal recourse, and safe working conditions. The social degrading of sex workers can function to alleviate some of the governmental and societal responsibility in protecting their civic rights (Hunt, 2013; Krusi et al, 2016). As they suffer the loss of their civil

¹¹ The term designating unmarried women, mostly in the Northern regions of South Asia, who were trained in a variety of arts, which they would perform for remuneration from noblemen who would serve as their patrons. Tawaif lived together in buildings called *kothas*, and held court performances at the palaces of Mughal royalty, up until the British invasion in the mid-19th Century. These women inherited their trade from their mothers, and were trained in poetry, singing, dancing, musical performance, conversation and entertainment from a young age. Since the British Raj their way of life has declined steadily and now the word *tawaif* is associated with prostitution (Hurlstone, 2011).

liberties and human rights, this increases sex workers' structural vulnerability to violence as they have to operate outside the societal protections other citizens (at least of higher castes or classes) can take for granted (Haugen & Boutros, 2014; Koken, 2012; Pheterson, 1993). Both within India and globally, many women associated with the label 'sex worker'—whether by choice or by force—have reported discrimination in obtaining housing, medical care, and mainstream employment (Barton, 2002; Paulson, 2008). Furthermore, this stigmatisation is not only enacted by others, it can also be internalised and reproduced by the sex workers themselves and is evident in the ways that they speak about themselves and others of their community (Cornish, 2006). Stigmatising experiences usually, if not always, work bidirectionally: the stigmatised group perceives the devaluation either from individuals or from institutions, and then internalises these enacted discriminations as deserved and as self-imposed inequality and powerlessness (Liu et al., 2011). How sex workers experience, negotiate and resist stigma is influenced by social, material and interpersonal factors, including poverty, ethnicity, self-worth and -esteem, and gender identity (Krusi et al., 2016).

2.5.5.3 *Fatalism*

Stigma is not only manifested externally, but it is also a critical internal process experienced by those who are stigmatised, and which threatens the ability of sex-trafficked women to be rehabilitated and reintegrated successfully (Scrambler, 2004). Internalised stigma, a lack of empowering experiences, and subscribing to the 'deviant' and 'unworthy' sex worker identities can promote fatalistic expectations that little can be achieved, or that all hope is lost (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015; Cornish, 2006; Goffman, 1963; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Magar, 2012). Under repressive social conditions, material oppression, which denies people opportunities for agency, and symbolic oppression, which denies them positive or active definitions of self, can lead to fatalism. Sex work related stigma, as well as the emotional and sexual nature of the labour itself, place unique demands on the psychological coping resources of female sex workers (Koken, 2012). The internalisation of stigma and prejudice has been linked to withdrawal from social support networks and decreased self-esteem (Link et al., 1989), increased feelings of self-deprecation, a weakened sense of mastery (Fife & Wright, 2000) and symptoms of depression (Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011). Where these forms of oppression are exerted with sufficient force and duration, individuals may come to consider their hardships as inevitable and unassailable, so that the appropriate response seems to be adaptation rather than resistance, and thus encourages stigmatised women of the sex trade to remain in sex work (Montenegro, 2002).

The impact of this stigma can instill within these girls and women the fear of possible retribution and discrimination that they will face from their families, communities, education providers and employers, who may brand them as being ‘dirty’ or without virtue. Social stigma has often resulted in a loss of social support and familial acceptance for sex workers, as presumptions of immorality and corruption lead many Indian communities and families to cut off their ties with a woman who is a known prostitute (Cornish, 2006; Swendeman et al., 2009). The fear of this stigma and its detrimental impacts upon their hopefulness to build fulfilling lives post-rescue has ultimately encouraged many victims trafficked into the sex trade to resign themselves to remain in that environment, rather than pursuing what they view as ‘fruitless’ rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009; Magar, 2012).

In Cornish’s (2006) study of sex workers in Kolkata, India, the subjects explained that, in their home communities, marriage and motherhood were key criteria for a female to achieve respect, and engagement in sex work denies them these sources of respect. Being a sex worker excludes a person from being a ‘family person’. A family person is spoken of as ‘good’, while being in sex work is ‘bad’. Entering sex work is spoken of as ‘becoming bad’ or ‘becoming spoiled’. Just as the spoiling of food is irreversible, so it is considered extremely difficult for a woman to lose the stigma of having been in the sex trade—regardless of how she came to be a part of it. Sex workers thus learn that they cannot regain a respectable identity but must expect and accept stigmatisation and discrimination (Cornish, 2006).

To inspire a shift towards prevention strategies for both sex trafficking and re-victimisation, and to enable rescued sex trafficking victims to recover from their experiences and to be accepted as full and equal members of society, the social stigma and gender discrimination associated with sexual activity and prostitution needs to be addressed to elevate both the social value and status of females above their cultural depictions of deference, servitude, and worthiness based solely upon their sexual status. Without measures to manage and mitigate these stigmas, victims become re-victimised as they are subjected to the scrutiny, discrimination and the subsequent violence and exclusion that can result from such stigmatisation (Heath, 2013). The manifestation of social hardships such as prejudice, rejection and bigotry during the reintegration process reinforce the social isolation, penury and discrimination that limit victims’ resettlement (Heath, 2013). It is suggested within the literature that global efforts to counter human trafficking for sexual exploitation will only be successful by tackling uneducated and misinformed opinions amongst the public at large as to why women fall prey to

traffickers, and there remains further opportunity for greater effort to be invested into preventative measures by governments, international agencies, NGOs, and local agencies (Wickham, 2009).

2.6 BUYERS AND SELLERS

It is important for anti-trafficking initiatives to understand the motivations of buyers and sellers of trafficking victims, as fundamentally, sex trafficking is a demand-driven industry. Were there not the existence of customers demanding female bodies for sex, traffickers would have no incentive to supply them. Preventative measures for anti-trafficking need to identify how to address and mitigate the processes of supply and demand (Hunt, 2013).

A ‘trafficker’ can be a recruiter, transporter, pimp, brothel owner, or anyone else who plays a role in the business of domestic or transnational prostitution (Chin & Finckenauer, 2012). The word ‘trafficker’ is often used within sex trafficking literature to refer to all individuals who are involved in the recruitment of women in the countries of origin, their transportation across state and national borders, and the facilitation and management of the women in whatever commercial sex venues they become engaged (Chin & Finckenauer, 2012). Within the minimal research that examines sex traffickers, perpetrators are identified as predominantly male (Bouché & Shady, 2017). The gender dynamics behind female sex traffickers are more complex, as when females traffick other females, it is generally the role of the trafficked woman who is a superior within a group of other trafficked women (Bouché & Shady, 2017; Williamson & Cluse-Tolar, 2002). Initially, sex traffickers may present themselves as empathetic and compassionate boyfriends who offer to help girls and women escape from an abusive home or from harsh living conditions on the streets (Anderson, Coyle, Johnson & Denner, 2014; Reid, 2016). A maltreated woman or girl can easily be seduced by the trafficker’s fraudulent promise of love, safety, and attention—this is a manipulative recruitment technique termed ‘love bombing’ (Dorias & Corriveau, 2009).

The sex trafficker’s primary motive, as a rational actor, is to maximise profits while managing risks (Bouché & Shady, 2017). In the recruitment process, sex traffickers often seek out girls who are vulnerable and lack a strong social support structure, and central to a sex trafficker’s business strategy is to convince or manipulate others (Dank et al., 2014; Reid, 2016). The victim is therefore isolated from outside support and controlled physically and emotionally. Traffickers gain control over victims through the use of physical and sexual violence, control of their money and work, by disorienting victims through the forced consumption of drugs and alcohol or by moving them frequently between

locations, and the production of pornography to blackmail and shame victims (Brayley, Cockbain & Laycock, 2011; Stark & Hodgson, 2003).

There is no profile that encapsulates a ‘typical’ client, as many of the biggest trafficking consumers are developed nations, and men from all sectors of society support the trafficking industry. Men who purchase trafficked girls or women are both rich and poor, Eastern and Western, but ultimately seek unified goals of sexual gratification, power, and domination (Niemi, 2010; Yen, 2008). Those who advocate a legal prostitution industry imply that purchasers of sex are unfairly vilified, arguing that educating them can turn these customers into allies in identifying women in forced prostitution who may help victims escape their traffickers (Ham, 2011). However, in contrast, those who believe that prostitution is inherently harmful to those involved describe customers as culpable players in sex trafficking operations (Gregorio, 2015). Purchasers of commercial sex are viewed as not only fuelling demand for sex trafficking victims, but also subjugating victims to rape and serious violence (Yen, 2008).

Sykes and Matza’s (1957) theory of delinquency posits that individuals compensate for criminal behaviour and minimise social control by evoking forms of socially acceptable excuses and justifications called techniques of neutralisation (Copley, 2014). In this perspective, norms and values are not unconditional imperatives, but flexible patterns for behaviour with varying levels of applicability depending on location, social circumstance, and historical period (Sykes & Matza, 1957). These neutralisations may be manifested as denial of responsibility (an attribution of the crime to forces beyond their control), denial of injury (a minimisation of the perceived extent of harm caused), denial of victim (a claim that the harm was justified, warranted or deserved), condemning the condemners (criticism and shift of focus to those who reject their actions), and defence of necessity (whereby individuals negate guilt by emphasising the necessity of their crime) (Copley, 2014; Reid, 2016). Sex traffickers and customers alike utilise neutralisations within varied historical and social contexts to construct victimisation and agency in complex ways which enable them to deflect criminal actions, mitigate complicity, and reaffirm social constructions (Copley, 2014).

2.7 HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

2.7.1 WOMEN’S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Women’s human rights lie at the core of any truly credible anti-trafficking strategy, for violations of human rights are both a cause and a consequence of trafficking in persons (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg,

2015; Heyzer, 2002; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009). It is argued that anti-trafficking strategies should endeavour to address human rights violations and ensure gender equality in the family, community, and society at large as their paramount objective. This would require interventions for female empowerment which address unequal gender relations that marginalise women—beginning first and foremost with cultural perceptions of women, their value, the ownership and empowerment of their bodies, and their rights (Doepke & Tertilt, 2011; Heyzer, 2002). The literature suggests that it is essential to challenge notions of women in terms of domesticity, dependence, ownership, and servitude, alongside constructions of women's sexuality as either passive or dangerous, existing only for marriage, childbearing, or for the provision of males' sexual pleasure (Banerjee, 2005; Heyzer, 2002; Vijayakumar, 2013).

The lack of rights afforded to disempowered women serves as the primary causative factor at the root of both their migrations and trafficking; through their failure to protect and promote women's civil, political, economic and social rights, governments and societies create situations in which trafficking flourishes (Coomaraswamy, 2002; U.S. Department of State, 2009). Hence, when one considers trafficking within its broader socioeconomic context, it is not difficult to connect human trafficking to failures to champion these various human rights (Chaung, 2006). It is therefore argued that through the application of the HRBA, securing truly universal human rights should be the basis of anti-trafficking efforts. This approach acknowledges the primary instigators of trafficking, such as discriminatory practices in education and health as marginalising women, girls and minorities, and focuses on empowerment models to reduce or eliminate the vulnerability of persons to being trafficked (Dragiewicz, 2008). Yet few trafficking prevention campaigns and victim assistance programmes address the stigma that girls and women who have been rescued from trafficking have to live with for the rest of their lives, which can leave them exposed to continued vulnerability and abuse (Chen & Markovici, 2003).

The HRBA is a two-way street; both duty-bearers and rights holders need to be fully informed about their rights and to actively participate in decisions that affect them (United Nations Population Fund, 2014). Rights cannot be given, but must be claimed by those who hold them, and the rights-based approach to development inspires people-centred development that encourages participation and empowerment through an emphasis on individual agency (Molyneux & Lazar, 2003). However, human rights systems have historically disadvantaged the marginalised, as individuals' ability to claim their human rights are significantly dependent upon the power relations present within the society or group to which they belong (Alston, 2005; Katsui, 2008), and furthermore, traditional human rights

discourse has largely emphasised male-dominated or gender-neutral understandings (Frostell, 2006). Therefore, for both girls and women, prevention fundamentally involves the promotion of individual and collective empowerment that will address the underlying causes of their gender inequality and the intersectionality of their marginalisation and equip them to become rights-holders (Heyzer, 2002; Katsui, 2008). Such individual and collective empowerment is an essential prerequisite for a rights-based approach; empowerment involves both a structural dimension—legal, policy, institutional elements and State accountability, and an individual dimension—one designed to equip individuals and groups with an awareness of their rights, and the power to claim them and to demand that they are observed and honoured (Heyzer, 2002).

Whilst discrimination and violence against women are integral to human trafficking, and the consequent manifestations of poverty and economic instability, no global or large-scale anti-trafficking program has ever aimed to address these underlying problems from a human rights perspective (Bernstein, 2010; Bravo, 2007; Sanghera, 2015). Even at the level of legal analysis, there is a persistent failure to examine how international human rights law could be used to address the root causes of the problem (Bravo, 2007; Chuang, 2006).

2.7.2 COMPETING RELATIONSHIPS: HUMAN RIGHTS VS. CULTURAL RIGHTS

Much of the discrimination experienced by Indian girls and women is rooted in cultural tradition, and such violation of human rights is often cited as justified by cultural history and practice. It is therefore important to understand the contentious intersection of human rights and cultural rights, and how this competing relationship impacts rights-based approaches to development broadly.

Human rights are traditionally understood as a set of universal, inalienable, and individual rights (Hafner-Burton, 2014). Almost by definition, they are supposed to be applicable everywhere and at any time, be independent of specific political systems or cultures, and have value even in political systems, cultures, or societies that do not make any reference to them or even explicitly reject their centrality (Roy & Annicchino, 2013). Therefore, the rights and freedoms guaranteed in these international treaties and conventions are often in direct conflict with cultural or religious practices, and there exists a long-standing controversy between the concepts of the universality of human rights and cultural relativism (Musalo, 2015).

Advocates of cultural relativism argue that permitting international norms to override the dictates of culture and religion demonstrates the imposition of cultural imperialism and colonisation, and is a violation of state sovereignty (Li, 2005; Musalo, 2015; Penna & Campbell, 1998). Cultural relativists cite that the “common set of values” declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights overlooks diversity and ignores the dynamic nature of traditional practice and customary laws (Reid, 2013). They furthermore often characterise culture as an integral attribute of self-determination and of people's sovereignty, which human rights are fundamentally intended to respect (Musalo, 2015).

Conversely, proponents of universality maintain that the human rights that have been guaranteed in international treaties and conventions are universal, apply to all countries, and must prevail even when they conflict with cultural or religious practices (Musalo, 2015; Penna & Campbell, 1998). Universalists critique culture as the expression and maintenance of the worldview of the most powerful in society (Li, 2005; Samatopoulou, 2012). They posit that to the degree that cultural norms are created and maintained by the powerful, they may disenfranchise less powerful individuals or groups in a society—for example, cultural norms in a patriarchal society become a mechanism through which to maintain the inequality of women (Li, 2005; Musalo, 2015). Universalists also defend criticisms of colonialism by citing the fact that the human rights standards that came into existence after World War II were not legislated by a few powerful nations, but they were rather drafted by representatives from diverse nations (Musalo, 2015; Samatopoulou, 2012). These drafters agreed that state sovereignty could never justify certain governmental practices that were seen to undermine the spirit of human rights. Hence, proponents of universality argue that international human rights norms have moral authority because they constitute the world community's consensus regarding ethical behaviour between governments and their citizens (Musalo, 2015).

Although traditional, cultural, and religious values are often cited or deployed as a justification to undermine and deny human rights, ultimately in practice, they cannot be invoked to contravene rights (Reid, 2013). Human Rights Watch has extensively documented how discriminatory elements of traditions and customs have impeded, rather than enhanced, people's social, political, civil, cultural, and economic rights (Reid, 2013). To suggest that there is a basis for one's individual right to enjoy one's own culture does not inherently validate the pursuit of culture as an end in itself (Irina, 2011). Rather, caution must always be maintained in order not to allow a cultural legitimisation of violence, especially since violence in the name of culture is more difficult to erase precisely because it is legitimised by culture-specific rules and norms (Irina, 2011). The human rights movement therefore seeks the transformation of cultural norms and traditions—not their rejection—but the onus

fundamentally falls upon cultural practices to demonstrate that they are rights-compatible (Reid, 2013; Roy & Annicchino, 2013). The human rights movement is not opposed to the existence of customary law, religious law, and tradition; it is opposed to those aspects of them that violate fundamental human rights (Gouws & Stasiulis, 2013; Reid, 2013). Tradition is not static nor fossilised, and culture naturally changes over time. Thus, international human rights law calls for customary and traditional practices that violate human rights to be transformed to remove discriminatory elements (Reid, 2013).

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored the numerous factors that continue to support the practice of sex trafficking, both globally and within India, and how they may impact individual vulnerability and thus influence the effectiveness of anti-trafficking initiatives. The literature I have discussed in this chapter serves as an important foundation for the analyses that will be presented in those that follow.

The continued growth of human trafficking clearly indicates that current global and domestic approaches to target and address this problem are insufficient, and more effective solutions need to be identified and implemented. The literature has indicated predominantly reactive approaches have thus far been used, which emphasise prohibition and prosecution. Hence, there exists a strong absence of meaningful preventative action. The literature therefore suggests that anti-trafficking initiatives must more strongly prioritise prevention and protection, particularly by understanding the problem of human trafficking as one closely associated with human rights violations.

Furthermore, the overrepresentation of women as sex trafficking victims indicates that gender is a critical component of the problem and addressing the vulnerabilities that stem from the intricacies of gender discrimination is therefore imperative. The literature illustrates that enduring gendered cultural and social norms in India are integral to the creation of stigmatisation and discrimination that contributes to the marginalisation, vulnerability and exploitation of Indian girls and women. However, despite evidence that social stigma, gendered discrimination and human rights are interrelated, there is a gap in the literature in meaningfully connecting these factors to sex trafficking and anti-trafficking work. Therefore, the multiple domestic challenges identified within the literature have informed my decision to explore an intention to honour and facilitate the realisation of individuals' human rights by addressing stigma and its related discrimination.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research topic was inspired by *Half the Sky*¹² and *The Locust Effect*¹³, both of which I read before commencing this Masters in 2015. These books exposed me to the global realities and intricacies of human trafficking, sex trafficking, and women's oppression, and also highlighted for me the importance of honouring and protecting the human rights of the poor and vulnerable as fundamentally integral activities in the endeavour towards poverty alleviation and human development. As an Indian woman myself, this research was also motivated by my own understandings and experiences of the conservatism, shame and stigma surrounding sex and sexuality within Indian communities. Whilst I have felt the frustration of these traditional values in restricting the agency and freedom of choice all Indian women should be able to exercise over their lives and their bodies, it was particularly abhorrent to me to come to understand that the same criticism and discrimination is endorsed for survivors of sexual violence, for whom the loss of their “purity” was never a choice. With the topic of sexual stigma as my inspiration, I used the first year of my Masters to undertake courses that extended my understanding of human rights, Eastern and Western feminisms, gender and crime, and human trafficking, which refined my perspectives and equipped me with foundational knowledge to pursue this particular research topic. My thesis is therefore a result of diligent exploration, reflection and learning about human rights, human trafficking, stigma, gender, and understanding the context of India.

This chapter explores how my research was undertaken, from both practical and conceptual perspectives. It also examines the key literature regarding qualitative research methodologies, my chosen methodology, and the subsequent implications and limitations of these methods for my research process.

3.2 LOCATION

This research was conducted in Kolkata, India. Although no country is immune to the practice of human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013), I chose to focus my research in Asia as the Global

¹² Kristof, N. D. and WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Toronto, Canada: Alfred A. Knopf.

¹³ Haugen, G. A. and Boutros, V. (2014). *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Slavery Index identifies that the region harbours two-thirds of people trapped in modern slavery (Global Slavery Index, 2016). India, specifically, is home to 40 per cent of the estimated global slave population, and the highest absolute number of modern slaves (Global Slavery Index, 2016), leading it to thus become known colloquially as the Slave Capital of the World (Gupta, 2012; Sinhal, 2014). India operates as a destination, transit and origin country for human trafficking (Global Slavery Index, 2016), and furthermore, the impact of stigma surrounding sex and sexuality is culturally and religiously unique and nuanced within this context. Therefore, whilst this problem is not exclusive to India, this context does present a significant concentration of the issues.

It is reported that an estimated 150,000 girls and women are trafficked annually into India from South Asia to feed the commercial sex industry, and more than two million trafficked women and children are trapped in commercial sex work in the red-light districts of India (Sarkar, 2014). It is also estimated that the vast majority of children in India's sex industry are girls (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Metropolitan Indian cities, such as Kolkata, see the most concentrated sex trafficking activity and victim populations (Sarkar, 2014). Kolkata is the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal, and this particular location was selected as the state continues to be a significant and popular centre of human trafficking activity within India, reporting the highest number of trafficking cases throughout India in 2016 (Samay, 2017). West Bengal shares borders of 2,217km with Bangladesh, 92km with Nepal and 175km with Bhutan, and thus, the state operates as a powerful trafficking transit point within India. Furthermore, Asia's largest red-light district, Sonagachi, is situated in Kolkata. It is home to an approximated 13,000 sex workers, over half of whom are believed to be victims of sex trafficking, and most of whom have little or no hope of escape (Dasgupta, 2014; Sarkar, 2014). I completed this research through the Kolkata-based NGO, Sanlaap, which completes anti-trafficking work in the red-light districts of Kolkata and operates a shelter home for those women and children whom they have rescued from sex trafficking. I worked with Sanlaap for a period of seven weeks, during which time I visited the shelter home, observed and assisted their group activities and vocational training for survivors, and conducted my research interviews.

3.3 METHODS

This research utilised qualitative research methods to understand the experiences of sex trafficking survivors, and the staff who work with them, in regards to their rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Denzin and Lincoln as have defined qualitative research:

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (2005, p. 3).

A qualitative method is integral in understanding the intricacies of the numerous influences that enable the continued subjugation of vulnerable women and children who have survived sex trafficking (O'Leary, 2010); such a method enables a rich, complex understanding of human experience. Furthermore, through the application of the social constructivist epistemology, an emphasis is placed upon how the world and its realities are constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation (O'Leary, 2010). A qualitative method examines how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (Berg, 2001). This approach also seeks to empower individuals by highlighting their stories and experiences that have remained unspoken and unacknowledged (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

I utilised purposive sampling (Oliver & Jupp, 2006), where the primary participants were staff of Sanlaap. I was assigned two supervising staff from Sanlaap headquarters, and my discussions with them informed their selection of the best staff to speak with within the shelter home and at their headquarters. They were also responsible for suggesting and facilitating a focus group. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were approximately one hour in duration, with nine staff across various levels of the organization; in-depth interviews attempt to look deeper into the participants' perspectives about a certain matter (KC, 2015). A one-hour focus group was also conducted with eight girls and women who had been rescued from sex trafficking, who are under Sanlaap's care in their shelter home for survivors. Listening to individuals' life experiences encourages bonding between researcher and participant, and throughout the interviews and the focus group, I was able to witness many human emotions such as anger, sadness, hope, and happiness. The expression of these emotions was a integral reason for my selection of the in-depth interview method, as it encouraged a connection between researcher and participant, and ultimately enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges (KC 2015; Seidman, 2013).

All participants who offered to be involved in the study were provided an information sheet to read (Appendices A and B), and then given a consent form to read over and sign before the interview took place (Appendix C). As the participants of the focus group were unable to provide their written consent due to their level of literacy, their verbal consent was audio recorded. Interpreters were

selected by the participants or Sanlaap staff and were used for two of the staff interviews and the focus group. They were required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the commencement of the interview (Appendix D).

All staff interviews took place in a private room at either the Sanlaap headquarters, or the shelter home offices. At the suggestion of Sanlaap staff, the focus group was conducted in the shared activity and meeting space used by Sanlaap to run programmes and workshops with the residents of the shelter home. All interviews and the focus group were audio recorded. The interviews were semi-structured; although I prepared an Interview Guide (Appendix E), these were not a strict set of questions that I asked participants. Rather, I began by discussing with them the purpose of my study in regards to gender relations in India, and social stigma related to sex and sex work, and asked them to discuss their own experiences and understandings in relation to these topics.

Following the interviews, I listened to each audio recording to review the discussion, and then transcribed these interviews in full. Once the transcriptions were completed, I emailed copies of them to my interviewees to review and allowed them to request amendments or exclusions if they felt they were necessary. Where an interpreter was used during the interview, they were requested to support the interviewee in reviewing their transcript for accuracy. Although this raw data was not directly shared with Sanlaap, a copy of my findings and completed thesis has been provided to the organisation.

Upon confirming the accuracy of the transcribed interviews, I began familiarising myself with the data in preparation for thematic analysis. In a qualitative, exploratory study, the researcher carefully reads and rereads the data multiple times, looking for keywords, trends, or ideas in the data that will help outline the analysis, *before* any analysis takes place (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). During this process, it is important to actively engage with the data, searching for meaning and patterns in the material while reading it, and focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). I then began coding the data, a process that organises the data to identify, develop and correlate themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The data was then sorted and categorised according to the codes. Codes are typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. The process of my analysis also involved comparing code frequencies, identifying code co-occurrence, and correlating relationships and interdependencies between codes within the data set (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This enabled me

to articulate the dominant patterns within the data and define and name the central themes that arose from the research for analysis. Reliability is of concern with thematic analysis as greater interpretation goes into defining the coded items, in addition to applying the codes to segments of text (O’Leary, 2010). However, this issue is less pronounced when there is a single analyst, as in this research, and thematic analysis remains the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012).

3.4 ETHICS

This research project was given ethics approval by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee on 13 December 2016 [Ethics Approval: 23620] (Appendix F). This research, as highlighted within the literature, is of a sensitive nature and is additionally situated within a topic that is commonly shrouded in cultural taboo within India. Furthermore, although the research did not interrogate the past experiences of sex trafficking survivors, their history was raised and informed our discussions during the focus group, and it was therefore imperative to remain conscious of the vulnerability of the research subjects and the possibility that the research could lead to their re-victimisation. Hence, all interviews and discussions emphasised their freedom to decline answering any questions with which they were not comfortable, and were navigated carefully and with great sensitivity, avoiding any inquiry regarding these experiences unless the participant was forthcoming. Although the support of Sanlaap’s in-house counsellors was available to all participants, my primary stance was to cause no harm to the research subjects through the research process.

Another ethical challenge I faced was the language barrier between myself and the research subjects. I do not speak either Hindi (one of India’s official languages) or Bengali (one of West Bengal’s official languages). I therefore required an interpreter during some interviews with staff and survivors who either did not speak English or were more comfortable to conduct the interviews in their native language. For these interviews, I exercised diligence in obtaining informed consent and honouring the confidentiality of the participant. The interviewee was provided the opportunity to select the translator, in order to ensure they were comfortable with that individual’s presence during the interview, and the interpreter was required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the commencement of the interview to demonstrate their understanding of the responsibilities required in their role (Appendix C).

3.5 POSITIONALITY

Stemming from the interpretive traditions of anthropology (Geertz, 1988), positionality is a research method to mitigate bias (Milner, 2007). Positionality describes how researchers explore their situatedness as researchers and their multiple and shifting identities and agendas that influence the knowledge they produce, and how our own biases influence and shape the research process (Bourke, 2014; Murray & Overton, 2014; Nagar, 2002). Positionality highlights specific instances of privilege and power as they arise organically within the relationship between researcher and subject and remaining mindful of these dynamics is pragmatic to advance research that is equitable and truly representative (Relles, 2016). The method relies on disclosures of the positions that exist in the decision-making processes of human subjects research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Positionality is achieved in application not only by candid admission of one's biographical orientation, but also by subsequent self-reflection to bracket, not exclude, this orientation from the research design and process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The need for such an approach is based on the assumption that social, cultural, and political dynamics exist between a researcher and their subject, and these dynamics are based on factors such as education, class, race, ethnicity, gender, and disability (Mickelson, 2003; Relles, 2016). Positionality is a continuing mode of self-analysis, and ongoing reflexive analysis of researcher and participant positionality in research encounters is posited as affording insightful and in-depth research perspectives (Bourke, 2014; McGarry, 2016). Reflexivity is especially important when utilising qualitative methodologies, in order to consistently clarify and justify their personal motivation for their research (Breen, 2007).

Qualitative research often requires close, dynamic, and complex relationships between the researcher and the research participants and employs greater direct interaction through in-depth face-to-face interviews and the exploration of questions which require detailed, personal responses (Stewart-Withers, Banks, McGregor & Meo-Sewabu, 2014). During fieldwork, a researcher's power is negotiated, not given, and one must therefore remain mindful of limitations in access and entitlement to data in order to avoid colonising and oppressing the researched (Merriam et al., 2010; Sanjek, 1993). The process of conducting enquiry based on relationships introduces concerns of multi-dimensional power, and it is therefore of paramount importance to ensure our research enables the discourses of the research participants to be represented in their own genres and on their own terms, rather than as an oppressive, self-serving exercise (Krog, 2011; Merriam et al., 2010; Scheyvens, Scheyvens & Murray, 2014).

Such reflexivity was a process with which I was constantly engaging throughout my research design, fieldwork, analysis, and writing. The following are reflections on my own positionality:

I was born and raised in India for the first several years of my life, and as I have family there and I return to India almost annually, I have some knowledge and experience as an Indian female of the cultural environment and its realities. However, I am unaware of what it is like to live in this environment on a daily, permanent basis—as my research subjects do—and I also have a lot of inherent values and traits that can be clearly identified as ‘Western’. Therefore, whilst there are areas in which I am able to find similarities with the research subjects, it was also imperative that I remained conscious of how we are simultaneously very different. I have endeavoured to be respectful of that in the way I present their experiences and ensure that I do not equate them with my comparatively limited experiences and understandings of life as an Indian woman.

As highlighted in the literature and from my interviews, my class places me in a position where I would rarely have to fear the problems of human trafficking. Being from a financially secure, educated background reduces vulnerability to exploitation (Haugen & Boutros, 2014), and I therefore exist within a protected space afforded to me by my privilege, which is foreign to some of my research subjects—particularly survivors.

My experience of Kolkata was such that I always felt physically safe and secure. Despite the fact I physically resemble an Indian woman, my dress, appearance and accent made it generally obvious that I was a foreigner and a volunteer. I was therefore never troubled by anyone, even during the times I was alone in the red-light districts. The men, women, and children who approached me within Kalighat and Sonagachi were warm, welcoming, and curious, and I never feared for my safety. Furthermore, where something felt emotionally overwhelming, I had the physical and financial freedom and the emotional support to remove myself from the situation at all times, and even to leave Kolkata or India altogether if I deemed myself sufficiently unsafe or unhappy. This experience of agency regarding my safety and wellbeing renders me unable to know or understand the vulnerability and violence that is inherent to the existences of my research subjects. For the most part, these imbalances in privilege were not a limitation in my ability to conduct my research, as it was never emphasised by me, nor highlighted by the majority of my research subjects. However, although I was able to acknowledge and remain conscious of this facet of my lived experience, resentment of such privilege and perceptions of my subsequent inability to empathise with survivor experiences was manifested in one interview with a Sanlaap staff member. This caused a shift in power dynamics, where the participant proceeded to provide short, unclear answers, refused to clarify their statements when requested to, and increasingly presented with body language that brought the discussion to a prompt close. Furthermore, after the interview, they no longer interacted with me around the shelter

home. Their right to disengage with or end the interview was something I remained respectful of, and it was ultimately their prerogative to decide they were uncomfortable with continuing the interview, whatever be their compulsion for doing so. Regardless of my ability to be reflective of my positionality, their response to my privilege was something I had to accept as creating the perception that I was an outsider and someone unable to empathise with their reality, which thus excluded me from the ability to gain their trust.

Religion is an important, defining principle of Indian tradition (Bandyopadhyay & Sen, 2017). As someone who has no religious affiliation, it was required that I remained actively conscious of valuing and fairly representing something which may provide my research subjects a great deal of intrinsic support, and which has influenced or guided their experiences and choices.

Lastly, the label of 'victim' used in sex trafficking discourse can automatically place the individual in a position of vulnerability and disempowerment. This label may have legitimate purpose when discussing the topic in a generic, high-level sense, but it was important to remain mindful throughout my research of how this colours my perception of the subjects I interacted with. As discussed by Scheyvens, Scheyvens and Murray (2014), when research is motivated by a personal, emotional response to social injustice, our attitude towards people who face those injustices should not be so shrouded by pity that we are rendered unable to see meaningful value in those whom we study. In my research, I therefore endeavoured to see the research participants not as generic victims, but as individuals who lead multi-dimensional lives, and who are capable of having their own power, resilience, and hope (Scheyvens, Scheyvens and Murray, 2014). It is this latter aspect of their identities and experiences that I wished to highlight and understand through my research.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

The research process is never perfect, and always has its limitations. For my research, the critical limitations were the time constraints of my fieldwork and Masters, language, and personal limitations in regards to research skill in this area of study.

I initially travelled to Kolkata to complete an internship with another NGO, which ultimately ended due to challenges surrounding their organisational management and ethics. Trying to follow up with this NGO to organise my research meant that I lost three of the ten weeks I had in total to complete my fieldwork. By the time I was able to meet with and agree a research position and strategy with

Sanlaap, I had less than six weeks of time remaining in Kolkata. This meant that I was limited in my time for relationship- and rapport-building. My initial fieldwork plan was to spend one month working alongside the NGO to make myself familiar with staff and survivors and immerse myself in their work and environment, but the lost time meant that I had to begin my interviews much earlier than I would have liked. This left me in a position, particularly with earlier interviews, where I was very much an outsider to my research subjects. These were challenges I unfortunately could not have foreseen, and although the majority of my participants were extremely cooperative and forthcoming in their interviews, this was still an element of my fieldwork experience that could have negatively impacted the quality of the trust and relationships I was able to build, and the data I was able to collect.

Although, as previously discussed, I do possess certain similarities with my research group, fundamental differences in our realities and experiences mean that I would never be considered an insider or ‘native’ of their group (Breen, 2007). Therefore, when combined with the constraints of time that I had for my fieldwork and my shortened time for relationship building—despite my best intentions—I was, in some sense, a ‘parachuting’ researcher (Gerrard, 1995). Parachuting often occurs because of the demands of academic pressure and is described as when outside-researchers parachute into people’s lives, and then vanish (Gerrard, 1995; Yozwiak et al., 2016). This form of research is limited in its ability to allow the researcher to conduct research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ their group and is a limitation of my experience as an outside-researcher in the possible efficacy and effectiveness of my research process (Breen, 2007; Pollack & Eldridge, 2015). However, I did not entirely ‘parachute’, as I did spend some time living in Kolkata, and I was able to give my time to Sanlaap and other NGOs outside of my research tasks. I was therefore able to still make a meaningful contribution to these organisations and the community beyond just fulfilling my research interests.

The aforementioned language barrier between myself and my research subjects was also a limitation, as translation from Hindi or Bengali to English was required. In the focus group, the translator provided by Sanlaap could not speak Bengali, and this meant that one participant who could only speak Bengali required one of her peers to translate from Bengali to Hindi for the translator, who then translated from Hindi to English for me. Translation is ultimately an interpretive act and meaning can therefore be lost in the process (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010). Furthermore, once translated, the words expressed no longer belong to the research subject, but to the individual who interpreted their meaning (Temple, 2008). This will always have limitations for the complete accuracy of an individual’s words, but I attempted to mitigate this limitation within my research by having their transcriptions translated back to them to ensure and confirm accuracy.

Although I have completed research with women before, I have no experience in conducting research of such a sensitive nature, and this could have negatively impacted both the efficacy of my fieldwork, and the quality of this research. The experience gained from completing my fieldwork and this Masters has better-equipped me to continue work in the same field in future, but there are weaknesses I had during the process of data-gathering, such as my confidence in navigating sensitive and taboo topics, and my ability to build relationships in a new cultural environment. I could only acknowledge these as weaknesses with hindsight and cultivate these as strengths through the process of completing the research.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

These findings are based on interviews conducted over six weeks, with eight Sanlaap staff, one staff member of the partnering Government-run shelter home, and one focus group conducted with eight survivors residing in the Sanlaap shelter home. These participants were asked questions about gender discrimination, women's social status in India, the rehabilitation process, and the role of social stigma hindering or supporting survivors' reintegration into society. Their responses have been identified by the following codes: counselling staff [CS], government staff [GS], Sanlaap headquarters staff [HQ], and survivors [Survivor].

4.2 GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS IN INDIA

In order to analyse and evaluate the influence of social stigma on the reintegration of survivors, it is important to understand the power and prevalence of gendered social norms, as it is the perceived transgression of such norms that lead to survivors being stigmatised. Both staff and survivor participant narratives clearly defined facets of 'womanhood' for the Indian female, consistently illustrating the social control exerted by dominant social norms upon her freedom, body and choices, and how this is contrasted by the realities of her male counterpart.

4.2.1 *The Ideal Woman*

Participants explained how, during childhood, powerful beliefs and social and cultural expectations regarding what 'success' as a woman looks like are taught and entrenched by a girl's family and community. These expectations emphasise the 'mindset' that one must follow the 'process' of marrying someone [CS4], and that virginity is central to the value and identity of the 'proper' single woman, without which 'society thinks that she is not a very good symbol of a good citizen... or woman' [HQ1]. These beliefs therefore have strong repercussions for a woman's acceptance and participation within her society.

... The family means there should be a husband, there should be a son... Your life cycle will be complete if you [are] a biological mother, if you have a husband, then you are a full[y] satisfied woman. [CS4]

Before marriage, if she is not a virgin, then her life is spoiled, her life is finished... [CS1]

4.2.2 *Marriage*

Participants described upbringings within a culture which deeply values marriage and thus prepares young girls ‘to believe that marriage is a good life’ [GS] as marriage ensures that the Indian woman’s ‘status is uplifted’ as she is ‘upgraded’ to a higher class [HQ3]. The institution of marriage was widely viewed as providing security and protection to Indian women, perpetuating ‘gender conditioning’ that men are protectors, and that unmarried women are vulnerable and ‘protection-less’ without a husband [HQ1]:

A husband is the protection... It is immaterial whether he is capable to give you the protection or not. But there is someone. It is a gender thing, ok? [HQ1]

You cannot go out somewhere without having a husband when you’re unmarried because it is not safe. But subsequently, having a husband ensures safety... I have no idea how! But that’s the perception, or the way people think. [HQ2]

Furthermore, in a discussion of what makes a girl of good character, one participant stated that, ‘Marriage should be there. But she should be married with somebody, then we are the winners!’ [GS], illustrating how marriage is integral to both an Indian woman’s identity and worth, and that of her family’s.

The single woman was classed within two categories—unmarried and empowered, or unmarried and disempowered [HQ1]. The emphasis upon marriage as central to an Indian woman’s acceptance in society has led to an inherent burden in being and carrying the identity of a single woman, regardless of whether she is empowered or disempowered. One participant illustrated this burden by stating perceptions held by society that, ‘A single woman is the most worthless person in the house’ [HQ1].

However, conversely, some participants highlighted that the government is increasingly pursuing the empowerment and liberation of women, and a social shift is occurring within modern India where it is becoming common and widely accepted that ‘women are very much career-focused’ and therefore ‘it’s not necessary that a woman should marry’ [CS4]. Furthermore, whilst acknowledging the role of marriage within society, one participant expressed that freedom for personal choice is important, stating that ‘marriage is a very important institution—I also feel it is a very important institution. But if I don’t want to marry, then people should respect that’ [HQ1].

...Marriage is not for all women. Although India is a developing country, now we are [saying] that in India, women who are not getting married, they stay safely, because... Many laws have been developed about the women, about their protection, about their lives. So, I think it is not impossible for women to be staying without marriage. [CS4]

Despite these balanced perspectives, staff participants did highlight that disempowered women feel shame when they go unmarried, because they view it as their fault they are not desirable. ‘And these kinds of things make her be an introvert... Her confidence level becomes zero’, which thus disempowers her further [HQ1]. Such disempowerment is reinforced by a society that looks down upon unmarried women for having failed to embody success as a woman, and which pities her for being without the security and protection that they believe she needs to obtain through marriage because she is ‘biologically more vulnerable’ [HQ3]. This pressure increases as she gets older and passes the ‘marriageable age’ of twenty-five, after which ‘it is kind of a crime if you go unmarried’ [HQ3]:

Because in our society, at a very young age, we are preparing the girls to be a mother, to be a wife... We are also giving [the image of] a family where my child is there, my husband is a loving husband - so we are then looking for it. So when I [do] not get it, that’s when I start thinking that this is my fault. [CS6]

4.2.3 Barriers to Freedom and Breaking Social Norms

Participants described how it is not widely accepted for a woman to have her independence, as independence and autonomy in India are viewed as masculine traits, and she is therefore criticised for violating her gender role [HQ1]. Limits are placed upon her freedom, defining exactly how she should behave. ‘You cannot do night stays, you cannot go drinking, you cannot go pubbing, because then you’re a “bad girl”, you’re a “bad charactered woman”...’ [HQ3]. Participants described women who do not adhere to expectations ‘that you should be within your limits’ [HQ3]—whether married or unmarried—as criticised by society for being ‘rebels’ [HQ3; CS4]:

So... You know, people place these perceived notions upon us, it’s like imposed upon us—even if we like it, or don’t like it... And if we don’t like it, and if we break the rules, we are rebels who do not conform to society’s expectations. So either way it is bad. [Survivor]

Therefore, where a woman uses her independence and empowerment to make her own decisions, she is criticised and ostracised for transgressing societal expectations:

Because, you are acting as a man. Whatever you are doing—[if] you are running your family, you are going outside [on] your own, you are purchasing things, you are in a decision-making position... To me, empowerment [is] when I am in a decision-making position... But in a patriarchal society, there is the mindset [that] only men can take... decision[s]—and women will follow. And I break [that] rule. Every [empowered] ‘single’ woman break[s] [that] rule. So society is not accept[ing] that. [HQ1]

For both married and unmarried women, and women of all classes, there are social controls upon their agency. As ‘very few families or people actually accept her freedom that it is her life’ [HQ3], these restrictions were described by participants as therefore denying an Indian woman her true independence:

Even after you are an adult, you don’t truly feel free, you are never truly free because of the barriers which society puts around you. You don’t really feel free or independent. [Survivor]

4.2.4 Female Sexuality and Chastity

The chastity of the female body was highlighted as very important within Indian culture and tradition, the loss of which had been described by participants in Sanlaap’s shelter home as losing ‘everything’ [CS1; HQ1]. Participants illustrated that the idea that Indian females require protection stems from beliefs that female bodies are inherently sexual and vulnerable. Women therefore become the gatekeepers of chastity, not men, and ‘...whatever it is, the blame comes on the girl’ [Survivor]. Indian girls and women hold the responsibility for protecting their chastity, and men are conversely excused for their participation or transgressions:

...She said, there was another instance where she was in love with this boy. And they were like, “No, it’s not the guy’s fault, she must have shown him something, she must have done something... It is her fault”. So she said it is the mindset. [Because] whatever it is, it is always [believed to be] the girl who started it. And it has always been like that. [Survivor]

4.2.5 Social Norms for Indian Men

When discussing Indian males, many of these beliefs and expectations were given less significance, or were altogether non-existent, because of the patriarchal social system that favours and emphasises the male experience, and which is therefore inclined to be ‘judgmental about the character of a girl, more than a guy’ [HQ3]. Participants described Indian men as largely exempt from judgments about such behaviour, and operating under fundamentally different rules to their female counterparts. For men there are often few questions or criticisms surrounding their sexual conduct; such discussions are rather dominated by justifications that promiscuity and polygamy are normal and natural for men, and little or no criticism that such male behaviour implies equally ‘bad character’ [CS4]. This comparative freedom was described as a male ‘birthright’, which therefore means that ‘people don’t really look down upon guys like that’ [HQ3]:

Because for society it’s like, men will engage into polygamous activity, it is something very natural... At that time there are no freedom, no liberty questions—just justifications that come in. [Survivor]

A guy can have ten sexual girlfriends at the same time, and it’s ok. But if a girl has it, you will probably ostracise her like hell. [HQ3]

The expression of male sexuality in India, especially in polygamous relationships, was described as natural and very acceptable within Indian society [CS4; CS5; HQ1], which directly contradicts expectations of female sexuality:

Polygamy is kind of a natural thing for men, and society and we women accept it in that way. But for females, it’s still one man at a time. [HQ3]

These justifications regarding male sexuality were also highlighted as being reflected and reinforced by religious and cultural beliefs. One participant described polygamy as being endorsed for men in Hindu mythology, despite the fact it is now illegal in Hindu law [HQ3]. Furthermore, historically, it was the common practice of Indian kings to have numerous queens, yet comparatively, the inverse has been rarely seen within India (Dhawan, 2016). These histories and religious traditions still permeate modern thinking and are provided as justifications for both promiscuous male behaviour, and the preservation and exclusivity of female virtue:

Since I am very much into mythology, I have even come to learn that mythology actually has initiated this kind of feeling in people, you know? If those kings and queens who were the demi-gods and -goddesses in our eyes, if they can do it and get away with it, why can't we? If it is right for them, why not for us? If they can have ten wives, why can't I? If Lord So-And-So can marry so many times, why can't I? People in India today actually give such examples! [HQ3]

The contrast of experiences of male and female sexuality in India was explained by one participant through the metaphor of pots, to represent the perceived quality of a woman's character as fragile and delicate, and that of a man's as repairable, if not indestructible:

The Indian social system is such [that it is] always comparing a lady or [girl] child with a mud pot. Once the mud pot is beaten, or hit a little, the pot will be broken... And [if] she's broken [it] means, [she is] lost. [She has] no use.... And male[s] in the community, they are considered as [a] gold pot. The gold pot means, if you always polish it, the gold will be shining more. [CS1]

Ultimately, these gendered social norms discussed by participants illustrate the narrow definition of acceptable feminine identity. This not only restricts the freedom of Indian women, but these normative frameworks also have the power to control their bodies, choices, and opportunities for empowerment.

4.3 SEX AND SEXUALITY IN INDIA: PERSPECTIVES AND DISCOURSES

4.3.1 Sex Education

Discussions of sex in India remain covert, and largely shrouded in taboo, as sex continues to be 'a very hidden, very secret thing' [CS3]. Adolescents are often told, 'It's not for you, it's for the adult persons' [CS4], which subsequently heightens curiosity, and can result in misinformation or dangerous inquisitive behaviours [CS4; GS]. Staff predominantly described gaining their personal understanding of sex and sexuality from private and limited discussions with women in their families, through the course of their work, or in one case, not until the participant was undertaking post-graduate level study in psychology [CS3].

Nobody, has the right to talk about their sex life, or... Sex-anything with their parents or anybody within their family... It's like, everybody keeps quiet in this regard. So they have more curiosity to know what those things are... [CS4]

I am married. But I don't have any proper sex education or proper knowledge... Because no one gave it to me. [CS2]

A consistent concern across many of the staff interviewed was the absence of sex education, and sexual awareness, both nationally and locally. India was described as lacking a 'prescribed manner, or... syllabus for sex education' [CS1; CS3; CS4]. This was coupled with a strong belief amongst staff that sex required 'proper education' [CS3]. They felt this was important to ensure adolescents, especially, were equipped with the knowledge to make better decisions about sex, and to hold more sex-positive views. However, staff also presented an awareness that sex education was difficult to administer and popularise due to 'different barrier[s], different stigmas, and different types of rigidity' in regards to discussions of sex [CS1], and that this mentality was primarily reflected in India's conservative rural, village-based communities [CS3; GS].

From my childhood, I don't get any education, and in my country, especially in West Bengal, no child takes any education about sex, or about sexual life. [CS2]

Sex education is a must in schools... [If there is]...an open discussion, [that] there is a negative aspect, [and] a positive aspect [to sex]... Then think that mental [understanding] is developed. [CS4]

Counselling staff participants described the lack of open, positive discussion about sex and sex education as primarily detrimental to the health and safety of those engaging in sex, as they begin to do so in covert and oftentimes dangerous ways—what was labelled by numerous staff as 'hidden sex' [CS1; CS3; CS5; GS]. This results in consequences such as unsafe sex, STDs, stimulating the HIV virus, continued misconceptions about sex and sexual organs [CS3], and situations where young girls are filmed and exploited by their sexual partner and his friends, or fall prey to trafficking [CS4; GS].

Because when they are in the adolescent period, they are not much more aware of the sexual life and the sex, how we will do the sex, and the proper system, and the proper position...

They are not knowing. That's why there are big chances of many bad thing[s] happening.
[CS5]

However, this emphasis upon sex education was also contrasted by some beliefs that its provision should be for information purposes only, and sexual empowerment or exploration for adolescents 'should not be encouraged' as any sexual activity prior to marriage 'damages their life' [CS4; CS5].

4.3.2 *Let's [Not] Talk About Sex*

Participants described that sex wasn't widely spoken about by their parents or within their families in a manner that encouraged positive perspectives or empowerment. Rather, any discussions about sex and sexuality were used to impress upon the individual that sex is prohibited outside the institution of marriage, that 'nobody except her husband should be with her' [GS], and that the character of women who transgress these norms is 'loose' or 'bad' [GS; HQ3] as single women do not have 'permission for sex' [CS5]. The rhetoric described by participants focused on sex as existing for the sole purpose of procreation [CS5], the potential for disease [CS1; CS4; GS], and how a woman's body becomes 'spoiled' [GS] where she engages in extramarital sex. There was consistent agreement that sexual exploration within marriage and with one's husband is readily accepted socially, and therefore carries no objection or stigma [CS1; CS3; CS4; CS5; HQ2] 'because we get a license for [having] sex only after marriage' [CS3].

But from the very beginning in our childhood, that is injected in our mind that the chastity...
Is for my husband. You have to cover everything, that is for your husband only. If somebody
touch[es] you... I become very scared, I'm feeling guilty. [CS1]

[She's] not a good girl. The term is "loose". She's a bad girl, a bad woman. [GS]

Participants did describe that where women do practice sex outside of marriage, society's reaction to and acceptance of such behaviour is contentious and context-dependent. Cohabitation, premarital sex and 'free sex' engaged in by women may be accepted by families and communities where more liberal perspectives are held—particularly in India's metropolitan cities and urban centres [CS5]. However, the majority of social environments within India stigmatise individuals who engage in such behaviour, often reinforcing and perpetuating the rhetoric that 'they are not good girls' [CS5; CS3]:

We belong in a society, so society will say something, and there will be some whispering and stigma. [CS2]

Where discussion of sexuality was open and encouraged within one participant's family, very progressive, sex-positive beliefs were held about discussing and engaging in sex. She described her mentality on all sexual activity as 'part of your life', and 'nothing about being ashamed' [CS4]. This belief system was also reinforced for the individual by Indrani Sinha, the late founder of Sanlaap, who encouraged sex-positive perspectives within the organisation:

...I think it is a practice of human beings. Because every day we wake up, every day we brush our teeth, we take lunch - everything. So the sexual activity is also the everyday need, maybe? [CS4]

4.3.3 Contentions Between Law and Cultural Tradition

Participants described cultural tradition in India around sex and sexuality as having greater influence than written law, where social beliefs, attitudes and stigmas were harder to surmount than merely creating legal change. This illustrates the dissonance that can exist between an individual obeying the law and believing in the value of that law. Sanlaap staff discussed their experience of law as most often changing practices amongst stakeholders, such as police and those in the judicial system. However, it was unclear to them whether or not this law meaningfully impacted their fundamental belief systems and ideologies learned from their families and upbringings, which would otherwise stereotype and discriminate against single women who have been sexually active [CS1; HQ1].

The government is taking [the] initiative to respect the single woman. But still, [they] can't do the attitudinal change of the society. [CS4]

Law can't change your attitude, it is not possible. From their inner mind, as a human being, how much they change? I don't know. I am not sure. But, because of [the] law, [they] have to obey the law, [they] have to abide by the law. [HQ1]

Custom is much more stronger than the written law, those customary laws. This is the practice of the society since long [ago],... And [it is an] age-old practice. Because of this, people are

having deep-rooted idea[s] in their mind, their perception[s], their view[s], they're having [these] from where they [were] brought up. [CS1]

Sexuality remains a private, covert and largely reprehensible facet of Indian female identity. Such contentious attitudes towards sexuality encourage secrecy and misinformation and serve to continue its absence from discourse about the empowerment and freedoms of Indian girls and women. Furthermore, these attitudes perpetuate the exclusion, labelling and discrediting of those who have engaged in sexual activity, and also work to relegate these girls and women to subordinate positions within Indian society.

4.4 SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS

Participants described consistent themes in the characteristics of the survivors Sanlaap had rescued from sex trafficking.

4.4.1 Vulnerability to Sex Trafficking and Re-victimisation

Participants signalled that where girls lack knowledge regarding their rights and the dangers they are susceptible to, they have poor decision-making power, and become vulnerable to exploitation.

...They need to know how to be confident to stop themselves from being vulnerable to society, to get them trafficked... They have to know what is trafficking... What is sexual activity, what is illicit activity, what is unwanted touching, etc. So, this needs education, this needs knowledge, this needs awareness. So they have to know all of that. Without it they are very vulnerable again for re-victimisation. [HQ3]

Their education and empowerment were argued to be imperative, so that they have awareness about their vulnerabilities, and have the tools to take the right decisions for their safety [HQ1]. Staff interviewed described such education for survivors as particularly central to work focused on ensuring they are not re-victimised¹⁴. Staff also discussed that re-victimisation was symptomatic of a lack of

¹⁴ The need for parallel education for both families and communities is discussed later in this chapter, under 4.6 Reintegration.

social awareness and empathy, rooted in teachings that have emphasised criticism and stigma against sexually active females, and which reduces compassion for survivors' trauma [CS1; CS4; HQ3]:

Because, I guess, society is quite unaware. They did not have the required... Sensitivities towards them, because they have been brought up in a different manner. [GS]

Once [her virginity] is gone, it is gone. Society is not... Aware about this vulnerability, abuse, and the victimisation—they are not aware. [CS1]

4.4.2 Urban vs. Rural Environments

Sanlaap's shelter home had a high representation of survivors from poor rural areas and villages. Staff discussed the impact of urban and rural contexts upon the education and understanding around female vulnerabilities and the dangers of sex trafficking. India was described as a 'mostly village-based country', where proper and effective education is lacking 'in the interior area of the villages' [GS]. Due to the remoteness of these villages, Sanlaap staff described that it is difficult or sometimes impossible to administer education and awareness programmes, such as those promoted by the government within schools in urban centres [HQ2].

...All the schools now have started [creating] awareness of... Child marriage, about trafficking, about rape—what to do, what to not do, what is the problem, what is not the problem, sexually what is the problem... What [are] the gender differences... They are giving a lot of awareness in the school also, nowadays.... Nowadays they are educated and they are understanding what is the problem... And the [children] are protecting also themselves. So, slowly, slowly they can understand, and the education can give [them] that. But if you go to the villages, and the outskirts, [where this awareness doesn't exist], they are not understanding. Still now they are very backward. [GS]

This lack of education results in poor decision-making power, and leaves girls vulnerable as they are unaware of their own rights, unable to discern between right and wrong, and through such disempowerment, are unable to articulate and express their opinions [CS1; HQ1; HQ2].

Rural environments devoid of such education emphasise India's patriarchal social system, and also foster many female-oppressive opinions regarding the burden and responsibility in raising and caring for the girl child. A girl is often viewed and treated as a 'thing' [HQ1] and is considered to require

‘special treatment’ [CS3], including providing constant protection and financial support. Her vulnerability as a female is also considered to reduce the overall safety of the household [CS1; GS]. Therefore, many parents place an enormous emphasis upon marrying off a daughter ‘as soon as possible’ in order to ‘get the relief from [her], and then [their] responsibility is gone’ [GS].

However, some participants also felt that the benefits of education seen in urban centres are not directly correlated to more accepting and progressive views of women. There were criticisms that those of higher classes and those who were very well educated were still capable of holding regressive prejudices about women and enacting oppression against them [CS5; HQ2; HQ3].

4.4.3 Class- and Gender-Based Vulnerability

Participants described that victimisation through sex trafficking for many survivors was class-based, resulting from their inherent vulnerability to such crimes based on their low social status. One staff participant explained that sex trafficking is a danger which upper classes are rarely vulnerable to, but rather exists in the lives of those who are ‘devoid of something, be it employment, education, money... When you don’t have these, you would be vulnerable to fall prey to these traffickers’ [HQ3]:

The economic condition [of sex trafficking victims] is just below the poverty line. [Victims] are very [rare] among the high and educated families, they are [largely from] the low and illiterate families, and minority communities. [CS1]

The overrepresentation of women within sex trafficking victim populations was explained primarily as a result of women being biologically the ‘weaker sex’ [CS1], which made them susceptible to exploitation and control at the hands of male dominance. However, it is interesting to note that one staff participant expressed the belief that females will become dominant over males in future, and a higher representation of men as victims in sexual crimes will be witnessed when the power balance inevitably shifts [CS2].

Vulnerability is inherent within the existences of Sanlaap’s survivors. It is a manifestation of the intersection of their social status, education, the efficacy of their social support networks, and the existence and maintenance of traditional values upheld in rural environments.

4.5 REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation, for Sanlaap, involves safe shelter, counselling, the provision of educational and vocational opportunities, and preparation for a survivor's reintegration. Addressing and remedying trauma is a primary objective of Sanlaap's shelter home, which fosters a short-term environment¹⁵ conducive to survivors' successful rehabilitation. Of all their activities, Sanlaap staff described counselling as the most important step of rehabilitation, as survivor trauma must be addressed before any other processes of rehabilitation can be progressed [CS1; CS3; CS4; CS5; HQ1; HQ2; HQ3]. Furthermore, counselling focused on addressing and mitigating social stigma, and 'build[ing] a strong mental orientation' to face enacted stigma¹⁶ is at the core of all counselling provided to survivors [CS4].

4.5.1 Stigma

Sanlaap staff described how many girls who have been rescued from sex trafficking do not see themselves as victims of abuse. This stems from the fact that they are 'treated as the perpetrators' (by society) of the 'crime' of losing their virginities [HQ3], and 'are made to believe that they are responsible for selling themselves' [CS3]. Stigmatising beliefs held by society regarding sexual purity [GS; CS5] were described by participants as reflective of a lack of empathy for survivor trauma. Most people preferred to see these girls and women as a dangerous and corrupting force within the community, which justified their exclusion and rejection. This stigma is also used to exert control over girls during their time in the sex trade, where traffickers exploited survivors' fears by providing false information about the way they would be treated and stigmatised by police, the legal system, and NGOs, or others they may turn to for help [GS].

They will not be like, "Oh shit, that's really bad... What happened to you?" They won't sympathise, they won't empathise. They will just be like, "Sexual abuse trafficking survivor... Oh man, she's been raped, she's been having sex with so many people for so many years—be away from her!" [HQ3]

¹⁵ The shelter home is not intended as a long-term solution. It exists to provide survivors a safe haven during the rehabilitation process, but the ultimate goal of Sanlaap is to reintegrate survivors—whether into the families and communities they originally came from, or into new environments that facilitate their successful resettlement. The shelter home is also only legally able to house survivors who are up to 18 years in age, after which time they are either returned to their families or placed into the women's hostel Sanlaap runs for older survivors.

¹⁶ Enacted stigma refers to experienced episodes of discrimination against people with the stigmatised condition on the grounds of their social and cultural unacceptability (Scrambler, 2004).

Indian society never treats her in a good manner, because if the girl is sexually abused or not, if any girl is missing, or abducted from her house, and they spend only one night outside of her home or outside of her village... Then the family members and the society members feel that she has just lost her purity. She has just lost her virginity... [CS1]

If she is to stay in the village, or this community, the other girls will also become bad. She will be spoiling the community. [GS]

4.5.2 Awareness of Enacted Stigma, and Internalisation of Stigmatised Beliefs

Survivors internalise enacted stigma (Link and Phelan, 2001; Scrambler, 2004), and are reluctant to identify themselves as having experienced this trauma. Because society has made them feel that their identity as a sexual abuse survivor carries shame, they believe it should therefore be hidden [HQ3]:

And that fear of stigma also comes from the society treating them that way, because that is what they know... “If I am out in the open as a sex worker, as an abused soul, people will not understand my problem. Rather they will stigmatise and they will label me as a bad charactered person, or as a bad girl. They will not realise what I have been through, they will just blame me for being into multiple sexual activities. Even though it has all happened without my consent, nobody will really care”. [HQ2]

Participants described their interactions with enacted stigma, where they were conscious of the ways in which they had been stereotyped, and felt they were denied the right to active participation within their communities. Although insulated from such discrimination within the care and protection of Sanlaap, participants discussed experiences outside of the shelter home where they ‘get to hear a lot from people about these stereotypes, because of certain people who like to be vocal’ [Survivor]. They also described experiences where they had felt as though they were looked at ‘differently’, and made to feel that they are ‘nothing’ [Survivor], with one survivor being told by a member of the public, “”Don’t sit here, sit a little away”” [Survivor], and another being barred from collecting water from a public well [GS]. This consciousness of society’s judgements and a lack of compassion for their experiences was isolating and painful for survivors:

We feel hurt, we feel bad. Even if we are not doing something wrong, we are tagged as doing something wrong. And that really hurts. [Survivor]

I have seen some communities... There is lots of stigma... After rescue, the girl can't stay because of stigma, because people have started to say, "She's a bad character, don't talk with her, she's a bad lady". So the girls leave the house. [CS4]

4.5.3 Resolving Culpability and Internalised Stigma

Survivors' beliefs that they are responsible for their participation in sex work encourage them to feel guilt and unworthiness and are strongly present within survivors when they arrive at Sanlaap's shelter home [CS1; CS5]. Staff described that survivor rhetoric centred around their feelings that "I am not pure, I am not good" [CS3], and overlooked the reality that they are victims of a crime [CS1; CS3; HQ2]. Sanlaap staff highlighted that central to their rehabilitation work was resolving survivors' self-stigmatising beliefs that their bodies and identities are 'spoiled' [GS], they will be rejected by their family, community, and society, and that their only option is to return to the sex trade. This is imperative, as inner guilt and internalised stigma 'ruins the life of the girl who was sexually abused' [CS3] as she otherwise denies herself the life, rights, and citizenship entitlements she deserves [HQ1]. Failing to address and resolve stigmatised beliefs held by survivors about themselves was often highlighted as a primary cause of failed rehabilitation, where survivors were disengaged, returned to sex work, or died from their trauma and depression [CS1; CS3; CS4].

So in the initial stage, they feel like... "I came from a bad place, I am involved in bad work, I am a bad girl, so there is only one way, I will return... There is no place for me to stay... There is no good job for me, I will return back to that place". At the initial stage, they believe these thoughts. [CS1]

We are saying... You are not doing the wrong thing, somebody did the wrong thing with you. You are not bad, you were trafficked. You don't have any problem, they did it. They reply, "No *Aunty*, we are spoiled, nobody will accept me". [HQ1]

Through counselling, Sanlaap staff therefore encourage survivors to challenge and reject stigma and cultivate a more positive self-image. Staff described that through their work, they therefore avoid using negative words such as 'victim' but focus rather upon empowering terms such as 'survivor' and 'human being'. This works to disestablish the survivor's mentality of disempowerment, shift the focus

from personal responsibility to force and coercion, to ‘teach the child that [they] are not wrong’, and helps ‘the girl overcome the stigma, and the trauma, and her problems’ [CS1; CS2; HQ1].

Sanlaap makes sure that we make them feel that they are not bad people, as people make them feel. They are not at fault, they are not the culprits for anything that has happened to them. No, they are not. The first thing is to make them feel that they are not bad. [CS4]
They should not be identified as a trafficking victim, they should be identified as you, as me...
You should treat them as a human being. They are also a human being. [HQ1]

Targeting this internalised stigma was identified as ‘the first and foremost way in which Sanlaap ensures’ successful rehabilitation [HQ2]. One participant summarised the counselling process as:

To make her feel as though she is not a rotten egg, as people make them feel. She is not an impure person... She is a vulnerable person, she is not a culprit. She is not a victim, but she just fell prey to the wrong person and the wrong time. To make her feel all of that, because if you are not confident about yourself, you cannot face the world. [HQ3]

Illustrating the efficacy of the counselling process provided by Sanlaap, one survivor described her experience of social stigma from a position of resilience, self-confidence, and optimism:

The world looks at [us], definitely, like [we] are nothing. They always look at [us] like [we’re] dirty, there is something not nice about [us]. But that’s not true. We have good hearts, we are good people, and we want to show them that they’re wrong. [Survivor]

However, conversely, internalised stigma can have a strong influence upon survivors, and even with counselling, has proven difficult to overcome in some cases [HQ2; CS1; GS]. Where survivors are unable to counteract this stigma, it works as a demotivating force in their lives, and can lead them to stay in sex work, or return to it after their rehabilitation. One staff participant described the powerful influence of this stigma and societal behaviour as ‘responsible for making them apprehensive towards their own life, itself’ [HQ3].

Furthermore, although strong efforts are made by staff to ensure trust- and rapport-building with survivors so that they feel comfortable to engage in the counselling process, counselling is only successful where the survivor is prepared and willing to undertake it. Multiple staff participants

highlighted that counselling can never be one hundred per cent successful [CS1; CS4; HQ1; HQ2] as ‘counsellors can’t do magic... It depends upon [the survivor’s] mental strength’ [HQ1].

Counselling can only happen with that person who accepts counselling, who wants to take counselling, who wants to be cooperative with the counselling. Otherwise it will be pointless. [CS4]

4.5.4 Chastity

Through the rehabilitation process, Sanlaap also encourages survivors to reframe their understandings of chastity, and see their purity and worth in new, more meaningful ways. Survivors have expressed feelings of guilt and rejection that the loss of their chastity means they can no longer attend places of worship, reflecting cultural beliefs around the unchaste woman as ungodly, or unworthy of God [HQ1]. Staff teach survivors that chastity is from the heart, and that it is a reflection of the truth and purity of their actions and choices, which cannot be taken away by the actions of those who have abused them [GS; HQ1]. This separation of chastity of body and chastity of deeds negates social beliefs and stigmas which have confused spiritual chastity with sex and sexuality:

If somebody trafficked me, if somebody forced me, and sexually abused me... That [does] not mean my chastity [is] gone! Chastity is here **[places palm over chest]**, from your heart. I think chastity [is] not in my skin, in my body... That is in my heart. I am not [at] fault if someone forced me and sexually abused me... [HQ1]

4.5.5 Staff Perspectives of Stigma

Staff described the existence of this stigma as a significant challenge in their work, impacting their personal feelings about how survivors are stigmatised and their trauma extended. One participant expressed that they felt ‘quite unfortunate to be a part of such a society’ that oppresses and victimises sex trafficking survivors further through their failure to accept them as ‘normal people’ [HQ3]. While staff acknowledged that it is imperative the social system changes, as individuals, they felt powerless to affect such social change in the face of such deep-rooted belief systems:

It hurts me too much. I think if I could have done, then I would have changed the whole social system, which is not absolutely possible. I can’t do anything. It makes me very sad, but there is very little I can do. [CS1]

But, actually, to do anything for them... It is not just us, but the society at large which needs to be reformed. Law will punish offenders, yes, but until we actually can make people aware... What is right, how you should be perceiving things around you... Unless we change our mindset... These girls will keep on facing such labelling, and such stigma from society. [HQ2]

4.5.6 Safe Environments and Meaningful Connections

Through the shelter home, Sanlaap provides a safe and loving environment to survivors. Survivors described the shelter home as protective from external stigma and negativity, that they felt they were 'taken care of really well', and that they were aware that they were lucky to receive the level of care that they are given, as compared to other shelters undertaking similar initiatives. The dialogue that is held between staff and survivors was described as centred upon reinforcing beliefs that 'you are not alone in this world, you have people who care for you' [Survivor].

Alongside the counselling provided to survivors, they are also involved in group sessions with other survivors, both currently undergoing rehabilitation and those who have been successfully reintegrated, to encourage social connection and build confidence. Furthermore, these sessions provide positive examples of fellow survivors who have reintegrated into society and succeeded in building fulfilling lives, despite their trauma and the stigma associated with their past experiences:

They are made to meet like-minded people, who are also survivors. So they feel more at ease that, "We are not really alone in this"... And... After that, they become, not completely, but much more confident about themselves. I will not say that they have all become very empowered, but they are in the process, at least. At least the process... Is rolled out. [HQ1]

It is important to teach them, to help them through, make them understand that they are not wrong, they have not lost everything... If they want, they can have a normal life. [GS]

4.5.7 Education and Vocational Training

Sanlaap facilitates survivors' pursuit of education and provides vocational training and employment placement to survivors as a means through which they can gain their independence and 'stand by [their] own feet' [GS]. Education and vocational training such as block printing, sewing, dance, and beauty therapy, enable survivors to 'explore their capacity to earn money in a good way' [CS5], and establish their own life and work [CS4]. The objective of providing such opportunities is to discourage

mentalities that their only option is to return to sex work, and to ensure ‘that they gain the momentum which they had lost in the whole process of being trafficked’ [HQ3]. Through this process, Sanlaap also emphasises enabling survivors to become capable of claiming their rights, and this is exemplified by their partnership with the NGO Free A Girl¹⁷ in the creation of the School for Justice¹⁸, a university programme to educate the survivors of child prostitution to become lawyers and prosecutors with the power to prosecute the criminals who once owned them [HQ1]. For survivors, having a means through which to become a ‘contributing member’ to one’s community and society is ‘vital’ to gain acceptance, counteract stigma, and ultimately enable successful reintegration [GS; CS4]. Education and vocational training were described as more essential to survivor’s successful reintegration than family acceptance, as their ability to be independent and self-sufficient had the power to protect them from such rejection [CS4].

And if you give some vocational training, some support to her that she can do something else... If she does anything then...maybe, she will not again go to that place. [CS4]

Successful rehabilitation is centred upon effective counselling, undoing the existence of self-stigmatising beliefs, empowering survivors to choose their own definitions of fulfilment and success, and equipping them with the skills and means to accomplish those definitions. These actions have been described as highly influential in enabling survivors to recover from their trauma and reclaim their lives.

4.6 REINTEGRATION

Survivor reintegration to family and community is the primary objective of Sanlaap’s anti-trafficking interventions, as the ‘ultimate goal to rescue the girl, to reintegrate the girl, is in the community—not in the shelter home. The shelter home is not the solution’ [HQ1]. Sanlaap’s extensive rehabilitation process prepares the survivor for her reintegration. However, participants also described the importance of preparing both her family and her community for her return, and her repatriation to an environment that will sustain her recovery and growth. Sanlaap staff described that many survivors remain cautious about reintegration, apprehensions which stem from their fear of rejection. In order

¹⁷ Free a Girl aims to fight prostitution of children and forced prostitution of young people up to 23 years of age, in Asia, Brazil and the Netherlands. Free a Girl partners with local organisations to facilitate rescue actions, survivor care, prevention, and to provide vocational training opportunities. <https://www.freeagirl.nl/en/>

¹⁸ <http://www.freeagirlindia.org/free-a-girl-india/school-for-justice-india/>

to ensure a survivor's successful reintegration, both the family and community she returns to must reflect the acceptance, empowerment and support she received during her institutional care.

4.6.1 Family Preparation

Prior to returning a survivor to her family, Sanlaap counselling staff travel to her place of origin to conduct a Home Identification Report. This report evaluates whether her home environment will be one that is healthy and supportive, and which will not exacerbate her vulnerability further. In order to ensure this, Sanlaap provides family counselling, and education and awareness about vulnerability to trafficking and re-trafficking. These discussions enable the families to understand the exploitation that survivors endured, to emphasise their innocence, eliminate perspectives of survivor culpability, and ultimately mitigate stigma. Sanlaap staff also prepare the survivor's family to understand how they should behave and talk with the survivor to ensure they do not re-victimise her, or stigmatise her, and that they are adequately equipped to provide her with the support she needs. Central to this is 'positive acceptance' of survivors, which was described by one participant as 'the main thing for... rehabilitation and restoration' [CS4].

We talk with the parents, and talk with the family members to say, "Don't create any stigma for your child... And society members, don't allow them to create any stigma for your child." It is included in our conversations when we counsel the family. [CS4]

It is good for her when the family members don't create any stigma, and her parents, especially. Because her trauma, her behaviour, her mental growth and physical recovery also depends on no stigma. [CS5]

Staff described that the strength of familial support is important, as it can insulate and protect a survivor from community stigmatisation and resistance, or encourage community acceptance, as sometimes 'the society automatically gives the support' when they see how the survivor is accepted, treated and respected by her family [CS3; CS4].

4.6.2 Community Preparation

Sanlaap promotes the right of survivors to return to their communities, and to enjoy their citizenship rights and entitlements in equality with other society members [HQ1; CS4]. Therefore, in addition to preparing families for the return of survivors, Sanlaap conducts wider advocacy and counselling

within the community they will be returned to. This includes the survivor's peer groups, teachers, village, local police, and community-based organisations and *panchayats*, to establish a robust support network. The communities which hold an awareness of vulnerability to trafficking, which recognise and understand that a survivor has been forced and tortured into sex work, that she is a victim of certain circumstances, and should not be stigmatised, are those in which she gains acceptance, support, and is able to be meaningfully reintegrated [CS1; CS4; GS]. Such 'attitudinal change is very much required' to reframe 'community ignorance' regarding complicity in sex trafficking [HQ1], to encourage empathy, and to humanise the experience of survivors.

We have to do advocacy with the community, with the society... And those who are in the surroundings of the child. [CS4]

Sometimes they accept [her], also, and some communities can be understanding. That, "Ok, she did the wrong things, but she did not know. Somebody took her, what would she do?" Some communities understand—not all communities. It depends on the community. [GS]

Sanlaap staff had also experienced cases where the survivor, or the survivor and her family, were subjected to abuse and torture for her presence in a community, often reflecting stigmas around sexual impurity and fears that the survivor will morally corrupt others:

The community is sometimes torturing the family, also. They are torturing the parents. "Why do you keep in touch with her?", they are shouting. They don't like this girl, so they do this type of torture. Sometimes [the community is] very much unhappy. Sometimes if [in] their own house [the survivor is] not safe, they will come back to the shelter home to be away from that community. [GS]

The girls sometimes come back to our home also, from [their] house... And tell, "Please give me some shelter, because I can't stay there... Nobody can accept me". [CS1]

4.6.3 Successes and Challenges of Post-Reintegration Care

Once a survivor has been returned to her family and community, Sanlaap staff maintain frequent contact with her and her family for a period of two years, closely monitoring the conditions of her reintegration and ongoing rehabilitation [HQ1]. These follow-up activities are necessary to ensure

the opportunities, surroundings, and guidance she receives are conducive to her ability to have a better life following her rescue [CS4]. One participant advised that they have an approximate reintegration success rate of 80 per cent [HQ1], primarily because of the emphasis Sanlaap places upon providing ongoing post-reintegration care. Furthermore, as in the case of one girl who was ultimately rejected by her family, this consistent support from Sanlaap ensures they are able to quickly identify when the family or community environment is harmful to the survivor, and can pursue ‘another way’ for her reintegration [CS3]:

She was [infected with] HIV in a brothel. She came to our shelter with HIV... We restored her, and there [was] a good relationship with the parents for that girl... After one month, when we do the follow-up, her parents told us... “Please go away with [our] daughter... We don’t want her.” Then we talked with her parents—“What’s the problem? She is in a very good health condition when she was in our shelter home, though she is HIV infected, her health condition is very good. So what happened?” They said, “No, no, no, it is a very infectious disease, and we know it has come from the brothel, and we don’t want our daughter back. Just go away with our daughter.” Then we asked, “Where will she stay? Because our home is not for girls over 18, so where will she stay?” So in the end they told us, “Send her to the brothel! Whatever she wants to do, she should do it there. We don’t need her.” Then we brought her in our shelter. She is in a very good situation now, so it is not a problem. Presently she is alive. [CS4]

However, other cases illustrated that even with Sanlaap’s thorough post-reintegration care, the influence of stigma and social exclusion can still drive survivors to return to sex work:

I rescued one girl, and I [returned] her in her house... So after a few years, I again met her in Mumbai. So I [asked] her, “You are here—why you are here?” Because I rescued her, you know? She said, “*Aunty*, what should I do? Because I am [being] bullied by such bad language, by my own family members... Then I think, that it should be better to go back [to sex work]. [HQ1]

So when [she is] not getting the support from the community, from [her] family, then the girl will return back [to sex work]. [CS1]

Furthermore, although staff primarily described cases of survivors who had returned to sex work due to the oppressive influence of stigma and a lack of familial and community acceptance, they had also experienced cases where survivors voluntarily returned to the sex trade because of the standard of living they could afford from working in prostitution. The money they were able to earn afforded them new luxuries such as costly shampoos, nail polish, and makeup [CS4], and being able to earn enough to become independent also enabled them to mitigate the influence of stigma or the rejection faced from their family and community [CS3].

They return back to the prostitution because they can earn money and... Actually, money is [important] for them... And sometimes they feel that out of all the things, “I am earning money, and I can live my life freely, independently. That is enough for me, I don’t need any family, I don’t need any society, I don’t need any culture”. So they return back to the red light area... [GS]

In the experience of Sanlaap, successful reintegration has been significantly dependent upon the existence of rights-protective environments, which are created by families and communities that understand the vulnerabilities and experiences of survivors, and the importance of both survivor rights and the absence of discrimination. Where these conditions do not exist, most survivors have experienced social exclusion that has isolated them, minimised their opportunities and choices, and encouraged their return to sex work.

4.7 CONCLUSION

These findings illustrate the complex interplay of numerous vulnerabilities, which are created and sustained by the presence of social stigmas and cultural attitudes. These stigmas had a powerful impact upon survivors throughout their rehabilitation and reintegration, and the ability of both Sanlaap and the individual to identify, manage and mitigate their presence was crucial to the survivor’s successful recovery. Meaningfully resolving social stigma therefore operates as an integral component of Sanlaap’s work, in order to ensure survivors are not re-trafficked, or re-victimised. The findings presented in this chapter will serve as the basis of my discussion in the chapter that follows.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the ways in which sexual stigma in India renders survivors of sex trafficking vulnerable to social exclusion, rejection, discrimination, and self-stigmatising beliefs, which increase their risk of re-victimisation, and undermine their ability to claim their human rights and enjoy equal participation in their communities. The research has explored the perceptions and experiences of Sanlaap staff and survivors residing in the shelter home in order to understand sexual stigma as it relates to, and impacts, sex trafficking and anti-trafficking in India. At the beginning of this thesis, I stated the central research questions that are the focus of this study. This question is:

- How is social stigma manifested and addressed by staff working to rehabilitate victims of sex trafficking in Kolkata, India?

The research also examines the following sub-questions:

- How does social stigma related to sex work in India influence anti-trafficking initiatives?
- Can addressing social stigma related to sex work act as a preventative measure that supports anti-sex trafficking initiatives in India?

Informed by the findings that have been presented in the previous chapter, I will address the above questions by exploring the role of human rights within development and the anti-trafficking movement in order to evaluate and advance the debates around greater preventative action. I also highlight the manifestation and dynamics of gender inequities, gender discrimination and sexual stigma in India and how they impact the environment Indian girls and women exist within. Finally, I examine how Sanlaap's rehabilitation, reintegration and anti-trafficking strategies are shaped by their influences, and I discuss the merits of these strategies and their implications for advocacy and future research.

5.2 HUMAN RIGHTS AS INTEGRAL TO THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING WORK OF SANLAAP

Before examining the manifestation of social stigma, it is important to understand the rights-based approach that forms the foundation of Sanlaap's work to identify, address, and mitigate this stigma throughout the processes of rehabilitation, reintegration, and advocacy. This research has identified that facilitating the realisation of survivors' human rights is central to Sanlaap's anti-trafficking work. The organisation enables rehabilitation and reintegration by focusing on healing survivors' trauma

through empowering them with the knowledge of their rights and freedoms, enabling and encouraging individual agency and self-determination, and fostering rights-protective communities and environments (Molyneux & Lazar, 2003). Sanlaap's community-based anti-trafficking interventions primarily exist to create rights-protective environments within which a survivor has sufficient capability and opportunity to operate as a key actor in their own development. These interventions also seek to empower them so that they are equipped to negate the stigma and discrimination they face, claim their rights, and become equal rights-holding members of their society (Heyzer, 2002; Katsui, 2008). The literature presents that stigma and discrimination are interrelated practices that reinforce and legitimise one another (Aggleton et al., 2005; Ross, 2013). The principle of non-discrimination, based on recognition of the equality of all people, is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments (Aggleton et al., 2005; McNeilly, 2014). A stigmatising social environment is by definition marginalising and discriminatory (Aggleton, 2005). Stigmatising actions, therefore, violate the fundamental human right to freedom from discrimination, which subsequently affects the rights and wellbeing of people belonging to a stigmatised group.

The findings from this research illustrate that stigma and its associated discriminatory practices have been central to Sanlaap staff and survivor experiences of trafficking in persons, as they foster vulnerable and exploitative environments that enable human trafficking both to manifest and to be perpetuated. Furthermore, the gender inequities that exist in India—which reinforce stigmatising beliefs—give rise to fundamentally discriminating conditions that erode women's rights, perpetuate their subordination, and subsequently increases their vulnerability to exploitation through practices such as sex trafficking.

As presented within the literature, the loss of human rights through discrimination and social exclusion increases an individual's vulnerability to violence, as through such marginalisation their civil liberties are compromised or denied, and they are often consequently forced to operate outside societal protections (Haugen & Boutros, 2014). Where human rights are not respected, or are unable to be claimed, all individuals become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation, and the universal protection, promotion and championing of human rights have therefore been posited as critical in efforts to eliminate exploitative practices such as human trafficking (Bravo, 2007; Weitzer, 2011).

Sanlaap's success in rehabilitating and reintegrating survivors, described as at a rate of 80 per cent [HQ1], demonstrates that securing human rights is fundamental to the effectiveness of anti-

trafficking. In order to reduce or eliminate vulnerability to discrimination, exploitation and re-victimisation, it is imperative to ensure women are empowered and not marginalised, that they are aware of their rights, and that they inhabit empathetic and rights-protective environments that enable them to claim those rights (Dragiewicz, 2008). The findings from this research illustrate that both the organisational strategies of (a) addressing the external and internalised discrimination that stems from social stigma and (b) emphasising the human rights of survivors have been integral and successful preventative measures in Sanlaap's anti-trafficking efforts. Furthermore, the work conducted by Sanlaap to negate and counter social stigma has demonstrated that mitigating and resolving stigma may also generate environments which reinforce rights, and within which both survivors and other vulnerable women therefore become insulated from, or less susceptible to, the dangers of trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

In accordance with their rights-based approach, during the rehabilitation process, Sanlaap staff focus on negating stigma and teaching survivors about their right to life, freedom from discrimination, and active participation within their community. Within the literature, Laczko and Danailova-Trainor (2009) posit that underdevelopment and vulnerability are interrelated and impact one another. Sanlaap operates with an understanding that trafficking is fundamentally a development issue, and therefore the organisation equally targets underdevelopment through its reintegration strategy (e.g. through finding alternative income-earning opportunities). This is reflective of the intention of human development to enable individuals to develop to their full potential, to exercise self-determination, and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; ul-Haq, 2003). Sanlaap facilitates survivors' selection of education or employment decisions, equips them with the capabilities and skills to pursue them, and supports the realisation of their personal aspirations. These processes empower survivors to explore and choose their own definitions of fulfilment in preparation for their reintegration. The School for Justice exemplifies an advocacy strategy that is reflective of the individual dimension of a rights-based approach, where Sanlaap strives to empower individuals with both knowledge of their rights, and the confidence and capability to demand their observance and fulfilment (Heyzer, 2002). This programme has demonstrated that knowing their human rights enables a shift in survivor mentalities from victimhood to agency, and how, with the addition of supportive and empowering environments, survivors have come to negate the restrictions of social stigma and discriminatory practices, and actively defend and claim their rights and those of others from their group.

Sanlaap's wider advocacy work within communities also demonstrates the social dimension of a rights-based approach, which recognises that creating and supporting social environments which are conducive to protecting and honouring rights and which facilitate the realisation of individual freedoms is integral in advancing human rights. As presented in the literature by Chuang (2006), rights-protective treatment and aftercare focused only on the individual ultimately has little effect in resolving an individual's vulnerability without identifying and remedying the socioeconomic conditions that initially rendered them vulnerable to abuse.

Sanlaap demonstrates an understanding of the need to address both the individual and social elements of rights-based development simultaneously, and therefore focuses not only on individual empowerment, but also upon community empowerment and education in order to cultivate environments that protect survivors and enable them to heal and thrive. Furthermore, successful reintegration and anti-trafficking strategies prioritise identifying rights-protective environments, monitoring them, and removing survivors when these environments inhibit or compromise their recovery (Aggleton et al., 2005). This is demonstrated in practice within Sanlaap's strategies to assess the efficacy of the environment survivors will be reintegrated to before their return, to diligently monitor that environment for a period of two years, and to intervene or provide further support as necessary during the process of their reintegration.

This research also highlights, particularly through the experiences of Sanlaap staff working at the legal and policy level, the contentious relationship that exists between human rights and cultural rights. An emphasis upon cultural rights can be at odds with the promotion and honouring of human rights, as the practices they endorse may limit the rights of the weak and reinforce power imbalances; where cultural rights are given priority, they enable the maintenance of the worldview of the most powerful, as is often seen within India's patriarchal communities (Samatopoulou, 2012). As presented within the findings, cultural traditions and traditional gender norms reinforced by cultural and religious histories sustain many practices that condone discrimination against the women of India. Traditional and culturally-rooted perspectives about what embodies femininity, what an Indian woman's gender role is, her lack of agency about her sexuality, and the limiting ways in which she can be fulfilled operate as forms of social control that deny her rights and freedoms, reinforce patriarchal privilege, and which perpetuate the maintenance of her subordinate status as a female in Indian society.

Some research participants were more conscious and personally frustrated than others by how the culturally accepted definition of the ideal woman limited and controlled their actions and freedoms. However, due to how these actions were seen as rebelling against normative prescriptions of what it means to be a valued and worthy Indian woman, many research participants described the inability of some Indian women to exercise their freedom of choice, as they couldn't partake in activities such as clubbing, late nights, drinking, casual dating, cohabitation, or engaging in premarital sex. Furthermore, cultural restrictions of the rights and freedoms of some Indian women were also demonstrated by staff participants' concern or frustration towards the lack of sex education, or the cultural opposition it faces. They expressed that access to information that would enable informed choices about their health and sexualities is commonly restricted based on beliefs about the place of sex within Indian culture. This demonstrates how cultural rights can undermine human rights, operating to limit an individual's freedom of choice, and their right to self-determination. Therefore, the dissonance between legal and cultural laws described by many staff participants seems reflective of the contention between human rights and cultural rights. This may explain why they have felt stakeholders they engage with—such as police, lawyers and judiciary staff—still hold their prejudices towards survivors under Sanlaap's care, despite legal progress in India that has been made to honour the rights of women and protect them from such discrimination.

Conversely, both survivor and staff participant experiences highlight within the research that where a woman's human rights are honoured, she is able to be free from discrimination and exercise self-determination. This was demonstrated by survivors who had been successfully reintegrated into families and communities that were educated by Sanlaap on the importance of not stigmatising or discriminating against the individual, where the environment was one that enabled her rights to be respected, and where human rights superseded the presence and validity of cultural rights.

As part of their anti-trafficking strategy, Sanlaap negates many cultural rights in their endeavour to protect and promote the human rights of survivors, and this is a critical element of their work to generate environments that do not foster discrimination or exploitation. Sanlaap demonstrates a universalist perspective towards the rights of survivors (Musalo, 2015), where cultural rights are seen as illegitimate where they dishonour or fail to comply with survivors' human rights. Therefore, in order to promote human rights above cultural rights, Sanlaap redefines beliefs about complicity, sexuality, chastity, female independence and identity for sex trafficking survivors.

However, although they have made progress in challenging cultural limitations for victims of sexual violence, it is important to note that Sanlaap does not meaningfully address the culturally significant

practices of marriage, premarital sex, sexual ‘impurity’, and traditional gender identities for Indian women who are not victims of sexual violence. Challenging the broader socioeconomic environment to honour the human rights of all Indian women impacts and improves the same environment within which vulnerable minority groups exist, and furthermore bolsters the efficacy of law reform (Cao, 2007; Carline & Easteal, 2014; Leshy, 2013). Improving the legal response to violence against women necessitates not only change in law, but also a radical redesign of the cultural landscape, as what law hopes to reinterpret and advance must be reinterpreted, advanced and reflected within the culture and society itself (Carline & Easteal, 2014). Therefore, the universal removal of cultural stigma and discrimination for all classes of Indian women can have positive impacts upon the experiences of sex trafficking survivors and other vulnerable women in India. Cultural change that is targeted only at survivors could be argued to be more limited in its impact to meaningfully affect change and empowerment for women within the wider social system. This could therefore be viewed as a gap within Sanlaap’s anti-trafficking strategy, and an area into which the organisation could invest greater effort as part of broader approaches to progressing the human rights agenda within the anti-trafficking movement.

These findings regarding Sanlaap’s rights-based approach reinforce Bravo’s (2007) assertion that human trafficking is fundamentally a human rights failure, and honouring human rights as a measure to resolve vulnerability to trafficking should be at the core of any credible anti-trafficking strategy (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015; Heyzer, 2002; Kristof & WuDunn, 2009). The successful cases of rehabilitation and reintegration work done by Sanlaap illustrates not only the efficacy of empowering survivors to know and understand their human rights, but also that of environments which promote and honour the human rights of women and other vulnerable groups. This has thus enabled survivors to be largely insulated from the dangers of re-trafficking, and re-victimisation, particularly as it relates to stigma and discrimination. Within the experiences of Sanlaap that were shared with me during my research, no survivor that had been rehabilitated and reintegrated by the organisation had been re-trafficked. Where they described cases of a survivor returning to the sex trade, this had been as a direct result of stigmatising and discriminatory environments that eroded her rights and freedoms, resulted in her social exclusion, limited her opportunities, and re-victimised her or encouraged her voluntary return to sex work.

Although these findings are only reflective of one organisation’s experience within one context, they do reinforce the notion that environments which do not honour human rights create a sense of helplessness for vulnerable individuals and drive them to make difficult choices—even if subjecting

themselves to violence and continued marginalisation are inherent consequences of those choices (Crawford & Kaufman, 2008; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Kara, 2009; Wickham, 2009). Individual survivor resilience and empowerment is immensely important to successful survivor resettlement (how this interacts with human rights in successful anti-trafficking is discussed later within this chapter). However, whether they erode or honour human rights, the social and cultural environment into which a survivor is reintegrated is fundamentally one of the most critical factors in determining vulnerability and re-victimisation, or success in reintegration. This finding from the research therefore highlights how the efficacy and success of anti-trafficking programmes is powerfully contingent upon the existence of rights-protective environments that are free from stigma and discrimination.

5.3 SOCIAL STIGMA

Stigma manifests as discrimination, which contributes to poverty through the maintenance of social and structural inequalities. These inequalities erode the social and economic possibilities for marginalised communities and exclude them from participating meaningfully in social and economic life. Equal participation is fundamental to development, democracy and justice (UN Women, 2012), and thus, targeting all forms of discrimination is fundamental to advancing human development. With an understanding of how social stigma interacts with discrimination, the erosion of individual human rights, and individual vulnerability, Sanlaap prioritises actively targeting and countering the manifestation and perpetuation of stigmatising beliefs within their rehabilitation, reintegration and anti-trafficking advocacy initiatives.

5.3.1 MANIFESTATION OF SOCIAL STIGMA

The research illustrated numerous ways in which social stigma was manifested within the Indian context, and reinforced theories within the literature that stigmatising assumptions are generated by the intersection of culture, power and difference (Krusi et al., 2016; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Furthermore, the findings presented evidence of both material oppression—where stigmatising beliefs denied survivors opportunities for agency, and symbolic oppression—where these beliefs encouraged survivors to deny themselves positive or active definitions of self (Cornish, 2006).

The research identified that survivors commonly experienced material oppression through enacted stigma from their families and communities. Enacted stigma was manifested before their reintegration and sometimes during it, and was reflective of environments which were not rights-protective, or

where Sanlaap's rights-protective education had not effectively changed social and cultural beliefs about survivor rights. Primarily, survivors were subjected to tainting labels, such as 'bad', 'bad girl', 'bad-charactered', or 'dirty'. These labels served to shame and isolate them, erode their self-worth and -esteem, deny their ability to subscribe to Indian cultural conceptualisations of feminine identity, and make them feel they were not entitled to have a place within their community or society (Liu et al., 2011). In some cases, these discriminatory labels were also applied to survivors' families as a means through which to encourage them to also reject the girl, rather than to risk rejection themselves. Stigma was externally manifested through exclusionary practices such as rejecting survivors' presence within families or communities, asking them not to be present in communal spaces or not to use communal facilities, or denying them the ability to interact with other girls and women within their community for fear their perceived inherent immorality would be dangerous and corrupting. The practice of these many forms of enacted stigma ultimately served to encourage the exclusion or ostracism of survivors from their communities, to perpetuate feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy, and to use power to impose, maintain and protect the accepted social and moral order of societies (Krusi et al., 2016).

These research findings also reaffirm that stigma works bi-directionally (Liu et al., 2011), as it is not only the processes of enacted and felt stigma that marginalise survivors, but also the action of these survivors internalising stigmatised beliefs and acquiescing to the subsequent restrictions and consequences upon their life and freedoms. Internalisation of stigma has enormous impacts upon individuals well-being and resilience, and is primarily manifested amongst sex trafficking survivors through withdrawal from social support networks and decreased self-esteem, increased feelings of self-deprecation, and symptoms of depression (Fife & Wright, 2000; Link et al., 1989; Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011).

Many counselling staff identified that it was common for survivors to arrive at the shelter home having internalised these stigmatising beliefs, which often left them feeling dejected and hopeless. Hence, Sanlaap staff had to actively work to negate and reframe these beliefs, in order to enable survivor rehabilitation and prevent fatalism. Fatalism, as proposed within the literature, often results at the point of interaction between external or material oppression, and internal or symbolic oppression (Koken, 2012). Fatalism was demonstrated within the findings where some individuals under Sanlaap's care viewed their hardships as unable to be overcome, and thus submitted to living under such repression, inequality, and powerlessness. Staff described that fatalism was a common and defining characteristic that was present in some survivors, and addressing this mentality was central

to their rehabilitation work in order to ensure survivors could recover from their trauma and be successfully reintegrated.

However, resolving fatalism was not always effective. Fatalism was powerfully evident within the experiences of survivors that Sanlaap had struggled or altogether failed to rehabilitate, where the influence of internalised social stigma encouraged these individuals to self-impose the denial of their right to rehabilitation services, or their right to be active, participating citizens within their society. Survivors who submitted to the limitations of stigma upon their lives often saw a return to the sex trade as an easier hardship for them to endure than to be rejected by their family, community, or society. Staff participants highlighted within the research that subscribing to these beliefs often resulted in the survivor returning to sex work, suffering from depression and other mental illnesses, or dying as a result of the influence of their mental and emotional trauma.

Staff also described survivors under their care who demonstrated stigma-based rejection sensitivity (Hatzenbuehler, 2017), where they anxiously anticipated the prejudice and discrimination they would face for having been a part of the sex trade and for becoming sexually ‘impure’. This was based either upon personal interactions with stigma or prior knowledge of such experiences by other sex workers or trafficked women, but also, in some instances, due to the intentional use of this stigma by traffickers as a tool for the emotional control, manipulation and exploitation of survivors. One staff participant described that where such a tactic was used, it operated to keep survivors in sex work as they were made to believe that even if they were able to return to their families and communities they would be stigmatised, rejected and discriminated against. This therefore created a belief that trying to escape their trafficker or seeking help would be equally as traumatic as remaining in the brothels, and was thus pointless. This particular finding illustrates the power of social stigma to operate as a mechanism which controls the behaviour and aspirations of the individual, and how the presence of stigmatising beliefs can be internalised to ultimately limit and regulate the actions of those who are stigmatised, even in the absence of directly encountered enacted stigma.

5.3.2 SURVIVOR RESILIENCE AGAINST STIGMATISING BELIEFS

Reflecting the theory presented in the literature by Koken¹⁹ (2012), the instances of failed rehabilitation which the organisation has experienced were fundamentally dependent upon the

¹⁹ Sex work-related stigma, as well as the emotional and sexual nature of the labor itself, place unique demands on the psychological coping resources of female sex workers (Koken, 2012).

inherent resilience and psychological coping mechanisms of those survivors to face and counter stigmatising and discriminatory beliefs. Regardless of Sanlaap's rehabilitation strategies or the efficacy of reintegration environments to honour their rights, the internalisation of stigma and prejudice ultimately lead some survivors to conform to the pressure of the social stigma and discrimination they faced regarding their chastity. They were therefore likely to succumb to fatalism and readily deny themselves their human and citizenship rights to live freely within their community, and often elected to return to the red light district.

I have seen [a survivor believe], “Oh I have lost everything—my parents do not want to care and take me back, my environment and my surrounding[s] do not want me. So, that life is better where I was [in the brothel]. It is better I go back”. [CS1]

The research reinforces theories within the literature that such adaptation is natural where the survivor does not have the individual resources to cultivate positive self-belief when faced with stigmatising assumptions (Link et. al, 1989; Montenegro, 2002; Wong, Holroyd & Bingham, 2011). As stated by one staff participant within the findings, the efforts of Sanlaap to rehabilitate and reintegrate a survivor are redundant in the absence of her willingness or capacity to resist stigma. There is a strong interrelationship between empowering, rights-enhancing environments and successful survivor rehabilitation and reintegration, but these environments cannot support survivor recovery and resettlement where the individual is unable to see their own value and demonstrate the capacity to demand the observance of their rights. However, this equally illustrates the importance of the environments within which survivors exist during their rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration, and how these must consistently negate stigma, positively reinforce her worth, and equip her with the ability to claim her rights, in order to cultivate her resilience to face and counter stigmatising beliefs.

5.4 STIGMA AND VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is dynamic, and is the result of the interaction of social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors. The findings indicate the existence of the interplay of survivors' personal, situational and circumstantial vulnerabilities—such as gender status, structural inequalities, and economic destitution or constraints. They demonstrate that these vulnerabilities are created, reinforced, and maintained by social stigma (Daniel-Wrabetz and Penedo, 2015). Furthermore, this research illustrates that survivors' 'vulnerability factor' (The European Commission, 2012) is bolstered by environment-specific influences present nationally, culturally, and within local communities,

including social norms, lack of social integration, restriction from opportunities and employment, and discrimination (Chuang, 2006).

What this research uncovered about how these vulnerabilities are manifested and maintained within the Indian context, how they interact with sexual stigma, and how they impact re-victimisation and re-trafficking is explored below.

5.4.1 MARRIAGE

The findings illustrate that a pervasive cultural emphasis upon marriage cultivates narrow definitions of successful or appropriate womanhood within more traditional, patriarchal communities in India. The influences of these norms profoundly shape the environment within which female survivors of sex trafficking are stigmatised, and which they must navigate. The research identified that there is significant cultural importance given to the ability of some Indian women to embody the virtues of a ‘family person’ [CS4] and to gain respect through the attainment of marriage and motherhood, and particularly through the maintenance of her premarital chastity (Cornish, 2006). This ability is believed to be lost to her by engaging in sexual activity, and thus violating her purity. The literature indicated that the loss of this purity—irrespective of the context within which it occurred—could signify the loss of her worth. This belief is sustained by social attitudes and stigmas that transgressing the boundaries of what is deemed sexually appropriate is an irrevocable, immoral and sinful action. The findings reinforced these perceptions, as many staff participants highlighted that for a female member of more conservative communities, the loss of her chastity was comparable to the loss of her life and future prospects. It was also expressed by many staff that, in their experience, Indian communities that upheld traditional identities of Indian womanhood exercised little compassion for the circumstances in which chastity was taken from survivors:

Once the chastity is gone, [it] means everything is gone. [If] the child is having sex with someone, [it] means everything is lost. Her whole purity, her chastity is gone. So she is nothing. [CS4]

This illustrates that for some Indian women, the social consequence of losing their chastity is that they are rendered powerless and irrelevant within traditional and conservative Indian communities, and that they often have little opportunity to recover from this and gain social acceptance. Furthermore, staff participants spoke about the lack of value which single women have within patriarchal Indian communities, the shame and burden associated with being unmarried beyond a certain age, or non-

compliance with the married ideal, thus illustrating how integral marital status can still remain to an Indian woman's worth.

[Society] only [labels] the woman. She is [either] a married woman, OR she's an unmarried woman, she's a widow woman, she's a divorced woman, she's a raped woman, she's a trafficked woman... As a human being, [women] don't have any identity. When we identify the man, we never [label him] as single, [a] bachelor, whatever. But, [for] women... There [are] so many categories, and [the] attitude towards the single woman is [that she is] totally worthless. [HQ1]

Further reinforcing the importance of marriage, participants presented only two accepted definitions of the Indian woman were espoused by more traditional communities: married and having become rightfully unchaste through the process of conception and motherhood, or marriageable and chaste. Any deviance from these ideals often resulted in labelling which served to erode her identity and subvert her place in Indian society. The teaching and maintenance of this limited identity of womanhood therefore operates as a form of social control, the influence of which is demonstrated by survivors who arrive at the shelter home conditioned to deny themselves their rights because of their belief that they are unable to honour such an identity, and without which they feel they have no other hope, value or place within Indian society. These social beliefs and stigmas impact the ability of a survivor of sex trafficking to regain her social acceptance—as demonstrated by the findings, this depends upon the context and the presence and strength of stigmatising beliefs, and it is either a difficult or altogether impossible process (Sanders, 2008).

Within this research, these accepted definitions of the ideal Indian woman indicate that the institution of marriage also gives rise to dominant beliefs regarding sexual respectability, which dictate that sexual activity should only be engaged in with a husband, and before which a woman's purity must be fiercely safeguarded. Such beliefs about sexual freedom illustrate continued perceptions of girls and women as passive owners of sexual and vulnerable bodies that, as presented within the literature, are in need of protection and which do not exist for their own fulfillment (Bose & Bhattacharyya, 2007). The compelling presence and influence of these beliefs reinforce notions of Indian females as property, negating their autonomy, agency and empowerment. As identified within the findings, denying their freedom over decisions related to their bodies and actions works to continue the objectification and subordination of Indian girls and women, and renders them powerless over societal expectations of their womanhood and identity—especially those individuals who are single and/or disempowered. However, it is important to note that the impact of these beliefs and stigmas vary, as they are influenced by factors such as class, and the urban or rural divide. As expressed by

some participants, the modernisation of India that is occurring in its urban centres is encouraging a shift away from traditional roles of marriage and motherhood, and empowering women to embrace their independence, autonomy, and careers. Therefore, girls and women existing within these more progressive, rights-enhancing spaces are less bound by the cultural expectations which often persist within lower classes and rural areas, and which contribute to individual vulnerability. Although this is an important distinction to observe, it was nonetheless expressed by staff within the findings that individuals from higher classes and those who are empowered within progressive urban environments are rarely represented amongst their survivor populations. This therefore indicates that the ability of these progressive beliefs to transform how Indian girls and women experience interactions between marriage and female empowerment are not yet meaningfully impacting or benefitting poorer and lower-class individuals, or those who experience the greatest vulnerability as a result of the dominant place marriage holds within the revered identity of Indian femininity and worth.

5.4.2 RELIGIOUS DEPICTIONS OF SIN

The findings also indicate that the stigmatising notion of sexual sin is often rooted in India's culturally predominant Hindu religion, or 'Hindu law' [CS3]. This exemplifies the powerful interrelationship between social attitudes about female sexuality and the importance of upholding and embodying the culturally divine virtues of chastity and purity. This is unsurprising, as sexual prejudice has been positively correlated with religiosity (Herek & McLemore, 2013). However, attitudes grounded in moral belief or religions are not exempt from being considered a prejudice (Herek & McLemore, 2013), and the findings illustrate that such beliefs have fostered discriminatory actions against survivors. A number of staff participants discussed representations or beliefs held by survivors that the illegitimate loss of their bodily chastity outside of marriage discounts them from embodying the expectation of the spiritual or godly woman, and thus makes them unworthy of God. They therefore felt unable to enter places of worship, demonstrating both the internalisation of stigmatising beliefs about their identities, and submission to enacted stigma. This profoundly illustrates how femininity is defined by religious precepts within Hinduism, the importance placed upon a woman's ability to embody the virtuous female, how difficult it is to navigate the societal reverence of woman as goddess, and how instrumental femininity is to an Indian woman's social worth. Therefore, the research highlights that sexual stigmas which religious tradition often fosters can cultivate a discriminatory environment, which may act to sustain patriarchal control over women's bodies and freedoms in India.

5.4.3 GENDER INEQUITIES

The findings show that much of the discrimination Indian women face about their sexual freedom and empowerment is rooted in gender inequities. Because purity does not hold the same cultural value for men as it does for women, men either enjoy freedom from stigma regarding sexual activity, or experience it to a less-restrictive or -harmful extent (Banerjee, 2005; Colaco, 2010). Men's sexual promiscuity is often excused or justified, particularly by historical and religious depictions of males for whom polygamy or promiscuity have been endorsed (Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2017). This enables contemporary Indian men to engage in many forms of sexual expression with little or no consequences or repercussions upon their identity, worth, or societal acceptance. Sexual aggression and virility were highlighted as prized for Indian males, and this was demonstrated in the creation of gendered imbalances in sexuality and sexual freedom which Indian women are not entitled to, as their own depictions of sexuality emphasise purity and sexual exclusivity under marriage. As discussed above, religious perceptions regarding female virtue, particularly, have permeated Indian society to such an extent that most conservative communities have been culturally conditioned to impose these expectations of sex, sexuality, and divinity upon Indian girls and women. The discrepancy between the autonomy Indian men and women possess over decisions about their bodies is highlighted within the data as a factor that reinforces the sexual control, stigmatisation, and subordination of women.

Both staff and survivor participants described the discordance they felt between the standards men and women were held to in regards to their expressions of sexuality. Although rooted initially in sexuality, the findings demonstrate that these gendered inequities spilled over to ultimately impact the freedom of Indian males and females. Participants expressed that expectations regarding their gender identity afforded men freedom of movement outside the home, and the ability to engage in practices such as drinking, late nights and recreational sex (activities that create the market for prostitution and trafficking). These were identified as activities that females of all classes would typically be scrutinised or discriminated against for engaging in, if not prohibited from doing so. The gender inequities manifested in these stigmatising beliefs also operated as a form of social control, as they regulated the actions of Indian girls and women and restricted them from exercising their freedoms. As stated by one participant, Indian girls and women, regardless of their age or class, 'don't truly feel free' [Survivor], as many freedoms are restricted to them based solely upon their gender identity, and the social and cultural expectations that identity therefore carries.

5.4.3 SEX, SEXUALITY, AND SHAME

This research also highlights a strong theme of sexual repression within the interviews, with discussion of sex remaining primarily secretive and restricted (McFadden, 2001; Puri, 2002). Both staff and survivor participants expressed that the dominant discourse regarding sex was that of deviance, promiscuity, and cultural control, with some emphasis upon health, and no emphasis upon sexual liberation. Such perspectives reaffirm negatively-held views of sexually empowered or sexually active Indian women, and the general cultural unacceptance, social isolation and rejection of women who exercise their independence to engage in such behaviour—whether for personal fulfilment, or within sex work. Furthermore, the way participants described social perceptions of women who engage in sex work illustrated what some researchers term ‘whorephobia’, which teaches the belief that sex workers are ‘bad women’, and which creates an inherent power imbalance between society and the women of the sex trade (Schaffauser, 2010). These women are subjected to tainting labels such as ‘whore’ or ‘slut’, which makes other women want to distance themselves from the stigma invoked by those words, and from those who embody it (Dunt, 2015; Schaffauser, 2010). This was evident within the findings where survivors were labelled as ‘bad’ or ‘dirty’. Whorephobia, and its associated stigma, acts as a critical mechanism through which to control women, police their behaviour, and limit their economic, sexual and professional autonomy (Schaffauser, 2010). It is interesting to note that although this was certainly evident within the experiences of Sanlaap survivors, it was also demonstrated that whorephobia in India is not only related to women of the sex trade, but also women who violate rules of the traditionally espoused female identity through their engagement in culturally deviant female practices such as cohabitation, premarital or recreational sex, keeping male company (even if only platonic), and participation in culturally ‘male’ activities such as drinking and clubbing. Staff and survivor participants highlighted that either outright whorephobia or phobic beliefs about culturally and traditionally atypical female and sexual behaviours were taught by their families and communities from a very early age through rigid discussions of what is appropriate feminine behaviour, and what is deemed sexually acceptable. Ultimately, this stigma manifests as a punishment for transgressing the boundaries of what is considered sexually appropriate and virtuous for women, and also acts as a mechanism of social control through which to deter other girls and women from similarly ‘misbehaving’. These stigmatised beliefs encouraged the exclusion of any woman engaging in sexual behaviour from normative prescriptions of the ideal Indian woman, and therefore worked to perpetuate feelings of isolation and rejection for sex trafficking survivors.

Only one example arose where sex was discussed frequently and openly by an individual and within her family. This predominant unwillingness to discuss sex in a constructive, positive, or factual manner was demonstrated by what participants described as minimal familial discussions about sex, and the lack of sex education provided in West Bengal and throughout India. This finding reinforces the ‘conspiracy of silence’ regarding sexuality evident within the literature (Puri, 2002). The result of such limited discussion and education was demonstrated by even adult and married women who feel they still carry inadequate knowledge or understanding of sex and their sexuality, and who still felt that they were not entitled or able to initiate or pursue such discussions due to cultural expectations that sex remain private and covert. Such taboo works to keep individual’s sexuality shrouded in shame, secrecy, and guilt, and this was evident even within the experience of the research interviews, as some participants were sometimes reluctant or embarrassed to expand on discussions about sex and sexuality. Additionally, whilst some staff expressed the belief that an individual’s personal choice can be exercised when making decisions regarding engagement in premarital sex, some affirmed that sex should only be practiced within marriage, as the loss of her sexual respectability would otherwise discount a woman from qualifying for marriage and motherhood, and thus have consequences upon the individual’s ability to have ‘a good life’ [HQ1]. These contentions present an interesting dynamic within the organisation, where Sanlaap staff is sometimes simultaneously endorsing reframing of chastity for survivors of sex trafficking, whilst negating individual expressions of sexuality for themselves and other Indian women. Again, this is reflective of how there is room within Sanlaap’s advocacy work to advance the rights and freedoms of Indian women more broadly, as part of the endeavour to progress rights-protective environments for survivors.

5.4.4 LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT VULNERABILITIES

Susceptibility towards practices such as trafficking and re-trafficking commonly stems from the lack of education and understanding regarding the dangers of these vulnerabilities (Ejalu, 2006; Ray, 2008). Within this research, a significant lack of awareness of these risks was demonstrated by many survivors, families, and communities. Therefore, misinformation about vulnerabilities, unfounded assumptions about complicity, and the subsequent loss of social support survivors experienced often resulted in their families rejecting any relationship with them due to their involvement in sex work and the inherent cultural shame that it carries.

I haven’t gone willingly into that place, somebody is torturing me. [But] nobody [will] accept me if I go back to my house... My father will torture me, physically. What to do? I want to go back in my house, but I can’t now. [Survivor]

One survivor was unable to return to her home because of her brother's rejection of her involvement in sex work and his condemnation of the loss of her chastity. Although her mother wanted to have a relationship with her, she was unable to do so because she was dependent upon her son and could not disobey his decision for the entire family to cease contact with her daughter [CS1]. A number of survivors had experienced similar rejection, as due to misunderstandings about vulnerability, victimisation and complicity, their families were unable to discern a distinction between sexual abuse and stigmatising beliefs centred upon the sacredness of chastity. In the absence of Sanlaap's support and protection of these survivors, these experiences of rejection would have created opportunities within which they would have become vulnerable to re-victimisation.

Furthermore, this lack of knowledge about vulnerability made survivors and their families susceptible to practices such as child marriage and love bombing (Dorias & Corriveau, 2009), as they were unaware of these existing as manipulative techniques which operated to disguise sex trafficking or other forms of exploitation. Staff explained that a significant number of survivors at Sanlaap's shelter home had been trafficked as a result of the façade of child marriage. These findings therefore indicate that the practice remains an easy way for traffickers to target poorer families in India, as the interconnected factors of economic hardship and the common lack of education about dangerous activities such as sex trafficking create perfect opportunities for the targeting and exploitation of Indian girls.

5.4.5 INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES

Although gender was a critical element of survivor vulnerability, and many staff participants expressed that women were overrepresented within victim populations because they are inherently the 'weaker sex' [CS2; CS3; HQ3], Sanlaap staff also identified that the survivors who were or have been under their care experienced intersecting vulnerabilities. Three of the staff interviewed stated most survivors were primarily from ethnic and caste minority communities, and this meant that their vulnerability to their initial victimisation or their re-victimisation was usually class-based and due to their low social status or caste. This often had the consequence of making them 'devoid' [HQ3] of protective factors such as education, literacy, wealth, or social prestige [HQ3; CS1; CS3]. Where such inequality persists, development initiatives are often unable to empower and protect these individuals to participate in social and economic life. This illustrates how vulnerability is rooted in an individual's personal exposure and susceptibility to situational conditions. This vulnerability is especially manifested within environments which fail to ensure equal access and protection to all members—

such as the more traditional and patriarchal communities from which most Sanlaap survivors came [CS1; CS4; HQ1; HQ2] (UNODC, 2008). Survivor vulnerability was also influenced by the urban and rural divide, which staff identified as stemming from the inexistence of education and awareness about individual vulnerability.

Some survivors expressed they felt their vulnerability also intersected at the point of physical beauty, which was a factor that worked to encourage more stigma and rejection of survivors, as their inherent worth and capabilities were overlooked, and again they were judged based upon their external or superficial qualities:

It is unfair that society, the world, always looks at how beautiful you are from the outside. Because, I know I am not as pretty as a lot of people, but the world [never] looks at [my] talent first, but always how I look. And that sucks. ... [It] hurts, when they don't look at my inner self, when they don't look at what I have to offer. [Survivor]

The above vulnerabilities operate to maintain social stigma within many communities, and within Indian society more broadly. The research demonstrates that stigma is a manifestation of power, which enables the subordination and displacement of vulnerable groups, and reinforces power imbalances (Krusi et al., 2016; Samatopoulou, 2012). Stigma is a form of ideological power,²⁰ which perpetuates injustice and widens inequalities, thus subverting the aims and success of human development (Scott-Villiers & Oosterom, 2016). Challenging norms that sustain these vulnerabilities and hinder the realisation of a just world are integral activities in the pursuit of sustainable development. Although Sanlaap actively works to address social stigma as part of their anti-trafficking advocacy, this stigma is still widely maintained as ideological power in the forms of patriarchal, class, caste and gender-based power. These forms of power were seen within staff and survivor experiences, sustaining the presence of stigma, which enabled survivor inequality to persist in the absence of advocacy efforts that countered stigmatising beliefs.

5.5 SANLAAP'S STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SEXUAL STIGMA

In order to mitigate the impact of this stigma, Sanlaap's rehabilitation strategy addresses the social and cultural expectations of purity for victims of sexual crime. This approach constitutes two crucial

²⁰ Ideological power secures people's consent to be dominated, through the generation of norms to which they may become habituated, even when it is against their interests. Such power is invisible, difficult to reverse and is one of the most challenging facets of power analysis (VeneKlasen & Miller 2007).

processes—reframing of survivor perceptions of self, and reframing those perceptions society holds of female vulnerability, sexual exploitation, and individual complicity. This again reflects an organisational understanding that stigma is a bidirectional experience. Thus, where stigma is encountered or perceived, and then internalised or self-imposed (Liu et al., 2011; Scrambler, 2004), it requires that both elements of the process of stigmatisation are therefore confronted and successfully challenged. The efficacy of this approach is evident within those cases where Sanlaap has been able to ensure successful reintegration through educating survivors, families and communities to re-evaluate, challenge and unlearn stigmatised beliefs. Each of the challenges, and what I have interpreted from the research as Sanlaap’s correlating approaches to address them, are summarised in the table below. A detailed examination of each of these strategies follows.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES	
CHALLENGE	SANLAAP’S RESPONSE
Subscribing to stigmatising beliefs/Fatalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate to survivors that stigmatising beliefs are baseless • Negate adaptation to stigmatising beliefs • Challenge perceptions of ‘respectable identity’ • Reframe notions of purity and chastity—separate body and virtue
Low self-esteem/self-worth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm and encourage positive definitions of self • Encourage survivors to identify their personal interests/needs for personal fulfilment • Equip survivors with education or vocational skills • Encourage interaction with past Sanlaap survivors who have been successfully re-integrated
Survivor beliefs of complicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise their innocence, teach them about consent • Reframe notions of purity and chastity—separate body and virtue • Teach them that a crime was committed against them • Teach them about their rights
Fear of rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate an environment that is welcoming and supportive to survivors, and which reflects their value and acceptance • Teach them about their rights • Encourage interaction with past Sanlaap survivors who have been successfully re-integrated
Family and community ignorance of vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate to survivors’ families and communities that stigmatising beliefs are baseless • Teach them about female and survivor vulnerabilities • Teach them about survivor rights. And how these impact successful reintegration • Challenge beliefs regarding complicity—emphasise survivor innocence, discuss consent
Re-integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate environment survivor will be returned to ensure it is rights-protective • Conduct rights-protective education within the family and community as required • Monitor this environment to ensure it remains rights-protective

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain contact with survivor, family, and community for a period of two years following her re-integration
Re-victimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor this environment to ensure it remains rights-protective • Maintain contact with survivor, family, and community for a period of two years following her re-integration • Remove survivor from the environment if it becomes discriminatory and negatively affects her resettlement • Identify alternative avenues for resettlement

5.5.1 DYNAMISM OF STIGMA AND VULNERABILITY

The successes or challenges Sanlaap has experienced in rehabilitating and reintegrating survivors of sex trafficking reinforce existing literature that proposes that both stigma and vulnerability are dynamic processes (Bebbington & Foo, 2014; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Sanlaap's rehabilitation and reintegration efforts are centred upon an understanding that vulnerability is influenced and impacted by the context within which the individual exists, their capacity for individual response, and the strength of surrounding social capital (Bebbington & Foo, 2014; Nef, 1999; Williams & Menestral, 2013). The experiences of survivors who have been successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated through Sanlaap highlight that stigma can be addressed, re-framed, and remedied, and many elements of the survivor experience and familial and community response are able to be mitigated or strengthened to alleviate vulnerability. This therefore further demonstrates that self-worth and -esteem are ultimately integral to how survivors experience, negotiate and resist stigma, attested by examples of survivors who either succeeded in cultivating resilience and positive definitions of self, those who struggled to overcome their internalised stigmatised beliefs, or those who succumbed to discrimination that stemmed from such stigma. Conversely, the findings also illustrated that even where stigma had been reframed and remedied by Sanlaap's rights-enhancing education, the dynamic nature of stigma meant that this education was able to be overridden by the return of stigmatising beliefs, which therefore subjected survivors to re-victimisation, and required Sanlaap to intervene in removing the survivor from this environment.

5.5.2 SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT

Sanlaap works to discourage survivor adaptation to stigmatising beliefs, and rather promotes resistance by teaching survivors to redefine and reaffirm their worth and understand and champion their human rights. Two critical ways in which this is encouraged is through negating beliefs that what has happened to them carries a finality for their lives, and by highlighting that the value of their

respectable identity is independent of their sexual history and conduct. Sanlaap accomplishes this through emphasising their innocence and continued worth and reinforcing that they are now in an environment within which people will care for their well-being, enable them to recover from their trauma, and help them to rebuild their lives. Sanlaap staff explained that this approach is employed, as it is common for survivors who subscribe to stigmatising beliefs to feel that they are no longer entitled to live a good life outside of sex work. This is often the result of their exposure to environments within which their bodies were not valued, their rights were not honoured or enforced, or where a survivor had experiences that taught her that she was not deserving of protection. Therefore, affirming her worth in this way was an integral means through which staff could negate any internalised beliefs held by a survivor that she is unworthy of agency or fulfilment. Furthermore, the importance of her chastity symbolising her worth was also illustrated by social sentiments that ‘her life is gone’ following its loss, which Sanlaap worked to actively negate through redefining chastity, and separating her body from her virtue—particularly as it relates to her innocence in those choices which she had no control over. This was effective in enabling survivors to reframe perceptions of their self-worth and reclaim their identities and rights regarding chastity.

Survivor empowerment through educational or vocational opportunities was also an integral measure to address social stigma. This was achieved through empowering survivors with means to pursue their interests, to gain confidence, and to deter them from feeling their only option was to return to sex work. As stated by one Sanlaap staff member, equipping survivors with these skills enabled them to regain the momentum they lost in their educations or careers during the time they were trafficked [CS4]. Additionally, ensuring survivors had skills which make them desirable for employment also worked to negate stigma as this enabled them to be seen as a meaningful contributor to their family and community [GS].

This approach was also complemented and reinforced by Sanlaap’s strategy to encourage socialisation between survivors within the shelter home, and with those survivors who had been successfully reintegrated. This strategy was utilised in order to target fatalism by reflecting to survivors that girls and women who had once been in their shoes had been capable of claiming their rights and finding their own place within their communities and societies.

5.5.3 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Sanlaap invests a significant amount of their advocacy work into addressing individual and community misinformation and misunderstanding, because the lack of education can contribute to initial vulnerability or encourage re-victimisation. This education work counters stigmatising beliefs that negatively impact the survivor's rehabilitation and reintegration experiences. Therefore, the provision of such education is integral to targeting and resolving stigma. Sanlaap addresses these challenges through their advocacy efforts, particularly focusing on female vulnerability, by assessing the environment a survivor will be returned to and engaging in providing information to her family and community which educates them on the realities and dangers of sex trafficking, and encouraging conversations which negate traditionally-held beliefs about complicity. Where Sanlaap has implemented this kind of education within families and communities, they have seen it result in acceptance of the survivor, especially where she may have already experienced rejection.

Sometimes if their own house they are not safe, and they will come back to the shelter home to be away from that community. So we give the counselling, and we also try to give the counselling or support to the parents... And then they may go back to the family, but maybe not the same community. [GS]

Furthermore, Sanlaap focuses specifically upon discussing social stigma related to sexual purity with survivors' families and communities, to emphasise the importance of removing this form of discrimination from their reintegration experience. This method of survivor advocacy ensures that they are able to exist within rights-protective environments, claim their rights, and regain their place in their communities and societies. All staff participants highlighted the absence of sexual stigma as a crucial element of an environment that is conducive to effective survivor recovery, and Sanlaap therefore places significant emphasis upon educating the survivor's family and community about the importance of insulating her from social stigma. This was demonstrated within the research as having positive impacts upon survivors' successful resettlement. In one case, a survivor's family had been given this rights-protective education and had accepted the girl back into their home. Although her community continually rejected her, her family insulated her from this discrimination and defended her rightful place within their home and that community. This eventually led to her acceptance [CS1], which then enabled her to be successfully reintegrated into her community.

Acceptance is the main thing for this rehabilitation, restoration, and repatriation—for everything. [They] have to accept her, and positively accept her. [CS4]

5.5.4 EFFICACY OF POST-REINTEGRATION CARE

Sanlaap's support of survivors for a period of two years following their reintegration demonstrated great success within their organisation in protecting their survivors from re-trafficking or re-victimisation, as they had an estimated reintegration success rate of 80 per cent [HQ1]. Furthermore, survivors themselves expressed that they felt the quality of the care they received from Sanlaap was very good, and they all felt prepared to succeed once leaving the shelter home, which is a strong testimony of how effectively the organisation equips survivors with the ability to be meaningfully resettled. However as these findings only reflect one organisation and one context, it would be worthwhile to evaluate support processes across other similar organisations in Kolkata, India, or other global trafficking centres, to understand whether Sanlaap's close monitoring of survivor reintegration—particularly focused on social stigma and discrimination—is a vitally effective tool in deterring vulnerability and re-victimisation, and whether it should operate as the standard for rehabilitative anti-trafficking efforts. There is very little empirical data on how often reintegration efforts succeed and, if they do, what factors are related to positive outcomes (Crawford & Kaufman, 2008; Pandey, Tewari & Bhowmick, 2013), so this is an area that certainly requires further research and understanding.

5.6 STIGMA AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON SURVIVOR RE-VICTIMISATION AND RE-TRAFFICKING

In the experience of the organisation, there was no evidence that social stigma was a cause for re-trafficking of survivors, nor did any staff participants describe experiences of survivor re-trafficking within their organisation during their aforementioned follow-up process. However, although the findings demonstrate that Sanlaap had been effective in addressing re-trafficking by mitigating social stigma and its consequences, there was sound evidence amongst participants that the influence of this stigma had operated as a primary causative factor in some survivors' re-victimisation. Staff expressed that stigma had worked to encourage rehabilitated survivors of sex trafficking to return to the sex trade when they were outside of this follow-up period, even where they had been provided with alternative educational or vocational opportunities by Sanlaap. As posited by Heath (2013), manifestations of stigma, prejudice and bigotry during the reintegration process can result in social isolation, discrimination and impoverishment, which limit the resettlement of some survivors. The influence of stigmatising and discriminatory actions in hindering resettlement was demonstrated by such cases as that of the survivor who contracted HIV during her trafficking, and who, despite initially being welcomed by her family, was ultimately rejected. Were Sanlaap not present to intervene in the

situation and to provide an alternative means for her resettlement, based on the social stigma associated with her sexual history and status, hers was a case that would have very likely resulted in continued discrimination and hardship—if not vulnerability to re-trafficking, a voluntary return to the sex trade, or some other form of exploitation. This case therefore illustrates that although Sanlaap continues their monitoring for two years, the reintegration period could be an ongoing process, one which does not cease, and which is constantly impacted by the dynamic and ever-evolving facets of stigma and discrimination, the survivor’s individual resilience, and the ability of her environment to be conducive to honouring and protecting her rights. It would be interesting to further explore and understand whether extending this period of follow-up and monitoring has any meaningful effect on protecting survivors from such re-victimisation, and how this could therefore impact the reintegration policy of Sanlaap, and wider anti-trafficking advocacy.

5.7 ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES FOR COUNTERING STIGMA IN REINTEGRATION WORK

This research illustrates that cultural perceptions of women in India, their identities, and their autonomy strongly influence stigmatising beliefs. Countering these deep-seated beliefs is integral to creating an environment within which these women are empowered, secure, and free. Although Sanlaap’s rehabilitation and reintegration strategies address these challenges to an extent, this research highlights that there remain opportunities to extend these efforts to take a broader approach to addressing stigma and vulnerability as it relates to sex trafficking.

5.7.1 NEGATE THAT MARRIAGE IS A MARKER FOR SUCCESS

This research identified the existence of many contentious and conflicting beliefs amongst participants in regards to the role of marriage within Indian society. Numerous staff described their confusion with why marriage was believed to impart safety, security and status upon Indian women. Many felt these new privileges a woman was afforded once becoming a wife were little more than unfounded assumptions, as it was perceptions about her that had changed purely as a result of her marriage, rather than a tangible change to her inherent worth. Social attitudes enabled her to be ‘upgraded’ to a higher class [HQ3] once she was no longer single, and participants expressed that this often afforded her greater respect within her community, and protection from the discrimination that is otherwise faced by single women. Some participants felt frustrated by these beliefs and perceptions about marriage, and how they limited the freedoms of some Indian girls and women, or attached their ability

to be safe and worthy to having a male presence in their life. Furthermore, although some Sanlaap staff conversely agreed with the cultural importance of marriage, none could identify beyond social and cultural beliefs why this should meaningfully impact upon the status of a woman and her ability to participate fully in her community more than her single counterpart. A few Sanlaap staff identified that these contentions about the place of marriage in modern India are slowly being challenged, and the cultural and political climate of India is increasingly placing less emphasis upon marriage and more emphasis upon the empowerment and freedoms of the single woman.

However, although this is the broader debate that is being progressed within India, Sanlaap's anti-trafficking work in addressing social attitudes and stigmas did not include challenging the perceived cultural value of the institution of marriage, nor gendered beliefs about women's vulnerability and worth outside of marriage. Rather, in some instances, marriage was still seen as a marker of a survivor's successful acceptance and reintegration into society, and is a process that Sanlaap has sometimes encouraged or facilitated for survivors [GS; HQ2] because it was seen (pragmatically) to ensure their safety from the violence of discrimination. Social expectations surrounding the importance of marrying and fulfilling the role of a wife could work to isolate the identities of survivors of sex trafficking, and which could result in their discrimination and social exclusion. Therefore, the maintenance of these social expectations should be connected with the perpetuation of exploitative practices like sex trafficking. As the organisation did not readily challenge or undermine these expectations, this could be identified as an interesting gap in Sanlaap's anti-trafficking advocacy.

The assumptions of vulnerability and the prevailing cultural subordination of single Indian women create an opportunity to reframe their ability to be independent, self-sufficient, and empowered outside of marriage, and to encourage a cultural shift within India that promotes the end of labelling, categorising and subsequently discriminating against women who exist outside of the married ideal (Link & Phelan, 2011). Initiating such dialogue also provides an opportunity to challenge normative prescriptions of acceptable femininity in India, and reframe the constructs of female identity, and what it means to be an accepted and valued Indian woman. It is reasonable to surmise that reintegration into existing cultural and social structures is easier or less traumatic for survivors (IOM, 2011; KC, 2015), and that challenging these structures could possibly hinder their reintegration or extend their trauma. However, as ideologies surrounding the importance of marriage are so integral to this emphasis upon upholding and embodying sexual purity and respectability, there could be scope within anti-trafficking strategies to undermine, transform and disarm stigmatising beliefs about ideal womanhood in India, as a preventative measure to anti-trafficking initiatives focused on sexual stigma.

5.7.2 OPEN DIALOGUE REGARDING SEX

Stigma surrounding sexual empowerment is central to the cultivation of an environment which shames and marginalises any woman who pursues and enjoys her sexual liberation. Although Sanlaap challenges the social and cultural expectations of purity for victims of sexual crime, their advocacy work did not readily examine or address the interaction of purity, sexuality and sexual stigma for Indian women more broadly, and the organisation does not specifically incorporate discussions of female sexuality into their efforts to address and mitigate stigma.

Women's well-being depends, among other things, upon their right to make choices about their own body, pleasure, and sexuality (Hawkins, Cornwall & Lewin, 2011), and challenging dialogues which control and limit individual sexuality is integral to ensuring the ability of all Indian girls and women to claim these rights and freedoms. Encouraging positive beliefs about all forms of sexual behaviour is fundamental to the process of challenging cultural perceptions of valued womanhood in India, and it additionally enables the creation of an environment that is accepting, compassionate, and which does not discriminate against or stigmatise women who engage in sex. Enabling Indian girls and women the opportunity and freedom to explore and assert their sexualities, and to still retain their entitlement to their Indian identity is therefore equally integral to the process of removing the stigma that has the power to oppress all Indian girls and women, including those who are survivors of sex trafficking.

However, although the founder of Sanlaap had encouraged some progressive, sex-positive beliefs within the organisation, the notion of individual freedom in sexual expression wasn't a perspective that was widely shared amongst participants, and perhaps indicates why this did not come out in discussions about stigma. No staff member endorsed nor expressed more than neutral feelings about premarital sex, and none personally agreed with such behaviour. Although it was almost unanimously felt amongst Sanlaap staff that sex education was required within West Bengal and across India, their intention in advocating for such education was purely for purposes of adolescents possessing the knowledge to ensure they could preserve their bodily sexual health, and for married couples to be informed about their sex lives. They felt that such education should never emphasise or encourage premarital sex for girls or single women. This is certainly a culturally complex issue; as demonstrated within the literature, progressive values about sexuality for all genders directly oppose the social, religious and moral ethos of India and sex education is thus viewed as fundamentally at odds with Indian values (Das, 2014; Tripathi & Sekher, 2013). These apprehensions about encouraging sexual

empowerment could also stem from concerns regarding the safety of girls and women in India considering the strength and ubiquity of stigmatising beliefs and their consequences. However, it is important to acknowledge that social stigma is constructed, taught, and maintained in multidimensional ways and therefore targeting it from expansive perspectives, such as cultivating and encouraging varied definitions of female sexuality in India, could be an integral and influential means through which to counter and undermine the social stigma faced by Indian girls and women broadly.

These personal value systems of Sanlaap staff related to marriage and sexual conduct largely reaffirm dominant ideals of marriage and sexual purity which Indian girls and women are raised to pursue and illustrate how these beliefs—which could limit the freedoms of Indian females—are held, taught, and sustained even within Sanlaap. Although Sanlaap affirms their innocence and provides insulation from these stigmatising judgments for survivors within the organisation—as it is acknowledged that protection from such stigma is vital to their ability to reclaim their lives—this raises questions as to whether their personal perspectives and belief systems create and perpetuate environments within which single, sexually active women are stigmatised in India, and which could consequently maintain the same environment within which survivors of sex trafficking are also stigmatised, and where they struggle to be successfully reintegrated. Therefore, an interesting contention exists within Sanlaap between addressing and eliminating stigma related to Indian girls and women who have been sexually active only as a result of sexual abuse, and not endorsing premarital sex for any other class of Indian woman. This disconnect could hence exclude such sex and those who engage in it from having an accepted place within Indian society, and thus perpetuate stigmatising beliefs about the worth of any Indian female who has engaged in sex. Challenging the conspiracy of silence (Puri, 2002), encouraging discussion of female sexuality, and cultivating diversified perspectives of what it means to own decision-making power and freedom over one's sexuality could operate as a critical means of empowerment to Indian girls and women, and work to undermine dominant cultural perspectives of the sexually passive and therefore obedient, accepted woman, or the sexually empowered and therefore deviant, stigmatised woman.

Furthermore, the findings clearly indicate that participants strongly believe comprehensive sex education regarding the biological realities of sex, sexual health, and safe sex practice is required across India. In addition to addressing the right and access individuals should be able to have to such knowledge, the promotion of sex education could have a valuable place within anti-trafficking work. Many staff expressed they felt the lack of education inspires curiosity and encourages exploration that can lead adolescents—particularly girls—into situations where they could be exploited. Although

challenging cultural perceptions of female sexuality was not the intention behind staff highlighting the need for sex education, there remains a possible opportunity to also integrate addressing stigma into such education. Reframing dialogues about sex to emphasise sex-positive beliefs, the importance of educated decision-making, and greater gender equity in individuals' freedom of choice could work to broaden cultural perceptions regarding who can engage in sex, and within which contexts it is acceptable or appropriate. Participants expressed there exists a double standard surrounding Indian sexuality, as sex is seen as natural for Indian men, and an integral part of their masculine identities. It could be worthwhile to explore whether, through the method of sex education, beliefs about Indian feminine identity can be reframed to also include and accept female sexuality. Ultimately, such advocacy around the sexual empowerment of women, and challenging traditional and restrictive perceptions of women's freedom are important in addressing gender inequality, and could operate to mitigate or alleviate the gender discrimination and social stigma girls and women face throughout India (Banerjee, 2005; Heyzer, 2002; Vijayakumar, 2013;).

5.8 CHALLENGES CREATED BY THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Encouraging broader perspectives of social advocacy for women's human rights to address social stigma requires the creation of a more-extensive social shift than just focusing on addressing discrimination regarding gender and sexuality as it relates to sex trafficking. However, although there could be value in initiating such dialogue, the findings indicate that beliefs about female sexuality in traditional Indian communities are predominantly conservative and deeply ingrained through cultural and religious histories. These beliefs are also often reflected within the political climate and would prove undoubtedly difficult and laborious to transform. The findings further illustrate that even broaching the subject could be especially complex, as it was frequently highlighted within the research that women exercising their independence and freedom—in forms that were sexual or otherwise—can be viewed as equally transgressing social norms and is thus often met with severe resistance. Even within the interviews themselves, some participants found it difficult or taboo to discuss sex and sexuality openly, and this is demonstrative of how challenging it will be to encourage dialogue about the acceptance of Indian women's freedoms over their bodies and sexualities, let alone to enable the realisation of that acceptance.

The Indian context is especially complex due to the influential role of patriarchal privilege. The research reinforces the existing literature that posits that Indian girls and women are at the mercy of patriarchal belief systems (Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg, 2015), which ultimately prize a stable, narrow and revered identity of Indian womanhood, which particularly emphasises female honour. The

findings affirm that, within India, sexual purity is often the insignia of ideal womanhood (Heyzer, 2002), and Indian women thus carry an immense responsibility to protect their premarital chastity in order to earn and maintain their place within Indian society (Puri, 2002). As seen within the research, to fail to comply with this ideal carries immense social consequences for Indian women. Although this traditional conceptualisation of Indian womanhood is narrow and regressive, it is still so central to the contemporary culture, and as it is additionally reinforced from both history and religion, it is extremely hard to challenge. Similarly, the research has presented that much of the gender discrimination experienced in India stems from the immense social burden of being a single woman. Challenging the enduring mindset that girls and women are both protectionless and worthless without men is complex. Nonetheless, there is opportunity to explore the likelihood that such discussions could contribute meaningfully to advancing the freedom of Indian girls and women and thus address sexual stigma more broadly, which may encourage a possible positive influence upon anti-trafficking work.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Social stigma in India operates as a form of control over women and creates discriminatory environments that perpetuate their vulnerability and subjugation. Female empowerment fundamentally requires interventions which address unequal gender relations which marginalise women; as presented by Heyzer (2002), this must begin, first and foremost, with challenging and reframing cultural perceptions of women, their value, the ownership and empowerment of their bodies, and their fundamental rights (Doepke & Tertilt, 2011). Sanlaap addresses social stigma and empowers sex trafficking survivors through addressing perceptions of sexually abused women and their value and facilitating the fulfilment of their rights. This has been demonstrated within this research as powerfully effective in enabling successful survivor rehabilitation and reintegration.

However, there remain opportunities to also focus further upon ownership over their bodily rights, and their empowerment to exercise those rights, for both survivors and other categories of Indian girls and women, as a broader preventative approach towards anti-trafficking. Through the creation of environments within which there is less discrimination, greater gender equity, and more opportunity for all females to claim their human rights and freedoms, this could create the power to ensure protection for all Indian girls and women from the varying degrees of vulnerability and discrimination that stems from sexual stigma.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that deeply embedded cultural stigmas in India related to female premarital sex and sexual activity profoundly influenced the rehabilitation and reintegration experiences of sex trafficking survivors, impacted their propensity for re-victimisation, and shaped the care and advocacy efforts of Sanlaap's counselling and support staff. These stigmas were rooted in social and cultural practices and traditions that erode female rights, perpetuate gender discrimination and sustain underdevelopment in India. These stigmas are also illustrative of the complex and multidimensional processes that give rise to environments that create and maintain conditions for the exploitation of Indian girls and women.

The aim of this research was to identify how stigma was manifested within the experiences of Sanlaap survivors and staff, and to understand how this shaped the organisational approach to rehabilitation, reintegration, and anti-trafficking advocacy. This research intends to contribute towards a better understanding of how stigma and its associated discrimination are linked to human rights violations in India, and how they subsequently enable female vulnerability to exploitation through crimes such as sex trafficking. It is hoped that such an understanding can bolster the argument proposed within the literature that preventative measures need to be prioritised over the reactive measures currently seen to dominate efforts within the global anti-trafficking movement. Although this argument has theoretical credence, greater empirical evidence is needed to link the protection of human rights to effective anti-trafficking work, and to support the prioritisation of prevention; to provide such evidence within the Indian context is a core aim of this research.

This research found that stigma, discrimination and violations of human rights are powerfully interrelated, and can combine to create a disempowering environment for vulnerable groups that perpetuates their continued insecurity and exploitation, thus hindering development efforts. These factors therefore provide three key entry points for successful anti-trafficking work: preventing stigma; challenging discrimination when it occurs; and promoting and protecting human rights, including monitoring and redressing human rights violations (Aggleton et al., 2005). Sanlaap's anti-trafficking approach targets each of these entry points, providing rights-protective education to survivors, their families and communities; advocating for survivor rights; protecting survivors from environments and situations which erode their rights; and actively monitoring their exposure to stigmatising beliefs, related discrimination and human rights violations throughout the process of their reintegration. The efficacy of addressing each of these concerns in order to construct rights-enhancing environments for their survivors is attested in this research by Sanlaap's success in rehabilitating and reintegrating an

approximated 80 per cent of their survivors. Sanlaap has demonstrated that insulating survivors from stigma, empowering them to counter stigmatising beliefs, and transforming these beliefs amongst families and communities is an effective preventative anti-trafficking approach. When protected from this stigma, survivors are able to return safely to Indian society, gain acceptance and claim their rights to active participation within their communities, be empowered to pursue educational or employment opportunities that enable their individual and human development, and are protected from future vulnerabilities to discrimination and exploitation stemming from stigma.

This research also found that social stigma was central to the two critical success factors in the rehabilitation and reintegration of sex trafficking survivors: (a) individual resilience or capacity for resistance to stigmatising beliefs and, (b) rights-enhancing environments within which survivors are able to live free from discrimination. The research shows that stigma is experienced both individually and socially, and there exists the interplay of both internalised and enacted stigma. Sanlaap's anti-trafficking work that is focused upon stigma demonstrates that resolving external stigma without resolving the internalisation of stigma (or vice versa) is ultimately ineffective in ensuring successful survivor rehabilitation and reintegration. Internalised stigma, especially, controls and regulates the behaviour of stigmatised individuals, and, as seen within the findings, can encourage survivors to self-impose restrictions upon their rights and freedoms as a result. Therefore, it is a critical and integral element of their primary responses to social stigma to negate these beliefs and target fatalistic mindsets amongst survivors. Without doing so, survivors would likely succumb to the imposed consequences of social stigma that encourages them to reject rehabilitation efforts or return to sex work. Where Sanlaap had failed to successfully rehabilitate and reintegrate a survivor, it was as a result of either her subscribing or acquiescing to stigmatising beliefs about her sexual purity and subsequent worth, or where she was not adequately protected from the external forces of stigma and discrimination.

Where HRBAs are able to disestablish the discriminatory practices that erode individual rights and maintain inequities within societies, they promote equality and enable the empowerment of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Through their HRBA to rehabilitation and reintegration, Sanlaap has been successful in ending the re-trafficking of their survivors, and in largely preventing their re-victimisation. The research has also demonstrated how effective the organisation's HRBA has been in empowering the majority of their survivors, which is also reflective of the organisation advancing human rights principles within these survivors' families and communities. However, the enduring cultural and religious practices of India continue to deeply influence the presence and maintenance of social stigma, which reinforces discrimination and undermines human rights. This research has shown that within the context of India, stigmatisation is a dynamic, evolving, and multi-

faceted experience. Therefore, meaningfully addressing social stigma is not a linear process; despite their successes, Sanlaap's rights-protective education was not universally effective in resolving stigmatising beliefs. These beliefs continue to be influenced and reinforced by ongoing experiences of stigma and discrimination, especially where these beliefs are rooted in the cultural and religious histories that are widely present within India, and which still hold contemporary importance and validity.

Furthermore, despite the HRBA implemented by Sanlaap at the organisational level, their approach to addressing social stigma is ultimately influenced by individual values. As seen within this research, these values are not always congruent with the rights Indian women should have to freedom of choice in their expressions of sexuality, which would otherwise be promoted by the HRBA. Although all Sanlaap staff discussed the challenge presented by the clash of human rights and cultural rights for survivors, some of these staff appeared to hold contradictory views when discussing female rights more broadly. Although these staff expressed progressive perspectives about complicity and sexual responsibility for sex trafficking survivors, they also expressed more traditional views (that reflected the dominant cultural norms which value chastity and purity) on the rights of ordinary Indian girls and women to engage in sexual activity. As highlighted within the research, the anti-trafficking work of Sanlaap staff is predicated on the foundation of a HRBA, and they uphold and facilitate the realisation of many of the principles of human rights for survivors. However, due to the pervasiveness of cultural norms, for a number of Sanlaap staff, their approach to the HRBA is somewhat ambiguous, as they are often compartmentalising—whether consciously or unconsciously—which rights are afforded to which categories of women. This research illustrates the real need for gender equality efforts within India to progress the cultural rights of girls and women, particularly by advancing dialogue regarding female sexuality, independence, and empowerment. Challenging cultural perspectives of females, and redefining their social value, particularly around their marital status and freedom over their bodily rights, targets numerous forms of gendered discrimination that otherwise make Indian girls and women vulnerable to exploitative practices such as trafficking. Nonetheless, initiating these processes would certainly be complex—both within India and the organisation—as there is a clear division between the existence, validity and efficacy of legal law, and the persistence of cultural norms.

This research also found that survivor vulnerability to exploitation was not only a result of social stigma, but also existed at the intersectionality of their other forms of vulnerability such as class, caste, education, the 'burden' of their female and/or single identity, and their adherence to conventional

standards of beauty. The association of these intersecting vulnerabilities with various unfreedoms of underdevelopment, including poverty, poor economic opportunities and insecurity, directly create the conditions that lead to trafficking —especially when connected with the cultural context of India which stigmatises women’s sexuality and largely demands a state of sexual purity.

Although the research attests to the efficacy of Sanlaap’s anti-trafficking work for survivor populations, there is an opportunity to gain further understanding of the broader development impacts of their anti-trafficking work regarding stigma. It would be meaningful to evaluate the wider influence of Sanlaap’s rights-protective education upon those communities where Sanlaap administers it and explore whether it has an effect upon protecting other vulnerable girls and women that may have otherwise become susceptible to exploitation through trafficking. This could garner evidence to quantify whether their advocacy around stigma, female empowerment and gender inequities affects the rights of other girls and women existing within those communities—in addition to the rights of survivors—and could thus reinforce how critical human rights are as a preventative anti-trafficking strategy.

The perpetuation of sex trafficking in India can be viewed as an issue of the fundamental contention between cultural and human rights. It also reflects deep cultural hierarchies and systems that maintain the second-class status of Indian girls and women, enables their vulnerability and exploitation, and impedes their ability to participate in social and economic life. Addressing stigma at the grassroots level and by negating these hierarchies for survivors—as Sanlaap does—has been demonstrated by this research as integral to the prevention of re-trafficking and re-victimisation. However, meaningful social change that targets this stigma, advances gender equality within India and thereby insulates all classes of Indian girls and women from gendered vulnerabilities will be the most powerful and effective means through which to ensure the honouring of their human rights, and the true resolution of exploitative practices like sex trafficking. This research provides a foundation of understanding regarding how social stigma, discrimination and human rights interact with preventative anti-trafficking efforts. When situated within strategies to advance human development and gender equity nationally, this could support a movement that seeks to challenge and disestablish the cultural subordination and disempowerment of females broadly throughout India. Effective anti-trafficking in India will be dependent upon the generation of rights-enhancing environments within which they are able to truly exercise and enjoy their rightful freedoms over their choices, bodies, and lives, and which ultimately protect, value and provide equality for all Indian girls and women.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND EARTH SCIENCES

TE KURA TĀTAI ARO WHENUA

LEVEL 3, COTTON BUILDING, KELBURN CAMPUS, KELBURN PARADE, WELLINGTON

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Phone +64 4 463 5337 Email geo-enquiries@vuw.ac.nz Website <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sgees>

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: STAFF

RESEARCH PROJECT

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Advocacy and Rehabilitation for Victims of Sex Trafficking

RESEARCHER

Sumu Mukesh

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. This research is designed to explore social stigma in India related to female sexual purity, and understand how this influences female vulnerability to sex trafficking and re-victimisation. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval for this research from the University's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting staff of Sanlaap working with survivors of sex trafficking to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in an interview, which is envisaged to take approximately one hour. These interviews will be conducted in private rooms at the Sanlaap office, which is a safe and familiar space for interview participants. Interviews will take place at a time of convenience to the participant. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants by email for review to ensure accuracy. You can also request a copy of the final research results by indicating this on your Participant Consent Form.

Participation is voluntary. At any time throughout the interview and without providing a justification, you reserve the right to refrain from answering any question, to turn off the voice recorder, or to cease the interview. Although Sanlaap will be identified as an organization, you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals.

All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor Dr. Polly Stupples, Lecturer in Development Studies. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until 31 May 2017, and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within one year after the completion of the project.

The following contact details are provided if you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project:

Name	Position	Email	Telephone
Sumu Mukesh	Researcher	sumu.mukesh@vuw.ac.nz	+ 64 4 463 5337
Polly Stupples	Supervisor	polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz	+ 64 4 463 6793
Susan Corbett	Human Ethics Committee	susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz	+ 64 4 463 5480

Sumu Mukesh

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND EARTH SCIENCES
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: SANLAAP **SURVIVORS**

RESEARCH PROJECT

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Advocacy and Rehabilitation for Victims of Sex Trafficking

RESEARCHER

Sumu Mukesh

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. This research explores social stigma in India to understand how this influences female vulnerability to sex trafficking and re-victimisation. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval for this research from the University's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting women who are survivors of sex trafficking in India to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in an interview, which is envisaged to take approximately one hour. These interviews will be conducted in private rooms at the Sanlaap office, which is a safe and familiar space for interview participants. Interviews will take place at a time of convenience to the participant. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants by email for review to ensure accuracy. You can also request a copy of the final research results by indicating this on your Participant Consent Form.

Where an interpreter is necessary to complete the interview, they will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which requires them to maintain the confidentiality of what is said during your interview, and to not use or disclose this information to others at any time. To ensure you are comfortable, you will choose who will serve as your interpreter.

Participation is voluntary. At any time throughout the interview and without providing a justification, you reserve the right to refrain from answering any question, to turn off the voice recorder, or to cease the interview. Although Sanlaap will be identified as an organization, you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals.

All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor Dr. Polly Stupples, Lecturer in Development Studies. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until 31 May 2017, and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within one year after the completion of the project.

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Susan Corbett	Human Ethics Committee	susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz	+ 64 4 463 5480

Sumu Mukesh
Victoria University of Wellington

APPENDIX C

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND EARTH SCIENCES

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROJECT

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Advocacy and Rehabilitation for Victims of Sex Trafficking

RESEARCHER

Sumu Mukesh

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing sumu.mukesh@vuw.ac.nz by 31 May 2017.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that the audio recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within one year after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- ☐ I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- ☐ I agree to this interview being audio recorded.
- ☐ I would like to receive a transcript of my interview by email.
- ☐ I would like to receive a copy of the research results by email.

My email address is: _____

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:

APPENDIX D

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND EARTH SCIENCES
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INTERPRETER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

RESEARCH PROJECT

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Advocacy and Rehabilitation for Victims of Sex Trafficking

RESEARCHER

Sumu Mukesh

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

I, _____ have been engaged as an interpreter on the above research project.
In carrying out this duty, I undertake to communicate information fully and faithfully, to the best of my abilities.

I understand that all information provided by interview participants is confidential, and I agree not to use or disclose this information except as required in the course of my duties as an interpreter. I also undertake to store any written transcripts of interviews securely as directed by the researcher, and to destroy any copies of these records remaining in my possession once my involvement in the project ends.

- ☐ I have read the Information Sheet that has been sent to participants of this research project.
- ☐ I agree to treat the names of the participants and their responses as confidential.
- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

Signed:

Name of interpreter:

Date:

APPENDIX E

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT AND EARTH SCIENCES
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INTERVIEW GUIDE

RESEARCH PROJECT

Social Stigma in India and its Impact Upon Advocacy and Rehabilitation for Victims of Sex Trafficking

RESEARCHER

Sumu Mukesh

School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

SANLAAP STAFF:

- How do you feel unmarried women are perceived in Indian society?
 - Do you agree with these views? Why/Why not?
- Do you believe there are cultural stigmas regarding female empowerment/independence/Westernisation in India?
 - Can you describe what these are, in your opinion?
 - How did you come to know of these beliefs?
- Do you think there are any links between these stigmas and the practice of sex trafficking?
 - In your opinion, does it cause vulnerability?
 - In your opinion, does it cause re-victimisation?
- Do you feel these stigma and subsequent discrimination restrict the ability of the women and children you work with to claim their human rights?
 - How? Why?
- How have you seen this stigma manifested in your work/experience?
- How does this stigma make you feel?
- Why do you believe women become victims of sex trafficking?
- In your experience, what does gender discrimination look like in India?
 - Have you known any of the women or girls you work with to have experienced such discrimination?
- How would you describe the experience of being a female in Indian society?
- Have you ever implemented a strategy as part of your advocacy work to target this stigma in any way? How? Or, why not?
- What factors do you believe are essential for rehabilitation to be truly successful?
- What factors do you believe make the women you work with vulnerable to re-victimisation?
- What role do you feel violence plays in development – do violent environments have a meaningful influence on development?
 - Why?

- How has this manifested in your work?
- How does this impact the work that you do?
-

SEX TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS:

- What plans do you have for the future?
 - Do you face any challenges in achieving those goals?
- How do you feel unmarried women are perceived in Indian society?
 - Do you agree with these views? Why/Why not?
- Do you believe there are cultural stigmas regarding female empowerment/independence/Westernisation in India?
 - Can you describe what these are, in your opinion?
- How does this stigma make you feel?
- How would you describe your relationship with your own empowerment?
 - Why do you see it as a positive/negative thing?
- Do you feel these stigma and subsequent discrimination restrict your ability to claim your human rights?
 - How? Why?
- Does this stigma influence the choices you make about your future? Why/Why not?
- How would you describe your social relationships?
 - Do you identify anything as having a specific positive or negative influence upon these relationships? How?
 - How do you manage/navigate this?
- Have any of your past experiences had an influence upon how you see yourself? Why?
 - How did you manage/navigate this?
- How would you describe the experience of being a female in Indian society?
- Do you believe in the ability for your successful rehabilitation at Sanlaap? Why/why not?

APPENDIX F

Phone 0-4-463 5480
Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Sumu Mukesh
COPY TO	Dr Polly Stupples
FROM	AProf Susan Corbett, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	13 December 2016
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval: 23620 Social Stigma In India And Its Impact Upon Advocacy & Rehabilitation For Victims of Sex Trafficking

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 22 January 2018. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards

Susan Corbett
Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee

APPENDIX G

RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND DOMESTIC TREATIES AND LAWS

INTERNATIONAL LAW	PROTOCOLS	DATE	INDIA SIGNATURE [S] and RATIFICATION [R] DATES	INDIAN DOMESTIC LAW	NOTES
United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (Trafficking Protocol)		2000	S: 12 December 2002 R: 5 May 2011	Indian Constitution (Article 23) Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Act 2016	These are the most reputable and recent instruments of international law that have set the course for how to define, prevent, and prosecute human trafficking (King, 2007).
	United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	2003	S: 12 December 2002 R: 5 May 2011	Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013, Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code	
	United Nations Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air		S: 12 December 2002 R: 5 May 2011		
The following instruments laid the foundation for the contemporary conventions and efforts to eliminating trafficking:					
Universal Declaration of Human Rights		1948	Voted in favour of the Declaration, and adopted on 10 December 1948	Indian Constitution (Article 51)	These treaties and protocols enshrine positive and negative liberties, and prohibit certain behaviours or practices that have been linked to trafficking, including: ethnic, racial and sex-based discrimination; discrimination on the basis of disability; slavery; forced labour and servitude; exploitation of prostitution; sale of children and sexual exploitation of children; forced marriage; torture and inhuman treatment and punishment; and arbitrary detention. International human rights treaties also identify and protect certain rights that are particularly important in the context of trafficking, such as: the right to own and inherit property; the right to education; the right of opportunity to gain a living through work freely chosen or accepted (UNHCR, 2010).
International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights		1966	R: 10 April 1979		
The United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others		1949	R: 1953	Indian Constitution (Article 23); Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956; Sections 366 (a) and 372 of the Indian Penal Code; Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012;	

				Bonded Labour Act, 1976; Child Labour Act, 1986	
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women		1979	S: 30 July 1980 R: 9 July 1993	Indian Constitution (Articles 15); Hindu Succession Act, 1956; Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013	
Convention on the Rights of the Child		1989	Accession on 11 December 1992	Indian Constitution (Articles 24, 39 and 45)	
SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution		2002			This is a regional trafficking treaty, created by the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Kumar, 2014).

Despite its ratification of the Trafficking Protocol, India continued to lack a unified comprehensive policy for human trafficking. Rather, its anti-trafficking policies have largely operated under a fragmented and piecemeal set of laws addressing various components of human trafficking such as slavery, child labour, and child marriage (Rhoten, 2015).

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