

Plight of Cabin Keepers

ActionAid Nepal

Vision

A world without poverty in which every person can exercise their right to a life of dignity.

Mission

To eradicate poverty caused due to injustice and inequity by empowering the poorest and the most marginalised women, men, girls and boys.

Plight of Cabin Keepers

ActionAid Nepal

fighting poverty together

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Table of Contents	Page
Executive Summary	2
1. Background	4
1.1 Rationale/Objectives	5
1.2 Methodology	6
1.3 Limitations/Constraints	7
2. Socio-economic Background of Cabin Keepers	8
2.1 Ethnic Composition	8
2.2 Marital Status	9
2.3 Age Groups	9
2.4 Literacy Status	10
2.5 Family State of Affairs	10
2.6 Previous Engagements	11
2.7 Forces driving them into cabin restaurants	11
2.8 Salary of the Cabin Keepers	12
2.9 Reward & Tips	12
2.10 Sexual Indulgence	13
2.11 Flesh Trade Engagement	14
2.12 How Much They Charge for Sex	14
2.13 Bills They Help Inflate	15
2.14 Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages	16
2.15 Use of Tobacco by Cabin Keepers	16
3. Exploitation of Prostitution/Trafficking/Intimidation	17
3.1 How They End up in Cabin Restaurants	18
3.2 Difficulties They Face	19
3.3 Freedom or Coercion	19
3.4 Means of Threat/Intimidation	20
3.5 What Prevent Them from Raising Voice	21
3.6 Health Problems they Suffer from	22
3.7 Traffickers Frequenting Cabins	22
3.8 Their Views on Life of Dignity	23
3.9 Rights to Improve Situation	24
3.10 Legal Provisions Required to end Exploitation	25
4. Conclusions	25
5. Recommendations	28

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List of Tables

	Page
1. Cabin Keepers' Place of Origin	8
2. Ethnic Composition of Cabin Keepers	8
3. Marital Status, Family	9
4. Number of Children to Support	9
5. Age Groups of Cabin Keepers	9
6. Literacy Status of Cabin Keepers	10
7. Family State of Affairs	10
8. Previous Engagements	11
9. Forces Driving them into Cabin Restaurants	11
10. Salary of the Cabin Keepers	12
11. Reward and Tips	12
12. Sexual Indulgence	13
13. Engaging in Flesh Trade	14
14. How much do they charge for sex services?	14
15. Bills they help Inflate	15
16. Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages	16
17. Use of Tobacco by Cabin Keepers	16
18. How do they find way to Cabin Restaurant?	18
19. Specific Difficulties they Face	19
20. Do they have freedom of choice or are they coerced	19
21. Means of Threat and Intimidation	20
22. What prevents them from Raising Voice	21
23. Health Problems they suffer from	22
24. Traffickers Frequenting Cabin Restaurants	22
25. Their Views on Life of Dignity	23
26. Rights to Improve Situation	24
27. Legal Provisions Required to end Exploitation	25

Foreword

AAN understands poverty as the economic, social and political conditions in which women, men, girls and boys are denied their rights to live a life of dignity. Injustice, violation of people's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and subsequent exploitation lie at the root of poverty. Poverty breeds exploitation and people's vulnerability set the space and scope for it.

This covert survey of selected cabin restaurants seeks to analyse how poverty and exploitation supplement each other in Kathmandu's cabin restaurants and how the cabin workers are the inevitable victims. Though the survey could bring within its range only 240 cabin keepers from over a dozen cabin restaurants - the number may only be a fraction of their actual size - they nonetheless, make some stunning revelations thereby helping readers gain an insight into their cabin-confined plight.

Cabin keepers as divulged from this research are indubitably 'comfort girls' who are recruited to act both as 'waitress' and 'seductress'. They are hired to boost sale by offering carnal pleasures to the customers. They indulge the whim and fancy of the extravagant customers either by choice or by compulsion.

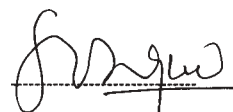
The cabin keepers procured from different parts of the country run away from their homes to escape the turmoils of conflict, hunger, family break-up, and domestic woes. These girls in their bid to escape poverty and domestic drudgery back home, take refuge in Kathmandu's sprawling cabin restaurants where they endure all sorts of sexual and psychological harassment and exploitation. Away from home they live at the mercy of their employers where they are left with little or no choice to make. Once they land in Kathmandu they inescapably experience social and economic insecurity that forces them to do the restaurant owners' bidding. Their vulnerability builds the perfect stage for the restaurant owners and their cohorts to instigate exploitation.

AAN fights poverty and other ills begotten from it, which works to disempower and disenfranchise people. It calls upon the State as the primary duty-bearer among others to enable its citizens to secure the right to an exploitation-free, dignified life by enacting laws consistent to the international covenants and protocols it has been party to, at the same time, it empowers the rights holders to launch the persevering fight to claim and enjoy their legitimate rights and entitlement.

The *Plight of Cabin Keepers* enables us to fathom the gravity of the problems faced by cabin keepers. The woes and sufferings of the cabin girls may run beyond what this research work arrests. Nonetheless, it uncovers some ugly facets of cabin life that debar the cabin keepers from living a dignified life. The ugly practices of exploitation within the cabin confines must come to an end. This may never be done by sweeping the dirt under the carpet but by bringing it to the notice of the authorities and making them realize and accept the severity of the problem. This is where AAN finds a role for itself.

Lastly, this survey vividly shows the readers what ensue in the cabin restaurants. It helps the rights activists to learn, understand, and share the pain and suffering of the cabin keepers. Not in the least, it is expected to arouse an urge for action among gender and women activists to pursue emancipation of these girls from an exploitative regime of cabin restaurants.

I would like to thank consultants Prakash Dahal for conducting this survey and Om Thapaliya for conducting the pilot survey on cabin restaurants; and Mona Shrestha Adhikari, Gender Equity leader of AAN, for coordinating this research. I would also like to thank the respondents who helped us in bringing out this survey.



Dr. Shibesh Chandra Regmi
Country Director

Executive Summary

This research work on Cabin Keepers - the women and girls employed by Kathmandu's Cabin Restaurants to serve the cabin dwellers - is built on a similar study previously conducted by an independent consultant for ActionAid Nepal. The previous study by Mr. Om Thapaliya covered 270 cabin girls and women in 175 restaurants which threw up the socio-economic dimension of the problem. The study focused exclusively on the ethnic composition, demographic composition, marital status, family status, educational status, sex trade within and outside the cabin confines, causal factors leading to cabin keeping, incomes of cabin keepers, consumption of tobacco and alcoholic beverages by cabin keepers and health risks.

The picture emerged from the study gave insight into their socio-economic problems and the causes thereof resulting in their vulnerability and victimization. However, various forms of exploitation such as: exploitation of prostitution; trafficking, recruitment and kidnapping; use of threat and intimidation to cow them into doing indecent things that hurt human dignity; and the fear-inspiring agents who conspire to silence their voices etc. were left out in the previous study.

So, the current study aims to unveil the hidden areas of the cabin trade and brings to light issues that lie at the roots of exploitation and violation of human rights, particularly the women's rights. The study thus solicits confidential information from 240 cabin keepers by hiring 12 Cabin Keepers for the job. Twelve girls and boys were handed a set of nine questions on a sheet of paper to ask the cabin keepers about (i) is there any covert trafficking network in operation? (ii) do cabin restaurants have role in cross-border and trans-national trafficking of girls? (iii) what ways and means of terror are employed to coerce the girls into doing things for one's profit? (iv) what makes them vulnerable and why can't they raise voice against exploitation and injustices? (v) what common ailments/sickness they suffer from? (vi) what in their opinion can ensure them a dignified living? (vii) who they fear the most? (viii) What in their opinion can enable them have control over their body and rights to self-determination? and (ix) what measures do they think the State must put in place to prevent exploitation and violation of their rights?

While the first five questions were designed to understand the cabin keepers'

feelings and their own perception about the cabin keeping works, the next four questions were aimed to extract their views and opinions over how to get over the problems faced by them. All the questions were open-ended which allowed them sufficient scope to express themselves.

The study has thrown up some horrifying facts about cabin keepers, and at the same time, mirror the state of dilemma they are in. The cabin keepers are not happy with the current state of affairs but cannot think of ways and means to ameliorate the situation. They largely blame the patriarchal structure of society, gender-discrimination, denial of access to parental property, and the government's 'indifferent' and 'apathetic' attitude for their woeful plight. These girls make no secrets of the fact that the restaurant owners set cops on them to intimidate while the cabin goers threaten to complain to the owners if they refuse to gratify their indulgence. The cabin keepers demanding death penalty and/or life sentence for the exploiters speak the volume of hatred and resentment they harbor against these people.

Illiteracy and ignorance are major factors that unfavorably set their thought patterns. The cabin keepers hardly know the state's legal arrangements whatsoever that guarantee their rights and entitlements. Nevertheless, they barely hide the pains and agonies they undergo in cabin keeping works. As to the authenticity of information provided by them, one may tend to doubt the credibility of their opinions. However, the mobilization of Cabin Keepers to glean information from their fellow workers put to the rest any such doubt.

Yet again, the sordid affair of the cabin keeping illustrated in this report may only be the tip of iceberg as the exploitation of the cabin keepers may be more appalling than meets the eye. It is assumed that the cabin keepers kept to themselves all such ugly tales of exploitation which they feared would put them in bad light or threaten their livelihood security. Thus, several inhuman, immoral and illegal treatments they are subjected to or forced to undergo find no explicit mention in this report in absence of credible information.

The information presented in this report are those supplied by the cabin keepers and nothing more or less.

Finally, while this study has thrown lights on specific areas i.e. exploitation, intimidation and trafficking of girls, the previous study, - that focused on socio-economic dimension - lays the foundation on which the current study is built on.

Background

The decline in one time thriving garment and carpet industries, owing to US/EU trade restrictions, gave impetus to the cabin restaurants in Kathmandu and its urban surroundings. The closure of several garment and carpet factories cost many girls and women their job. The factory workers mostly women and post-puberty girls brought in from different outlying districts of the Kingdom suddenly faced the problem of survival. These women and girls unwilling to return to the domestic drudgery back home hung around in Kathmandu. Kathmandu's roadside eateries picked them as potential means of attraction to lure the customers. Thus the capitalistic and unscrupulous restaurant owners roped in these desperate, job-less women and girls and put them into the cabins. (20% cabin keepers supplied from garment factories: Survey Cabin Restaurant-based Prostitution).

Cabin restaurants are sleazy drinking dens. They hold numerous plywood cabins, dark and dimly lit, allowing privacy to the cabin occupants. Usually, a table and two benches make the complete sitting arrangement of a cabin. The cabin keepers are girls and women who are employed to give company to the visiting clients and indulge their every whim to boost the sale. The cabin keepers are expected to give company and serve the male customers by resigning oneself to their whims and fancies thus enhancing consumption of food and beverages. Her job is to boost the sale by maximizing consumption. She mainly employs three techniques (i) allowing clients to grope her body (ii) seduce them into buying food and drinks for her (iii) and/or provoke sympathies by telling hard-cluck stories. In order to reap personal benefits, these cabin girls go as far as performing oral sex or committing sexual acts within the tight confines of the cabins.

The girls and women are principally hired to work as waitress. But once they step into the trade, they end up becoming seductress and eventually a flesh trader. A cabin girl who can seduce the customer into spending more money in the restaurant wins restaurant owner's appreciation. Others who don't are shown the door.

For reasons of being lonely and hapless in Kathmandu and for fear of losing the means of survival, they can't stand up against injustices and exploitation but allow themselves to suffer at the hands of restaurant owners and cabin occupants. From all accounts (including what cabin keepers have to say) it appears that they are both sexually and psychologically exploited by the customers, restaurant owner and the law enforcing agents.

Since the cabin keepers' job require them to gratify the sexual indulgences of the customers and fill the owner's coffer, they can't help prostituting themselves. The customers would oblige the waitress or cabin keeper only if the latter agrees to indulge their sexual desires. The cabin keepers are largely heavy smokers and drinkers. Initially, they took to drinking and smoking to give a pleasurable company to the customers which ultimately became their way of life. In the cabin trade, one who pays the most calls the shots. The cabin keepers can have no choice but to sit with the highest payer regardless of the client's attitude, behavior and treatments. Because, the client hold the purse strings and the owner holds the string of these girls, they have no choice but to comply with the situation.

The garment and carpet factories are long gone. These girls and women have secured livelihood in the cabin restaurants which are steadily on the rise. It is widely perceived that few unscrupulous law enforcing agents, traffickers and restaurant owners work in collusion in the supply of girls and the operation of these restaurants. Similarly, cross-border trafficking agents and overseas trafficking network are feared to frequent these cabin restaurants to look for easy preys.

Rationale

Trafficking by means of coercion or deception is violation of human rights. Similarly, exploitation of prostitution and coercing girls and women into doing things against their will is a grave crime. Forced to prostitute oneself to the benefit of others is grossly inhuman, illegal and unacceptable. The flesh traders or sex workers must have control over their body, right to decide how they make use of it, and a right to self-determination. On the contrary, the cabin restaurants are reaping benefits while the wealth creation is done entirely by these women and girls. Upon denial and defiance they are intimidated, threatened with physical assault and lives.

Hence, a survey that would unearth various under-cover agents who are involved in denying these girls' and women's right to life of dignity and self-determination, appear imperative. Equally important is the need to find out what various illegal and immoral means are employed to perpetuate their exploitation. Thus, on the whole, the research study is aimed at throwing lights on the unlit corners of the cabin trade thereby understanding the complexities of the problem. It equally seeks to spotlight various means and ways of exploitation of these girls and women. Finally, the study seeks to listen to what these girls and women have to say in regard to legislative and administrative arrangements that could put an end to exploitation and ensure a life of dignity to them.

Objectives

The research study seeks to throw lights on the dark recess of cabin restaurants and bring into light every form of exploitation that denies cabin girls and women the right to life of dignity and the right to self-determination. The objective of the study is primarily to get an insight into how the prostitution of these girls and women are exploited; trafficking, purchasing or kidnapping network if any at work; and what various means of threat and intimidation are employed to force them to do things against their will. The study also solicits the views and opinion of the primary stakeholders - the cabin keepers - over the legal and remedial measures that they think important to end the exploitation and to ensure a life of dignity.

The study narrowed its focus on the following areas of research to find out the followings:

- i. Whether there is any covert trafficking network in operation?
- ii. Whether cabin restaurants have any role in cross-border and trans-national trafficking of girls?
- iii. What intimidation and terror means are employed to coerce the girls into doing things for one's profit?
- iv. What makes them vulnerable and why can't they raise voice against exploitation and injustices?
- v. What common ailments/sickness they suffer from?
- vi. What in their opinion can ensure them a dignified living?
- vii. Who do they perceive as fear-inspiring agents?
- viii. What in their opinion can enable them have control over their body and rights to self-determination?
- ix. What measures do they think the State must put in place to prevent exploitation and the violation of their rights?

Methodology

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the issue under study, a close-to-truth picture can emerge only if the Cabin Keepers undertake the research work themselves. The cabin women and girls are ever suspicious of outsiders and hardly bare their heart to one other than their close confidante.

Bearing this in mind, the researcher spent quite some time in identifying surveyors that include cabin keepers and male waiters who could do the job as required. Without taking a few male waiters into confidence (they are there to keep an eye on cabin keepers), it would have been nearly impossible to accomplish the task. With much difficulty (confusion and fear reigning their mind) a few cabin keepers

agreed to undertake the task. They were given the handout carrying set of questions to solicit answers from the cabin girls. The surveyors were picked from cabin restaurants operating at Chabhil, Baneswor, Bhimsengola, Bag Bazaar, Battisputali, Rato Pool, Sinamangal, Jaya Bageswori, Kamal Pokhari, Bouddha, Kalanki and Balaju. The respondents came from nearly 50 different restaurants operating in these very areas of the Kathmandu valley.

The surveyors were given two weeks of time to collect answers from the cabin keepers.

Limitations & Constraints

The biggest constraint faced by the research project was that of identifying and persuading the cabin keepers to take up the job of surveying. In this pursuit, at least 40-45 cabin keepers were met and talked to. This was done by frequenting the cabins and holding secret and confidential talks with the girls as well as making use of 'network' that reportedly coordinated and operated the cabin trade in the valley.

At least half-a-dozen of cabin girls were met through the 'network' at various resorts lying at the outskirts of the city. Discussions were held over the assignment and the information to be sought from cabin keepers. Many of them dragged their feet when they were briefed over the nature and type of responsibilities, particularly their role in extracting information on exploitation, agents of exploitation, means of exploitation, trafficking network etc. They declined the offer.

The researcher realized that these 'middle men' arranged girls living under fear and intimidation are unlikely to serve the purpose. They run the risk of bringing manipulated information. So, a better and meaningful alternative would be to frequent the cabins and approach the girls directly. Even this task involved risk. It required one to spend money in buying foods and drink for them and make them see their interests in undertaking the task. Despite the effort, half of the girls who were approached declined the offer. Many of them said that it involved risks and that it was not a venture worth taking. Some of the girls who initially agreed to do the work later returned the questionnaire citing reasons that their colleagues refused to cooperate and that they alleged the surveyors of selling their plight to earn profit for themselves.

The relentless effort paid when some cabin girls and their male colleague, who were hired to keep an eye on them, agreed to conduct the survey. Yet, not everyone completed all the 20 handouts which each of them were given to complete. The researcher had to rush effort to complete them.

Socio-economic Background of the Cabin Keepers

This section will bring to light the overall socio-economic status of the cabin keepers along with their current situations. This would include inter alia the girls' place of origin, ethnic composition, literacy status, marital status, number of children to look after, with or without family to support, earnings, food and drink habits, age groups, nature and kind of sex trade they are engaged in.

The findings presented in this section are borrowed from the previous report Cabin Restaurant Based Prostitution in Kathmandu Valley completed by Mr. Om Thapaliya on behalf of AAN. The study interviewed 270 cabin keepers in 175 restaurants.

Table 1
Cabin Keepers' place of origin

Districts	Percentage
Sindhupalchowk	10%
Dolakha	9.5%
Kavreplanchowk	9%
Jhapa (including Refugees)	8%
Makwanpur	7%
Nuwakot	6%
Dhading	5%
Chitwan	5%
Udaypur	4%
Morang	4%
Sarlahi	3.5%
Janakpur	1%
Rest of the districts	28%

The figures cited in the table show that large number of cabin keepers come from

Table 2
Ethnic composition of cabin keepers

Ethnicity	Percentage
Tamang	40%
Rai/Limbu	13%
Brahmin/Chhetri	12.5%
Dalit	8%
Magar	6.5%
Newar	4%
Dhimal/Rajbanshi	2.5%
Sherpa	1.5%
Others	12%

districts i.e. Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Kavre, Jhapa, Makwanpur and Nuwakot respectively which happen to be the districts notorious for girl-trafficking. Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and lack of employment opportunities have been identified as factors contributing to the trafficking trade in these places in the past. The figures in the table exhibit predominance of the Tamang girls in the cabin restaurants. Interestingly, of total Nepalese sex workers in the Indian sex industry, Tamang girls are said to have the highest population among Nepalese prostitutes. This apparently make them the most vulnerable ethnic group owing to illiteracy, ignorance and, above all, lack of employment opportunities back home. They are followed by Rai/Limbu and Brahmin/Chhetris.

Table 3
Marital status, family

Marital status	Percentage
Married	145 (54%)
Living with husbands	20 (13.5%)
Divorced	4 (2.5%)
Living separately	62 (42.5%)
Husband away	7 (5%)
Undisclosed	52 (35.5%)

As illustrated in the table, only 145 (54%) of total 270 cabin girls interviewed are found married. Of them, 20 (13.5%) are living with husbands, 4 (2.5%) are already divorced, 62 (42.5%) are currently living separately, and 7 (5%) have their husband away from home. The status of 52 (35.5%) remain unknown as they declined to share.

Table 4
Number of children to support

No. of children	Percentage
One child	35.5%
Two child	12%
Three child	5%
Four or more	1.5%

Of total 145 married women cited in the previous table, 35.5 % have only **one**

Age groups of Cabin Keepers

Age group	Percentage
12-15 Yrs.	4%
16-20 Yrs.	28%
21-25 Yrs.	34%
26-30 Yrs.	27%
31 Yrs. above	3%

child to support, 12% have **two** children to look after, 5% of married women have **three** children to look after and 1.5% have FOUR or more children to take care of.

Out of total 270 respondents, 4% are found aged between 12-15 yrs., 28% between 16-20 yrs., 34% between 21-25 yrs., 27% between 26-30 yrs., and 3% 31 yrs. and above. The statistics reveal that girls at age group 21-25 yrs. make up the highest population of cabin girls followed by age group 16-20 yrs. the second highest, and the age group 26-30 yrs. the third highest. The number of minors or tender age girls have been negligible at 4% which shows that child prostitution is yet to enter the cabin restaurant. Similarly, woman above 30 age have small population which denotes that they are not on high demand.

Table 6
Literacy status of Cabin Keepers

Literacy status	Percentage
Not literate	113 (42%)
Barely literate	92 (34%)
Primary Education	30 (12%)
Secondary Education	16 (5.5%)
Higher Education	7 (2.5%)
Undisclosed	12 (4%)

The literacy level of the cabin keepers seem pathetic. Of all 270 cabin girls interviewed, 113 (42%) are found illiterate, 92 (34%) said that they could read and write with difficulty, 30 (12%) have attended the primary level, 16 (5.5%) appeared or passed secondary level education, and 7 (2.5%) are pursuing higher education.

Table 7
Family State of Affairs

Family State	Percentage
Have Father and Mother	49.5%
Father only	9%
Mother only	16%
None of them	5%
Step Mother	11.5%
Undisclosed	9%

Quite often, the family breakup resulting from mother's elopement or the entry of stepmother or the death of one of the parents are the causes forcing the girls to flee their homes. Poverty has key role in family break up and the dispersion of family members. However, judging by the figures shown in the tables, approximately

50% of cabin keepers have their parents back home. The other 50% however, have faced bitter situation of owning father only or mother only or none of them and a few even faced a non-affectionate step mother. Of the total 270 respondents, 45.5% have their parents at home, 16% have mother only, 9% father only, 5% none of them, 11.5% have stepmother and 9% refused to disclose their actual situation.

Poverty lies at the root of girls exodus. The family trouble blamed for the flight of girls is the consequence of rampant poverty in the rural Nepal. This is further compounded by the ongoing political conflict.

Table 8
Previous engagements

Previous engagements	Percentage
Studying in School	6.5%
Housewife	31%
Domestic Servant	8%
Garment/Carpet Factory	22%
Street Child/Brothel returnee	25.5%
None	7%

The table shows an alarming trend among street children and Indian brothel returnees (25.5%) landing up in Kathmandu's cabin restaurants. The street children, already vulnerable, seeking refuge in the cabin trade means they are jumping into the fire from frying pan. And, the brothel returnees unaware of their own HIV status heighten the risk of spreading HIV infections as they indulge in flesh trade inside or outside the cabins.

The figures in the table shows housewives (31%) make up the largest population of cabin keepers. Two major reasons, as pointed out by them, drive them into cabins i.e. (i) poverty and the husband's inadequate earning (ii) betrayal at the hand of the husband.

Garment and carpet factories which were major suppliers previously when cabin restaurants were limited in number have been the third major supplier (22%) at

Table 9
Forces driving them into cabin restaurants

Forces	Percentage
Poverty	43%
Ignorance	21%
Money and Pleasure	18%
Family problem/Political turmoil	18%

present. Similarly, girls from villages who serve as domestic servants at private homes look for cabin restaurants to escape from domestic drudgery. Similarly, school girls make up 6.5% of the total girl supply to cabin restaurants.

Poverty indisputably remains the key agent in driving these girls into cabin restaurants. However, there are few others who have joined the filthy lucre for the high living and fast earning. Yet others have joined cabin restaurants to meet both ends as no better alternatives were available to them. Those entering the cabin trade in quest of pleasure and money-making constitute 18% of the total cabin population. Similarly, 43% adopted cabin keeping works driven by poverty, 21% by ignorance and other 18% due to family problem and the on-going political conflict.

Table 10
Salary of the Cabin Keepers

Salary	Percentage
Rs. 1500-2000	69%
Rs. 2100-2500	19%
Rs. 2600-3000	9%
Rs. 3000 and more	3%

The cabin keepers virtually work for a paltry amount. They, however, make more money from cabin clients. Drinking and eating apart, the reward in form of tips given for services provided in the close confines of cabins is heftier than salary (see tips in the table below). This tempts the cabin keepers to work as seductress and indulge every whim of the clients to get the reward. Many of them refused to disclose their actual income. They sought to keep it to themselves. Going by their accounts, the extra income they make stand taller than the salary they monthly receive.

Rs. 1500 - 2000 is the salary of average cabin keepers. They make up 69% of the total 270 cabin keepers interviewed. However, 19% of the cabin keepers

Table 11
Reward and tips

Reward and tips	Percentage
Rs.500- 1000	5%
Rs.1100- 1500	8%
Rs. 1600-2000	17%
Rs. 2100-2500	32%
Rs.2600-3000	13%
Rs.3100-4000	18%
Rs.4000 above	7%

received Rs. 2100 - 2500 per month which is 25% more than the salary average cabin keepers took home. A small number 9% received Rs. 2600 - 3000 which is higher by 50% compared to the salary of average cabin keepers. Three percent cabin keepers are paid Rs. 3000 and even more.

The figures in the table clearly exhibit that the average reward or tips earned by individual cabin keepers have been greater than their average salary. While 32% of total 270 respondents earned Rs. 2100-2500 per month (the admission of earning may still be far less than actual earning) in reward for services, 18% ranked second highest earners making a monthly income of Rs. 3100-4000 (going by their own admission). Those earning Rs. 2600-3000 make up 13% followed by 17% making Rs. 1600-2000 and 8% earning Rs. 1100-1500 on monthly basis. The highest earners constitute 7% who have a monthly income of Rs. 4000 and above. Similarly, those having the lowest incomes make up only 5% who earn Rs. 500 - 1000 a month. The figures lead to the conclusion that 95% of the cabin keepers have learnt the way of the cabin world and have adjusted themselves to it. However, 5%, the lowest income groups, are seemingly yet to get into the mainstream cabin trade.

Table 12
Sexual Indulgence

Sexual Indulgence	Percentage
Groping/ fondling	63%
Masturbation	14%
Oral sex	4%
Sex outside the Cabin	19%

** One may reasonably doubt over their honesty in sharing their sexual indulgence. Hence, the figure may not represent the nature and magnitude of their sexual indulgence.*

The cabin clients with sufficient money to burn would have preferred a tidy, hygienic and moderately expensive restaurants to the dirty cabins had their not been the enticing sexual services. While this remains an open secret, the nature and kind of sexual indulgence within the cabin confines and outside is never easy to plumb.

The figures drawn from 270 cabin keepers, cited above, may or may not be wholly true. Nevertheless, the nature of sexual indulgence cited in table remains a truth shared by the cabin keepers themselves.

As cited in the table, the cabin keepers normally allow cabin clients to grope their bodies. The clients can access to this pleasure by buying a little food and couple of drinks for the girls. Sexual activities beyond that, however, depends on the understanding reached between the client and the cabin keeper. Except sexual intercourse which, according to cabin keepers, involves risk of being caught red-handed, other indulgences i.e. masturbation and oral sex are performed within the cabin confines. In doing so, more than one cabin keeper collaborate. While one of them is engaged in sexual act, the other keep a watchful eye on police raid or any other unexpected and unwanted occurrence. Among various sexual indulgence occurring within the confines of cabins and outside it are; groping/ fondling (63%), followed by masturbation (14%), oral sex (4%), and sexual intercourse outside the cabin (19%).

Table 13
Engaging in Flesh Trade

Engaging in Flesh Trade	Percentage
Sex in Cabins	63%
Sex in Guest Houses	14%
Sex in own bed room	4%

Figures as admitted by cabin keepers

The figures thrown up by the survey seem conservative. It is widely perceived that cabins are glittering facade behind which they run the flesh trade. However, to get the true self of cabin keepers one needs to pose himself as sex client. They put the face of a cabin keeper and behave decently until they learn that the client is genuine and bring no harm to them. Thus, the actual number of cabin keepers indulging in sex trade may be far greater. The figures cited above may only be the tip the iceberg.

Nevertheless, the survey has brought to the fore various places which the cabin keepers chose for sex trading. The girls offered sex within the confines of the cabins, chose Kathmandu's cheap guest houses and even took clients into their bed rooms.

Table 14
How much do they charge for sex services?

Charges	Percentage
Rs. 200-500	31%
Rs. 600-1000	42%
Rs. 1100-1500	14%
Rs. 1600 and above	13%

Of all 270 respondents, only 5 in number or 2% admitted that they had sex with clients inside the cabins, 36 or 13% said that they visited guest houses with the clients and 14 or 5% found it safe to have sex with clients inside their own bed rooms.

Among the few who disclosed engagement in flesh trade (refer to Table 13), the highest number 42% charge between Rs. 600 to 1000 for one time sex. This is followed by other 31% who sold one time sex for Rs 200 to 500. Another 14% said that they wouldn't agree for less than Rs. 1100 and went for as high as Rs. 1500 for one time sex. And 13% offered themselves for Rs. 1600 and above. A large number of them, 73% favored safe sex and remain aware of sexually transmitted disease including HIV/AIDS. The other 27% are reckless adventurers who least bother about the consequences. The horrific scenario that surfaced during talks with the flesh traders was that only 37% used condoms during intercourse. They said that usually they were to have sex under alcoholic influence and were too drunk to ensure condom use. Others said that their clients disliked the idea of using condom.

Table 15
Bills they help inflate

Bills	Percentage
Rs. 600-1000	37%
Rs. 1100-1500	27%
Rs. 1600-2000	17%
Rs. 2100-4000	6%
Rs.4000 above	2%
Undisclosed	11%

The figure cited above exhibits the sale made by cabin keepers in a single day. Of all the cabin keepers interviewed, 37% made a sale of Rs. 600 to 1000 a day which comes around Rs. 18,000 to Rs. 30,000 a month. Those who made sale of Rs. 1100-1500 make up 27%, followed by 6% making sale of Rs. 2100- 4000, and 2% making sale of Rs. 4000 and more. It was discovered that the salary and extra income (reward) of cabin keepers who made the highest sale rose proportionately. However, the volume of sale made by cabin keepers and the corresponding tip (reward) they claim to receive for cabin-bound services are found inconsistent.

As to the tip (extra income), 32% - the highest number of cabin keepers - said that they made an extra income (tip) of Rs. 2100 - 2500 a month (Table 11). Nearly 37% (the highest number) claimed that they made the minimum sale of

Rs. 600 -1000 a day (Table 15) which comes around Rs. 18,000 to 30,000 a month. In view of the services they provide inside the cabins and the resultant sale, the tip (reward or extra income) they claim to receive seem heavily downplayed.

Table 16
Consumption of alcoholic beverages

Consumption	Percentage
1-2 bottle of Beer	37.5%
3-4 bottle of beer	30%
5-6 bottle of beer	7%
7 bottle of beer	8.5%
Undisclosed	17%

The figures tell the tale of their everyday consumption. Almost all of those consuming alcoholic beverages drink beers. Only a negligible few take hard drinks. Almost everyone claimed that they developed the habit of drinking beer while working in the cabins. The cabin keepers are expected to boost the sale by gratifying the sexual indulgence of the customers. They wouldn't make the sale unless they agree to fulfill the whims and desires of the clients. In order to inflate the bill, food and beverages consumption must be maximized. One way of doing this is to ask the client to buy food for them. The clients would buy food only if the girls/women agree to share drink with the clients. The cabin circumstances, in this way, compel these girls/women to drink which later becomes their habit. They do all these to fit in the trade and to keep the owner happy.

As shown in the figure above, 37.5% drank 1-2 bottles of beer a day followed by 30% guzzling 3-4 bottles, 7% 5-6 bottles and 8.5% consuming as many as 7

Table 17
Use of tobacco by Cabin Keepers

Consumption	Percentage
Non smokers	37.5%
Smokers	30%
1/2 packet a day	7%
1 packet a day	8.5%
2 and more	17%

Going by their own admission, smokers out-numbered non-smokers. Nearly two-thirds or 64% of 270 cabin keepers surveyed did smoke albeit to varying degrees. One third or 36% refrained from smoking. Of total smokers, 88 or 51% consumed

1 packet of cigarettes a day followed by 57 or 33% smoking 10 cigarettes or half-a-packet a day. Those consuming 2 packets or more numbered at 28 or 16%.

Among the causes for smoking are; to give pleasurable company to the customers, stress, headache and frustration. Several cabin keepers said that developed addiction to tobacco.

Similarly, of all the respondents 73% claimed that they knew about the health hazard like tuberculosis and cancer caused by smoking.

B. Exploitation of Prostitution, Trafficking, Intimidation and Coercion

This section will attempt to seek answers to questions (i) is there any covert trafficking network in operation? (ii) do cabin restaurants have anything to do with cross-border and trans-national trafficking of girls? (iii) what intimidating or terror means are employed to coerce the girls into doing things for one's profit? (iv) what makes them vulnerable and why can't they raise voice against exploitation and injustices? (v) what common ailments/sickness they suffer from? (vi) what in their opinion can ensure them a dignified living? (vii) who do they perceive as fear-inspiring agents? (viii) What in their opinion can enable them have control over their body and rights to self-determination? and (ix) what measures do they think the State must have in place to prevent exploitation and encroachment on their rights?

To find the answers to these questions, 240 cabin girls from 50 randomly chosen restaurants were interviewed. Twelve selected cabin girls and auxiliary workers of the restaurants were handed the questionnaire listing the set of questions. The findings that unfold below is based on responses made by the cabin keepers.

The questions seeking to extract responses from the cabin keepers were not so designed as to restrict or influence their answers in any way, rather they were structured to allow them maximum freedom to speak out their mind and heart. Hence, the number of columns in the tables below are constricted and/or dilated subject to the range of information provided by the cabin keepers.

Thus, the first question was aimed to uncover the supply network. How they land up in cabin restaurant and who pave their way.

Table 18
How do they find way to Cabin Restaurant?

Ways	Percentage
By oneself	80 (33%)
Through Friend/Peer	125 (52%)
Distant Cousin/Fellow Villager	35 (15%)

During the survey, one other hidden facet of girl-trafficking was brought to light. At least three respondents said that they were promised job in Kathmandu's restaurant by their friends who turned out to be the women-traffickers' agents and nearly sold them in India. According to them, as they grew suspicious of the trafficker's motive, they somehow managed to run away and landed up in cabin restaurant. If their version has grains of truth in it, a job in Kathmandu's cabin restaurants has perhaps become an irresistible offer for rural girls who have been cautioned against going India or overseas. The girls and their gullible parents may, however, see no harm in working at Kathmandu's cabin restaurants. The tale of guileful friends working in collusion with traffickers also points at the traffickers new strategy of employing cabin girls in trapping rural girls for flesh traders.

Of all the 240 cabin keepers interviewed, 125 or 52% were introduced to cabin restaurants by their friends and peers. This amply suggests that cabin keepers themselves are the biggest source of supply of cabin girls. A total of 80 or 33% said that they explored the opportunity themselves which means they offered themselves for the job by appearing in person in the restaurant.

The other 35 or 15% said that they were put in the job by their cousins and fellow villagers. The girls under this category are prone to high risk of trafficking. Several unfolding tales of Indian brothel returnees tells that most of them have been sold by their cousins, uncles, and near and dear ones.

In order to get an insight into the nature and kind of difficulties they face as cabin keepers, they were encouraged to talk over specific difficulties at length. They spoke about a range of problems they encountered which are cited in the table below.

Of all the respondents, 127 or 53% opined that they faced no 'real' difficulties. Many of them are found reluctant to talk about what they considered their lot or destiny and said "we have to live with it, hence no sense sharing them with

Table 19
What specific difficulties do they face in cabin restaurant?

specific difficulties	Percentage
No real difficulty	127 (53%)
Torment/Humiliation	72 (30%)
Stay late hour	23 (9.5%)
Salary not timely paid	6 (2.5%)
Foul mouth owner/client	12 (5%)

others". Many others took humiliation and all kinds of degrading and indecent behavior as part of their job, hence, no complaint about them. Though initially they sought to seal their lips over all sorts of pains and humiliation they received at the hands of owners and clients, they spilled the beans in subsequent questions. In tables to follow they revealed what they unsuccessfully sought to hide in the beginning. As shown in the table above, 127 or 53% opine that they faced no real difficulty. Others shared the troubles and difficulties they faced in the cabin restaurants. 72 or 30% of the cabin girls were blunt in stating that they suffered pain and humiliation mostly at the hands of clients and owners. Similarly, 23 or 9.5% said that they were forced to stay until late in the evening. Other 6 or 2.5% added that they were not paid on time. Likewise, 12 or 5% complained that the foul-mouthed client and the owner hurled abusive languages on them.

In response to the question as to what extent they had freedom of choice if any at work, or were they coerced into doing things against their will, the respondents answered in 'Yes' or 'No' and 'No Comment'. The table given below lists their responses.

Only 65 girls or 27% said that no means of intimidation or coercion applied to force them work against their will. However, 138 or 57.5% said that they were cowed into doing things which they detested.

Table 20
Do they have freedom of choice or are they coerced into doing things against their will?

	Percentage
Freedom of Choice	65 (27%)
Coercion	138 (57.5%)
No Comment	37 (15.5%)

Other 37 or 15.5% sought to keep their mouth shut.

Table 17 and table 16 mutually clash in terms of information and present rather conflicting views of the cabin keepers. As for instance, in table 16, 127 or 53% respondents expressed that they faced no 'real' difficulties. And only 72 or 30% complained that they were subject to pain and humiliation at the hands of clients and owners. However, in table 17, those who admitted that they worked under coercion made up a staggering 138 or 57.5% followed by 37 or 15.5% keeping their lips tight. This obviously shows that many respondents earlier sought to hide information in table 16 which they disclosed in the subsequent table.

This was followed by a question over the ways and means of threat and intimidation employed by owners, clients or other exploiters. The responses of the 240 cabin keepers are cited below in the table.

Table 21
What threat/intimidation means are employed to cow them into submission?

	Percentage
No threat	65 (27%)
Threaten with job dismissal/ physical harm/blackmailing / defamation	138 (57.5%)
Police harassment & abuses	37 (15.5%)

The cabin keepers had a range of points to make in response to the question. Their varied opinions are lumped together in four different slots of the table. Here again, the findings are shocking. 173 or 72% of the cabin keepers said that they are routinely threatened with job dismissal, physical harm, blackmailing and character defamation by owner and the clients upon refusal to cater to their 'improper' and 'indecent' demand. This was followed by 33 or 14% respondents who felt no threat. 23 or 9.5% respondents preferred to keep their mouth shut. And, 11 or 4.5% opened their mouth against what they called police harassment and abuses. They explained that the owner are in league with the police who visit the restaurant from time to time and enjoy free food and drinks. The owner uses the influence with the police to intimidate and, the police too, hurl abuses and issue threats at times.

To a question over why they silently endure oppression and what prevents them

from raising voice against exploitation, the cabin keepers came up with shades

Table 22
What prevent them from raising voice against exploitation/ oppression?

	Percentage
Fear of Police/Adm	15 (6%)
Fear of clients	27 (11%)
Disgrace/Embarrassment	72 (30%)
Fear of Owner	44 (18.5%)
Fear of Job dismissal	61 (25.5%)
No one to heed	21(9%)

of opinions. The table below records their varied opinions in the table below.

The threat of exposing them (cabin restaurants are perceived as dirty and notorious place) amounts to be the biggest fear that prevents them from opposing exploitation and injustices. The reason behind this fear is that cabin keepers usually keep their place of working a secret from their in-laws, family and relatives. Cabin keepers are largely frowned upon by the society. Hence, the fear of disgrace and embarrassment coming to them and their family upon others learning their true identity make them vulnerable.

Now, we'll see what the cabin keepers fear the most and what they fear the least.

The highest number of cabin keepers 72 or 30% feared disgrace and embarrassment coming to them and their family once the secret of working place is made known. This held them from raising voices against injustices and exploitation. Next is the fear of losing the job. Those who sealed their lips for fear of dismissal from job make up 61 or 25.5%. A fear from owner make up 44 or 18.5% followed by fear from clients which make up 27 or 11%. The clients issued threats of exposing them or causing physical harm if they complained.

The fear of police and administration make up 15 or 6% followed by 21 or 9% who have little trust on judicial or legal arrangements. This group is highly cynical about the legal or law enforcing regime.

In order to find out whether they suffered any health problem in particular after joining the cabin keeping works, a question was posed to them. Their responses to the question are cited in the table below.

Table 23
Have they suffered any health problem since cabin keeping?

Health Problem	Percentage
Occasional Fever	12 (5%)
Frequent Cough & Cold	26 (11%)
Respiratory disease	15 (6.5%)
Stomach ailment	63 (26%)
Regular headache	67 (27.5%)
None	57 (24%)

While the prevalence of endemic like HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B is unlikely to be monitored in this kind of research work as that would require thorough medical test, effort was made to discover common ailments that the cabin keepers suffered from. Two most common ailments detected during the survey are; stomach ailment and headache. This may be owing to the cabin's environment i.e. smoke-filled cabins with stench of alcohol ever rising, no ventilation and no rays of sun ever piercing into them. The hazard is coupled with the food habit they developed while working in the cabins. The food and water remain largely unhygienic and unclean which pose health hazard. While 63 or 26% suffered from stomach ailments, the other 67 or 27.5% suffered chronic headache. This was followed by frequent cough & cold 26 or 11%, respiratory disease 15 or 6.5% and, occasional fever 12 or 5%. A total of 57 or 24% had no health complaints.

A question was asked on overseas trafficking. The girls/women were asked if people frequented the cabins with overseas job offer. The question was aimed to discover if trans-national or international trafficking of Nepalese girls had anything to do with the mushrooming cabin restaurants of the Kathmandu valley. The cabin keepers responded with 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't Know'. Their responses are given in the table below.

Table 24
Do people come with overseas job offer?

Answers	Percentage
No	67 (28%)
Yes	126 (52.5%)
Don't know	47 (19.5%)

It was discovered from the cabin keepers that people came to lure them with job promises in Hong Kong, Dubai and Saudi Arabia. A total of 126 or 52.5% of respondents said that such people often visited the cabins. They, however,

demanded huge amount for air ticket which is barely affordable by the cabin keepers. A few said that such people were dishonest who only sought to sexually exploit them or exploit their prostitution. 67 or 28% denied having met any such people. Similarly, 47 or 19.5% preferred to remain tight-lipped over the issue.

The last three questions were designed to extract their views on matters; legal/remedial measures, regulations to improve their situation, ways and means to ensure them a life of dignity and so on.

They were asked what in their views could enable them to lead a life of dignity. As it was an open-ended question with no choices or restrictions, they freely expressed their views. Shades of opinions were expressed which varied from each other. Their expressions are lumped together in seven slots of a table given below.

Table 25
What in their view can enable them lead a life of dignity?

	Percentage
Living with family	28 (11.5%)
Wealth	11(4.5%)
Prestigious Job	87(36%)
Freedom of Choice	23(9.5%)
Change in guest/social attitude	41(17%)
Stringent regulation	19 (8%)
Don't know	31(13%)

As illustrated in the table, 87 or 36% went for prestigious job that they said the government must provide them to enable them lead a life of dignity. This is followed by 41 or 17% who opined that a change in the attitude of of customers and society could help them lead a life of dignity.

Likewise 28 or 11.5% opined that an opportunity to live with the family (many of them have fled their village) would enable them lead a life of dignity. Another 23 or 9.5% expressed that freedom of choice would enable them a life of dignity. Similarly, 19 or 8% favored stringent regulation for enabling them lead a life of dignity. Similarly, 11 or 4.5% favored wealth as the only means to lead a life of dignity. And, 31 or 13% had no opinions of their own.

The other question concerning their rights against exploitation was put to them. They were asked if they seek or claim any particular right which could improve their situation.

Varied opinions were expressed which are cited in the table given below.

Table 26
What rights if/when granted can improve their situation?

	Percentage
Legal Rights against exploitation	65 (27%)
Exclusive rights to Women	138 (57.5%)
Occupational Rights	37 (15.5%)
Law to fix working hours and salary	
Don't know	15 (6.5%)

While 15 or 6.5% of the respondents were unable to think of any rights, the rest expressed different opinions ranging from legal to occupational rights.

The highest figure or 123 (51.5%) cabin keepers went for women's rights at par with men which they considered critical to improve their situation. This included equal rights over the inheritance of parental property. The other 37 or 15.5% favored positive discrimination or exclusive rights to women which would help improve their situation.

The other 33 or 13.5% demanded legal rights against exploitation which in their view could ameliorate their situation. Other 17 or 7% asked for legal arrangements for setting working hours and salary which, in their opinion, would improve their plight. And, 15 or 6% opted for what they called occupational rights which in their opinion would help improve their situation.

Finally, the cabin keepers were asked to give their opinion about any legal provisions that they think must be in place to prevent exploitation of cabin keepers.

Here again, shades of opinions were expressed which are cited in the table given below.

Opinion in favor of stringent regulation and its strict enforcement prevailed over other opinions. Those favoring stringent regulation and strict enforcement made up 97 or 40% of the total respondents. This was followed by 43 or 18% who sought capital punishment like death penalty and life sentence to exploiters. Their seeking of such a harsh punishment to exploiters speak of resentment and hatred they harbor against the exploiters. A total of 21 or 8.5% remained skeptic about the whole thing. They opined that no matter how stringent a law

Table 27
What legal provision must be in place to prevent exploitation of cabin keepers?

	Percentage
Stringent regulation/ strict enforcement	97 (40%)
Severe Punishment	19 (10%)
Death penalty/life sentence to exploiters	43(18%)
Ban on Cabins	9(3.5%)
Regular monitoring	18(7%)
Money speak louder than law	21(8.5%)
Don't know	

may be, money speaks louder than the law. Another 19 or 10% sought severe punishment without being specific to the nature of punishment. Similarly, 18 or 7% favored a regular monitoring mechanism in place to curb exploitation. Another 9 or 3.5% sought restaurants be debarred from running cabins.

Conclusion

The survey conducted in 50 randomly chosen cabin restaurants operating in the Kathmandu valley by interviewing 240 cabin keepers have brought to the surface the cabin-specific maladies afflicting the cabin keepers. Though fear and misgivings often held them from openly expressing themselves, they nevertheless shared their pains and agonies with the fellow interviewers taking considerable liberty.

One fact which came to light is that the cabin girls have been denied rights of self-determination, freedom of choice and even rights to take decisions over their body. They prostitute themselves to fill the coffer of the owner as they are put through constant fear of dismissal from job, police actions, exposing them and bringing disgrace to them and their family, blackmailing and even physical harm. In this way, they are forced to live under constant fear which enable the owners to capitalize on their vulnerability and exploit prostitution to harvest personal benefits.

Most of these cabin keepers are from several outlying places of the kingdom. They detest the working environment and resent the exploitation that takes place within the confines of the cabins but they can't oppose it. An act of defiance or resistance would make them jobless and land them in the street. They can't go back home to face poverty, unemployment and the conflict situation that await them there. So, if they quit or are kicked out, they may have no option other than to earn their living by selling their bodies. Perhaps, they think that prostituting themselves behind the glittering facade of cabin restaurant give them a sense of

pseudo dignity and security. So, they prefer the dark confinement of the cabin to the freedom of street as the latter, they fear, might cost their dignity and security both.

All they can do and have been doing is that they keep changing cabin restaurants in hope that the other would be a better one in terms of money making and safety. But, they are not. Yet, they keep changing hoping for better.

Majority of them admit that they work under fear and are forced to do things against their will. Even the law enforcing agents (some girls have come openly against police abuses and atrocities) serve the owner by threatening and intimidating them. This brings one to the conclusion that the cabin girls have little or no choice and that by accepting the job they have forfeited their rights of self-determination, freedom of choice, and rights to take decisions over their own body.

Their calling for stringent legal measures that send exploiters to gallows, are pointers to the depth of hatred and resentment they harbor against the exploiters.

In view of steady growth in cabin restaurants in the Kathmandu valley and the rise in various forms of exploitation, a regulatory mechanism to tackle exploitation of female workers, and to set a code of ethics for the restaurants follow, has become imperative. Besides, minimum health standard must be ensured and the hazardous cabin environment be tackled.

The task may not be easy in the event of business people and law enforcing agents pursuing common interests which lie in the perpetuation of the status quo. Therefore, a nationwide campaign spearheaded by the leaders of the cabin keepers who stand for change is necessary. These girls, however, need to be adequately empowered in terms of sufficient knowledge, information and capabilities and build their confidence to launch kind of social movement in favor of change. As they have been put through a fear regime for long by traffickers, owners and their cohorts, they might need more time to overcome such fear.

The other ugly facet of the cabin trade is the trafficking of girls for filthy lucre and possibly into other sordid trade under the cover of cabin restaurants. The survey has helped surface one horrific reality that cross-border and trans-national traffickers are on the prowl looking for easy prey in cabin restaurants. Traffickers with promises of lucrative jobs overseas in Dubai and Hong Kong widely frequent

cabin restaurants. The girls who see their prostitution being exploited by others are likely to be swayed by false promises. Ignorance and illiteracy make them vulnerable to such indecent proposals.

The other dreaded scenario that looms is that the cabin girls are increasingly used to lure innocent gullible village girls into cabin restaurants. As promises of job in Indian cities are no longer attractive proposition and the anti-trafficking network is making it increasingly difficult for traffickers to run their flesh trade, they have begun to use cabin girls to sell promises of lucrative jobs in Kathmandu. Once the traffickers net these rural girls, they supply them to the cabin restaurants and force them into sexual slavery. Many girls during the survey disclosed how they were lured by other girls into traffickers' net and were nearly sold off.

In the conflict-ridden situation of the country which has compelled many young boys and girls flee home to escape both conscription in the Maoist army and persecution at the hand of security forces, cabin restaurants and cabin keepers are bound to grow in number. The non-skilled and non-literate young girls hardly have any dignified means available to survive than to engage in cabin keeping or flesh trade. Besides, in-country trafficking of girls can hardly come under notice or be curbed. There is every likelihood that the unregulated and ill-monitored cabin restaurants slowly overstep the legal or ethical limits and grow into sex industry or sex supplying agency. In either case, risk of exploitation of prostitution of the helpless and optionless girls heightens. Hence, the need is to keep curb on exploitation of these innocent victims who are driven away from home by poverty and political conflict.

While there may be no immediate and viable alternative to cabin restaurants, a regulatory and monitoring mechanism at the micro level and a law to define and safeguard fundamental rights of cabin keepers at the macro level are urgent necessity.

This could only be achieved through organizing and building network of cabin keepers, empowering them and mobilizing them into rights campaign by giving them a voice. At the same time, CSOs and INGOs should vigorously lobby and influence the policy makers into shaping legislation in favor of cabin keepers to end their exploitation.

Recommendations

Based on the study, following suggestions and recommendations are made for actions to be initiated by the Government, INGOs and CSOs to end exploitation of Cabin Keepers.

- A legal regime that puts a curb on exploitation of prostitution by traffickers and their cohorts is an urgent necessity. The Government through enactment of law must ensure that the jobless and vulnerable village girls are not forced to live at the mercy of handful of exploiters but they live under the watchful eye of law. A law/regulation that lays down Cabin Keepers' duties and responsibilities vis-a-vis the owners' obligations, duties and responsibilities and their stricter enforcement is imperative.
- The INGOs and CSOs must work to help organize, empower and mobilize Cabin Keepers working in Kathmandu's estimated over 3000 cabin restaurants. While at the micro level, they must be organized and their organization be evolved and strengthened, at the macro level, initiatives i.e. advocacy, lobbying and campaign must be initiated to influence and shape Cabin Keepers' friendly policies. A broad-based initiative in alliance and collaboration with range of organizations is required for the accomplishment of the goal.
- A monitoring mechanism comprising all the stakeholders i.e. authorities, cabin keepers, owners etc. need to be put in place to regularly monitor both the situation of the cabin restaurants and cabin keepers.
- A new Act or Regulation is needed or the existing Labor Act be amended to define working hours, salaries, fringe benefits, allowances, overtime, health insurance etc. The exploitation has arisen due to the absence of such provisions.
- Such Act/Regulation must make it mandatory for all restaurants to provide authorities with the details and whereabouts of the female workers employed.
- The Act/Regulation must provide the Cabin Keepers with the provision to file lawsuit at the court against owner when and if they are unfairly and unjustifiably fired from the job and thus get the injustices redressed.
- The statutory age requirement for cabin keeping must be strictly maintained and enforced to discourage employment of minors in cabin restaurants.
- Heavy penalties must be imposed on such restaurants which work in violation of the legal/regulatory measures, and those involved in exploiting the prostitution of cabin keepers.
- Government must keep records of cabin restaurants operating across the kingdom. Legal action must be initiated against all restaurants operating illegally. A code of conduct and a code of ethics must be set for all legally operating restaurants. The illegal operations must immediately be clamped down.
- Government must initiate efforts to change people's perception towards such restaurants by improving both the working conditions and the working environment.

ActionAid

ActionAid (AA) is an international development institution registered as a global organisation in The Hague, the Netherlands in September 2003. The AA International Secretariat is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Founded in the United Kingdom in 1972, AA is a secular and non-political organisation working with over nine million of the poorest people majority of them living in the developing world in 42 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is committed to improving the quality of life of the poorest and the most marginalized people so that they can live a life of dignity.

AA has been working in Nepal since 1982. Its mission here is to eradicate poverty by facilitating the process of empowering the poorest and the most marginalized women, men, girls and boys. The work of ActionAid International Nepal (AAN), hereafter referred to as ActionAid Nepal (AAN), over the years has undergone various changes informed by its engagement at the community and other levels. Its scope of work has thus grown in content, coverage, commitment and capacity to work in a complex situation over the period.

AAN changed its approach from direct service delivery to partnership mode with local NGOs in 1996. Similarly, it adopted rights based approach in 1998 with an aim to creating an environment in which poor and marginalized communities can exercise their rights, and address and overcome the causes and effects of poverty caused due to injustice and inequity by actively engaging themselves in all aspects of development activities.

Currently, AAN's long-term partnership programmes at field level are being implemented mainly in Baglung, Baitadi, Banke, Bardiya, Chitwan, Dang, Jajarkot, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Khotang, Nawalparasi, Parbat, Saptari, Sarlahi, Sindhuli, Sindhupalchowk, and Siraha districts, as well as in some urban areas of Biratnagar, Damak, Dharan, Inaruwa, Itahari, Kathmandu and Lalitpur municipalities. Besides these, AAN has several short-term engagements in more than 40 districts of Nepal.

AAN's rights holders are the poorest and the most marginalized people particularly women, children, Dalits, ex-bonded labourers, victims of natural disasters and conflict, urban poor, people with disability, landless poor, and people living with HIV and AIDs. In 2003, AAN prioritised five themes based on the local context and needs - Education, Food Security (including Natural Resource Management), Gender Equity, HIV and AIDS and Peace Building. It also works on Globalisation & Corporate Sector, Emergency & Natural Disaster Management, Disability, Urban Poverty and Media Advocacy.

AAN works at the grassroots level to address the immediate conditions of the poorest and the most marginalized people, and at the national level with various advocacy programmes in order to influence public policies and practices in favour of its rights holders.

As a chapter of AA International, AAN is also actively engaged in advocating at the regional and international levels on issues such as Education, Food Security, Gender Equity and Governance and HIV and AIDS that cut across globally, to campaign for pro-poor policies and to enable the poor and marginalized communities to secure their rights.

AAN actively shares its working experiences by participating in district and national development debates, establishing links with similar development organisations and His Majesty's Government of Nepal, and by forming partnerships with Nepali NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders as appropriate. AAN has three Regional Resource Centres one each in Biratnagar, Kathmandu and Nepalgunj to help and monitor its programmes being carried out in the respective regions.

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