Chapter – IV

Findings I:
Field Work and Case Studies of Children
Chapter - IV

Introduction

The fieldwork for this research was conducted between December 2014 till December 2016 in Khalpara red light area in Siliguri details of which is mentioned in Chapter - III. I started out with making visits to Khalpara and making myself known to the people. At the time when I started work, an office of DURBAR was situated in the beginning of the area in a small set of rooms. There was only one man who was in-charge and he kindly gave me permission to use his premises to meet the children. I used to reach there almost after breakfast and whosoever of the children showed interest to interact with me I interacted. The person who was there on behalf of DURBAR is also an inhabitant of the Khalpara and had his house there, his mother was in the sex trade. Now he lives in the town of Siliguri but comes every day to open the office. He arranges for the regular weekly visit of the doctor who does the checkup of the people of Khalpara to check for AIDS, other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and for other general checkup for the children. Apart from this he has a register of all the inhabitants in the para and it is his responsibility to supply data on population whenever required. He has two assistants, members of DURBAR, former sex workers who assist in taking pregnant women or sick persons to the doctor. They help in organizing Pulse Polio camps and programme in the locality.

Durbar Mahila Samanway Committee (DMSC) is an organization working for the welfare of the sex workers. It was established in 1992 in Kolkata. It is a collectivization of 65000 sex workers, functioning as exclusive forum of female, male and transgender sex workers in West Bengal, India and managed by the sex workers. Durbar believes that sex work is like any other job and supports its recognition as work. It opposes the criminalization and other legal oppression of sex work.

I visited Durbar office in Kolkata in the initial phase of my research to have an understanding of the problems and situations of the sex workers and their children. I got to learn from there that Durbar has not been functioning well in Siliguri because of the lack of cooperation. Then I visited Sonagachi red light area and Kali Ghat red light area to observe the sex workers, children, customers, pimps and the environment. I
interacted with the sex workers and the children there and got little idea about their life situations.

**Initiating Fieldwork**

The person from DURBAR initially introduced me to the children who were quite curious about me and themselves came to interact with me. They had many questions about my intentions but when I explained my problem they started cooperating with me. In a matter of a week to 10 days I managed to make a group of children between the age range of 6-14 years of 15 to 18 children of which I selected 6 girls and 4 boys for detailed case study (SEE TABLE 4) as they were more regular than the others and were willing to share their thoughts with me. Please see the TABLE 3 below for the complete list of the children.

Here I now present in brief the range and variety of activities and enquiries I conducted during the fieldwork with the population of Khalpara including the children. I received a lot of help and cooperation and acceptance by the people of Khalpara which made my work considerably enjoyable and easy.

I conducted various group activities with the entire group of children with a view to understand their perception of themselves, their abilities, aspirations, wishes and life conditions. I was also interested in knowing about their relationships with mother, father, teachers, neighbors and peer group. I have tried to find out their relationship with their schools, with curriculum and extra-curricular activities. I also observed them at play during their leisure hours or holidays from school. I met their teachers, private tutors, mothers and the neighbors; the fathers I could not meet regularly or continuously for any length of time. The mothers are more or less confined to the Khalpara most of the time as their clients visit them there itself and very rarely do the women go out even for shopping. The children are used for doing shopping chores while the men buy the other necessary things for the home.
Visiting Khalpara Red Light Area

My timings for visiting Khalpara initially was from morning till evening; I was discouraged from visiting late in the evening as that was the time for the customers to come. During the afternoon I used to meet the interested children once they came back from school. The mothers permitted their children to interact with me once they came to know me. However, initially I used to visit the homes when the children were in school interacting with the mothers but gradually the children themselves sought me out as I waited in the DURBAR office. I could make the parents to agree to Saturdays as the day when the children would spend two hours from 10.00am to 12.00 noon with me doing group activities. The mothers did not want me to come on Sundays as that was a day for their customers. It was not possible to physically meet or see the fathers of the children during the time I used to be there except occasionally during some festivals.

Group activities

When I conducted field work, I also conducted a group work activity every Saturday with the children of sex workers in the red light area. For conducting this group work, a small room outside the office of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (a non-government organization working for the welfare of sex-workers) was arranged. The group activities started from 10am and lasted for 2 hours. The group members belonged to the age group of 6-14 years, the target age group of my study. The group consisted of 15-18 children. Some of them were not regular but most of them attended the group work. All those who attended the group work had asked permission from their home or had at least informed at home that they were attending this group work for 2 hours. 10 selective cases were chosen purposively among the group members for an exhaustive case study. A verbal consent from the mother of these 10 children were taken before making their study.
Table 3: The list of group members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ali Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>LKG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mohan Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Milka Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>LKG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Meetu Singh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>LKG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sannat Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Tashu Roy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Imdad Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sushma Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Zaki Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sohan Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sahana Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Zayn Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Ritu Singh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Sheetal Das</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Rishi Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Prashant Das</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Class 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Bhaina Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Reema Das</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(pseudonym)

During the group work, I observed their activity and their participation in a group experience and carefully noticed each individual’s behavior and the way they interact and cope with peers in different situations. I involved them in activities which would reflect their individual self. Some of the group activities that I conducted with them are as follows:

1. The children were asked to write an essay. The theme of the essay was "Myself". They were asked to write about themselves and to mention the things that they like and dislike. Their favorite actor, color, food, subjects in school etc. Their best friend in school and at home. What they like the most about
themselves. How do they expect life to be in future? The way they live their life. What relationship in their life is the most important? What is the most important lesson in their life and what is their view on the role of education in a person’s life. Some of the other themes that the children wrote the essay was on “my mother”, “my class teacher”, “my friends”, “my ambition”, “my favorite festival” etc.

2. The children were sometimes divided into groups and were given a group task. In each group the children were asked to select a leader by themselves and then to perform the task and at the end the leader had to present the work. One of the task given to them was to write down in the chart 10 points that makes a person happy and 10 points that makes a person sad. So the children came out with various answers. This task reflected their values and priorities in life. It also made them realize their own values.

3. In some group activity, the children were asked to draw. I would provide them with theme. One of the theme was “My home” where the children were asked to draw their home and could draw anything that is in their house like television, domestic animals, flowers etc. but it had to be present in their house. The first time when I gave this theme, the children under this theme drew aquarium in the house, computers, laptops, fish pond with fishes, two storied building etc. The children were not aware that I would discuss the drawings after they completed. That was the time when I could visualize their house before making a home visit. The children seemed to know the commodities present in one another’s house. While discussing about the drawing, the children themselves would correct saying that this is not there in her house or she didn’t make this that is in present in her house. This helped me to understand that there is so much interaction between the houses, very less privacy and more transparency. The children were careful while drawing next time because they knew that I would discuss their work in front of all the group members.

4. Whenever there was drawing activity to do, the next group work would always follow up with coloring. The children loved to play with colors but little they knew about the combination. They made everything bright and flashy. A boy of
class 6 drew a rainbow with more than 7 colors and the colors were haywire. It was noticed during the field work that the red light area is a place of bright colors. The sex workers wear bright color lipstick, their dresses are colorful and even the clothes seller (a person who moves around selling clothes in a trolley) who visits there brings flashy, bright and glittery clothes for sale. It was observed that the children of sex workers used much brighter colors.

5. Somedays I would encourage the children to talk about their favorite television show during group work. We would discuss why the children liked some character and disliked the other. Who are their super heroes? Whom do they consider good and bad among the characters of their favorite serial or cartoon. This helped in understanding the interaction between the television and the child. It helped to analyze how much the television as an agent of socialization plays a role in the lives of these children and how much it influences them.

6. During one year of group work with these children, I got an opportunity to celebrate many festivals with them like Durga Puja, Christmas and Holi. I was able to participate with these children in their celebration and was able to observe them during the special occasions of their life.

7. Birthday celebration of the children were also done where all the children made a birthday card for the birthday boy/girl. Little amount of money was collected from these children and a birthday cake was bought from a nearby cake shop. Two boys from the group work was always assigned to go and buy the cakes because one of them had cycle and the other one would sit behind and carry the cake. During one of the birthday celebration, the mother of the birthday boy had come to see. She was very pleased with the kids and was so happy that her son was cutting a birthday cake and celebrating his birthday which is not a very usual thing in the red light area.

As the group members grew older, the interaction with them started to be in depth. The theme of an essay changed from “Myself” to “What is it being a child of a sex Worker”. The interaction between me and the children became more crystal. The children started
sharing their personal problems after the group work and that is how this group work helped so much in conducting case work.

Beside the observation and information gathered during group work which was conducted weekly, I also conducted home visits in other days. There was continuous face to face interaction with these children throughout the year. I also gathered information about them from their different agents of socialization mostly being their mother followed by the others like their siblings, the peers, the neighbors, the shopkeepers in their locality, the school staff, the doctor who came for a weekly visit in the red light area and the staff of the NGOs which are working for the community in the red light area.

I also used Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale on each of these 10 children of sex workers to evaluate their self-esteem which helps in understanding their attitude toward their self. It is a ten-item Linkert-type scale with items answered on the four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It is widely used to evaluate individual’s self-esteem and if their score is less than 15, it indicates a problematic low self-esteem.
**Table 4: The profile of the case studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Position in the birth order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bhaina Khatun</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Second Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has two sisters and one brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sheetal Das</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Third child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has three brothers and one sister</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Meetu Singh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lower Kindergarten</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has one elder sister and one younger brother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sohan Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Second Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has one elder sister and one younger sister</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sushma Khatun</td>
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<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Second child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Tashu Roy</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Second Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One elder sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mohan Khan</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
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<td>Youngest child</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Has two elder sisters and one elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Prashant Das</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Class 8</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Rishi Khan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Second Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has two siblings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(pseudonym)
Case Studies

No. 1

Name: Bhaina Khatun
Age: 14 years
Gender: Female

Bhaina lives with her mother and her mother’s counterpart in Khalpara red light area. She is a tall and beautiful girl almost ladylike. She has two sisters and one brother and she is the second child of her mother. Her mother also looks beautiful. Even though Bhaina’s mother is a mother of 4 children and is almost 30 years old, she has a good physique. The age difference between the first child and the last child is about 8 years.

Bhaina reported that she loves her mother a lot and respects her. She said, “I used to quarrel with my mother before and not listen to her and disliked her for her profession but now I understand that whatever she does is for me and my sibling’s future. I don’t complain anymore to her but of course I don’t like what she does. There is so much of stigma and discrimination attached to it outside the red light area. People look down about us and they don’t want to talk to us if they come to know that we live in the red light area. In future I don’t want to stay in this place, I would like to take my mother and my siblings somewhere far away from this place and live a normal life”. Whenever Bhaina mentioned about her family, she always talked less about her mother’s counterpart whom she calls “kaku”. Bhaina told that her mother loves her and she believes that her mother will never ask her to join the same profession as her later in life.

Bhaina comes from a Muslim family but does not hesitate to attend other religious festivals. She also has pictures of Hindu Gods and as well as of Jesus in her house. She finds Ramadan very special. She said, “Ramadan is a thirty days fasting prayer which Muslims have to follow. It is not compulsory for girls to follow but I like to fast during Ramadan and so I do, all men at home follow Ramadan every year.” She believes in God and her prayer. She has strong faith in her prayer and believes that prayer changes things.

Bhaina reads in class 5 in a Bengali medium school. She does not go to school regularly because she thinks that students go to school to get a job and earn money and
she believes that she can earn money even without studying. Her parents do not force her to go to school. They are happy to keep her home and not insist her to attend school as her parents have difficulties to send all the four children to school. While going to school her mother has to give her money for lunch and transport, so whenever her mother does not give her money she does not go to school. Her parents also do not force her or take any initiative to send her to school. Her mother shows lack of interest in her formal education. The thing that her mother seems concerned is her daughter’s marriage. As her mother thinks which decent boy will marry a girl from the red light area. Bhaina and her mother understand that there is no respect for sex workers and their children in the society. Bhaina’s wedding with a decent man outside the red light area is a dream of her mother. She wants Bhaina to live a simple life and have a family outside the dark world of the red light area.

Bhaina has a mobile phone of her own and says that she has many friends with whom she chats over the phone. She chats with these friends through a social networking site “Facebook”. She has many friends outside the red light area but she has not disclosed to them that her mother works as a sex worker and just tells that her father is an electrician. She said, “I feel very embarrassed to tell other people that I live in red light area and my mother is a sex worker. But I love my mother a lot. She has provided me with all my needs like clothes, shoes, bags and even a cell phone.” It emerges from her words that she measures her mother’s love in material terms while her own love for her mother is reflected in her wishes to rescue her mother and transpose the family somewhere else though she shirks school for casual reasons and is happy to report that she obeys her mother. The love that Bhaina expresses towards her mother is in materialistic terms. From interacting with Bhaina about love, I understood that Bhaina relates love to giving something in material. She never spoke about her mother giving her a hug or a kiss out of love. For Bhaina loving someone means providing him/her with goods and materials. She said, “My mother buys lots of things for me because she loves me and I love my siblings that is why I buy sweets and chocolates for them.”

Her ambition is to become a make-up artist. She is attracted to the ambition because she believes that in achieving her ambition she will become more beautiful and can make others look beautiful. She thinks that beauty is everything. Being beautiful and looking gorgeous means everything to her. She values beauty over brains. With the
money she gets from her mother she buys nail polishes, hair color and other cosmetic items. She always asked the researcher how much would it cost to straighten hair. She is fond of colorful nails and beautifying herself. Even when she came to attend group work, she dressed up neatly and had clean and polished nails. Her aspirations are yet not channelized, probably they are realistic as there are many beauty parlors in Siliguri and there is always a demand for girls to work in them. She seemed to be unaware that there was training involved in becoming a beautician.

She also does all the household work like cleaning, cooking, washing dishes and also washing clothes of her own and sometimes of her siblings too. She said “I don’t like to work during my menstruation cycle because I feel uneasy and lethargic. But other time I do all the house hold work. I sometimes help my younger brother and sister with their homework too. During the time of menstruation, I use cloth when I stay at home and if I have to go to school or market I use sanitary napkins. But usually at night I prefer using cloth because of the heavy flow, pad will not be able to absorb. If I use cloth at night, there will be no stains in the morning”. Baina has a proper toilet and bathroom at her home, where she can wash her used cloth in the morning.

She said in school only some friends know that she comes from the red light area but doesn’t know about her mother’s profession. She likes to keep her profile low and doesn’t have many friends in school. She fears teasing and discrimination by the outsiders. Baina is much older than her other class mates and this could be a reason why she is irregular in school and has not made many friends among her classmates. She reported that she has many good qualities and is smarter than many of her friends in class. She reported that she was more aware about the realities of life that the other girls seemed ignorant. She takes pride in her beauty and she is proud that she is smarter than other children in her class. She said that she is capable of handling any kind of situation, be it from taking care of siblings without mother or travelling to unknown places alone. But so far she has never travelled to any place by herself. Her ideas about herself are not founded on actual self rather they project an image that she has not yet established.

She thinks living in red light area has made her smart as she said, “living in this area we get to learn how the trafficking of girls is done by luring them and I think I will never fall into it and become a prey. I think that the girls from villages are stupid and
they think that if anybody promises to offer them a job, good clothes, phone etc. they will go along with them and later they get sold in the red light area. Many will fall prey of love and when the girls leave their home with their lover, these men bring them to the red light area and sell them. I will never get lured or fooled by such act as I have seen how the sex workers are brought to this red light area. I know someone who was sold in the red light area by a man who was giving her a lift in his car”. She smiled and repeated confidently that she is not vulnerable to trafficking.

She perceives that everyone believes that Khalpara red light area is a bad and a filthy place. She complained that if any girl outside the red light area wear jeans and short skirts they will not be looked as a sex worker but any girl inside the red light area if seen wearing jeans and short skirts then they will consider them as a sex worker even if they are not in the trade. Her mother does not allow her to wear jeans and skirts. Whenever she is in her locality she has to wear long nighty which looks like a long loose dress or salwar suit with scarf or dupatta. She said that wearing a scarf and covering the chest is the sign of a decent lady in the red light area. It was also observed that the non sex workers living in red light area always wore a scarf or dupatta around their neck. It was mostly the young children who were turning into ladies wore these dupattas.

In future she does not want to live in Khalpara. She wants to get married to a good and a loyal husband and live far away from the red light area. She wants a happy married life. She told that for a girl living in Khalpara is really difficult to find a groom from a good family because nobody wants to marry a girl who has lives in the red light area. She added that even the boys from the next village who are alcoholic, jobless and gambles whole day look down on the girls from the red light area even if they are not in the trade but just because their identity is attached to their mother’s profession or the area they live.

Bhaina is not conscious that she is lacking behind the developmental task. Her aspirations are without focus and she has created an identity completely rooted in Khalpara. She has low commitment to her identity as well as low exploration. She doesn’t seem to seek out for potential identity alternatives by trying out various roles and life plans. Nor she has made any commitment to her present identity. She wants to hide her identity as a sex worker’s child whenever possible. If we look into the identity
status of James Marcia, Bhaina falls in the status called **Identity Diffusion** where adolescent have not achieved identity and are aimless floaters. They are drifters and careless, and they tend to be superficial. They are often lonely and unhappy because they have no truly intimate relationship.

**No. 2**  
**Name:** Sheetal Das  
**Age:** 13 years  
**Gender:** Female

Sheetal is a healthy looking girl. She has three brothers and one sister. She is the third child. They all look different from one another. It is difficult to say if all these children are from the same father. Sheetal’s mother looks as if she is in her late forty’s.

Sheetal said. “In my family, my mother loves me the most and I also love her a lot. I don’t like my elder brother because he beats me up often. Last time when I was playing outside in the evening, my brother asked me to stop playing and sit for study. But before I stopped my brother came and started hitting me and brought me back home. I cried. I am scared of him and I don’t like him. I have two younger siblings and the eldest brother is already married and settled outside Khalpara but he often comes and visits us. We had gone to his house in his son’s birthday.”

Sheetal’s house is neat and clean. Sheetal said that she helps her mother in the household work like cleaning the house, doing laundry, washing dishes and also sometimes cooking. Many times when I visited her home, I found Sheetal cutting vegetables or helping at kitchen.

Sheetal studies in class 5. As reported by her. “When I go to school I don’t take the school bus from Khalpara area because I don’t want my friends to know that I live here. My mother also doesn’t want me to take the school bus from here. So I move out to the road side and stand across the road and wait for the bus. The school is about 6kms away from here.” Sheetal feels embarrassed to tell her friends that she lives in the red light area. “I have many friends in school. Most of my friends don’t know that I live in red light area. My school gets over at 3:30pm and I reach home by 4pm. My mother prepares tiffin for me and sometimes she also helps me with my studies. She helps me
in decorating the project covers. My mother usually makes roti and sabji for tiffin. I like to take alu bhaja with roti. I can also cook alu bhaja, it’s my favorite. After reaching home I freshen up, have tea and snacks and then leave for tuition. For tuition I go to a place across the red light area”. Khalpara area is divided by a road. On one side of the road the sex workers live with their counter parts and families and on the other side there are people living who were once in sex trade or have never been involved. So for tuition Sheetal goes to the other side of the red light area which also come under Khalpara. After she returns home from tuition she eats her dinner and watches television. Her daily routine also includes watching television from 8pm to 10 pm. She loves watching Hindi serials. She once told that even in television serials the sex workers are always portrayed as a bad women and their children are always teased and discriminated by others.

Sheetal’s mother has a counterpart who is a drunkard and quarrels with her mother most of the time. When her parents quarrel, she said she can’t concentrate in her studies and so blames her parents for her poor result in her class. She has failed twice in school and had to repeat classes. She fully blames that on the situation at home. She said she cannot study when there is fighting and beating going around at home. She said that her parents also raise hands on her sometimes and her elder brothers also quickly raise their hands on others whenever there is an argument. Sheetal is also fast when it comes to raising hands on other, this was noticed during the group activity. She would quickly beat the younger ones and dominate. This is a learnt behavior from her immediate agent of socialization. Sheetal was also caught using foul language many times which is common thing among the children living in the red light area.

Sheetal likes to dance and draw. Her favorite subject is Bengali and her ambition is to become a doctor. She said, “education will help one to become someone successful in life.” She is a good dancer and she is quick in catching the dance steps from television. She likes Durga puja and performs her dance during the competition held at Durga puja in the red light area. She knows all the latest Bollywood songs and actors. She copies their dance, but she is little shy about her weight. She is the healthies among her friends in the red light area and her friends tease her so she is little shy about her weight. Her mother gets very angry when anybody calls her fatty or teases Sheetal in front of her so the other children in the red light area leave no chances to tease her when
her mother is not around. Sheetal is a little bully but the other children are no less. They get beaten up but they don’t stop teasing her.

During *Holi* celebration Sheetal was found taking local alcohol with her friends from the red light area. Her parents had allowed her because it was *Holi* a time of celebration. During *Holi* all the men and women of the red light area belonging to different religion were in the street playing water colors and everybody seemed drunk. There was loud music played and everybody danced to the tune. The children danced and played carelessly without being monitored by their elder ones. On that day, no rickshaw puller wanted to go to the red light area. It was difficult for me to find a rickshaw to go to Khalpara.

Sheetal is comfortable in speaking in Hindi and uses the same with her parents and her brother and other relatives who lives outside the red light area. She said, “I want to live with my relatives. I don’t want to live my entire life in Khalpara. Given an opportunity I would always choose to leave this place and move somewhere else. So many things take place here. My own neighbor once had strangled a small baby of a sex worker because that baby was crying all the time and was disturbing the sex worker while she was attending the client. This sex worker could not take any action against the neighbor because she was helpless and no body supported her”. Another incident that she narrated was of a sex worker who was not mentally fit and her baby was drowned in a big bowl of cold water by the *bariwalli* who thought that the baby will disturb his mother and the mother will not be able to make good money for the *bariwalli*. A child of 13 narrated these stories as if it was a daily affair. She had little expression when she talked about this unpleasant act. Her friends also knew about these incidents and they too didn’t react in a surprised manner. The children of sex workers living in such situation grow up in manner that takes away their innocence and live life with not much variations of emotions. It becomes confined and limited because their agents of socialization are limited and they lack opportunities to go beyond and explore various agents of socialization because along with exploration the children have to face challenges. Challenges that is attached to their identity.

Sheetal told that one evening while returning back from tuition it was dark and one man tried to touch her on her way back home. She came home running and complained to her mom. Her mother told to be careful next time and this was all the thing that her
mother could say or do. One day Sheetal’s mother told me that I could take away her
daughter from red light area and keep her with me and she would never come to ask
her and interfere in her life but all she wished was a better life for her daughter; a life
away from red light area.

Sheetal’s goal in life is to move out from the red light area and live with her
relatives. Her goal did not include her mother or any of her family members. It was just
herself. She is neither enmeshed in the family nor totally detached, instead she has
struck a balance between the two positions and has become individuated. It is not that
she has not been responsive to parental needs but she wishes autonomy.

Sheetal said, “I want to come out of this area and leave the identity behind
completely because if anybody from this area goes outside to do decent work like work
as a house maid in other people’s home, the outsiders will always look down upon us
and stigmatize us for belonging to the red light area”. Identity is a major problem faced
by the children of sex workers and specially when the child grows and her agents of
socialization increases, it gets harder for them to hide this identity.

When the customers visit Sheetal’s house. Her mother sends her to one room and
latches it from outside until the work is complete and the customer is not around. This
way they try to avoid encountering the client and keep the identity of the child hidden.
Sheetal said, “I hate when my mother locks me inside the room. Sometime I hear noises
from the other room, I dislike it and pray to God that I might not be reborn in the red
light area”.

Sheetal is aware about her identity as a child of a sex worker and its challenges and
looks for every means to hide them and is also looking forward in future to bring about
some change in the identity. Sheetal is forming her identity in a realistic and integrated
manner. She has sense of her abilities and goals and has interest in work which she
knows can be achievable. Her ideal self and the real self is in the state of congruence;
it is not too disjointed. This means that Sheetal is aware about her actual self. She
understands her position in the society and she has made an effort to explore what is in
the other side of her society that she lives in. By making visits to her brother and his
family and other relatives, she has been exploring the world beyond the red light area
and she has chosen to live outside the red light area someday. She is very clear about
that and she is working on forming an identity which is acceptable by all. Though she
lives in the red light area where days and nights are merged in one, she lives a routine
life and she has clear understanding about what she wants to do in her later life. She
seems to be focused in her goal and someday she will definitely achieve if she continues
to grow this way.

No. 3
Name: Meetu Singh
Age: 8 years
Gender: Female

Meetu is a very pretty looking child living with her mother, younger brother and
her elder sister. Her mother is a Nepali and she is originally from Darjeeling. She is
Hindu by religion. Meetu has a beautiful face but she is always seen wearing dirty
oversize or small size clothes and never her own size. Her nails are not cut properly and
she applies nail polish. Most of the time the nail polish is faded or have come out which
gives not so clean look to her nails. She also has lice in her hair and the color of her
teeth is reddish because of consuming paan masala and gutka.

She lives in a house with two rooms. Usually in this red light area the houses have
many rooms and these rooms are rented or owned by many sex workers, so the sex
worker lives with her family in these rooms and that’s their home within a house.
Usually three or four sex workers live with their children in a house but have their food
separately. Meetu’s house has just two rooms and no other sex workers live in the
house. There are very few utensils for cooking at her house and the beds were without
bedsheets when I visited Meetu’s house. Her house looked dirty and untidy. Clothes
were thrown everywhere around the house. There was no proper sanitation in the house.
For drinking water, they used the hand pump near the house but there was so much dirt
around that hand pump. They hardly boil the water for drinking.

Meetu is studying in Lower Kindergarten at the age of 8. She lacks behind the
psychosocial developmental stage defined by Erik Erikson (SEE TABLE 1). All her
class friends are very much younger to her. She studies in an English medium school
and her favorite subject is English. The school that she attends is Shamsia Hope School
which is up to class 4 and is situated in Khalpara itself. It is a co-education school. The
main reason behind Meetu joining the school so late was because of her mother’s ignorance. Her mother told that she failed to admit her to school because she wasn’t aware when admission to school opens and closes. Because of which Meetu did not attend school at her expected age.

It is said that if the children are not praised for their accomplishments, they may instead develop a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. Meetu has joined school and it is an achievement for her but her friends tease her for being so big and still studying in kindergarten. Her younger brother studies in two classes above than her, he is in 1. He too looks very cute. They have a difference of 2 years. Meetu loves her younger sibling and she always used to bring him during the group work activity. Meetu and her brother attends the same school. Meetu carries her brothers bag every time while going to school and coming from the school. She said it is too heavy for him to carry.

Meeting with Meetu’s school authorities, I was informed that Meetu once stayed in a hostel of an organization working for the children of sex workers which was away from the red light. There were other girls as well from red light area. But Meetu ran away from there after staying there for two-three weeks. She ran back with her elder sister who was already there in the hostel before Meetu joined. The elder sister is now living with her uncle who is her mother’s elder brother away from the red light area and Meetu and her brother with her mother and her mother’s counterpart “babu”. Meetu’s class teacher reported, “Meetu was absent for a long time. One day I met her mother in the road while returning back from school. I asked her why Meetu is absent in school for such a long time and then she replied saying that Meetu doesn’t wants to attend school. She simply said it. The sex workers as a mother lack authority over their children. They don’t insist their children to go to school. They don’t discipline their children. There are very few who disciplines their children.” The interaction between the teacher and the child’s mother fall in the mesosystem of the systems defined by Urie Bronfenbrenner. The positive interaction between the child’s mother and the class teacher brings positive impact on the child and the negative interaction produces negative result. This was reflected in the case of Meetu.

All Hindu festivals are celebrated at her home and her favorite is “Durga Puja”. Because during Durga puja there is a big celebration in the red light area where all are engaged in dancing and celebrating. A big statue of goddess Durga is kept in the street
just in the entrance of the red light area and very loud music is played from evening till late night and most of the children gather there in the evening where they get prasad (food/fruit that is offered to god and later given to the worshipers as blessing).

Meetu has saved some money. She has around 300 rupees. She learnt to save money from her friends. In red light area the mothers boast about how much money their children have saved. The mothers feel proud about it. Sometimes with that money Meetu buys something that she wants to eat. She gets the money from her mother. Her mother keeps sending her to shop every time. They do not buy and stock anything in the house. So whenever anything is required the mother sends Meetu to shop to buy and because the younger brother is too young to calculate money and buy goods he stays at home or accompanies his sister. So every time she goes to the shop, she gets some money from her mother and she saves that.

Meetu loves watching television and to dance. But she doesn’t have television at home. She goes to her neighbor’s house to watch television. She is fond of watching cartoon. She visits her neighbor who has a girl of Meetu’s age and they are friends and they both watch cartoon together when others are not watching their serial. She is not very fond of cell phones unlike the other kids in the red light area. Her mother also owns a black and white cell phone without camera.

Her ambition is to become a doctor and this is influenced by the elders there who say that doctor is the highest paid job with lot of respect. She at the at of 8 studying in kindergarten is not a bully but a shy girl who wished that she didn’t have to attend school. It has become a burden for her to attend school. She faces discrimination within discrimination. Her identity as a child of a sex worker acts as a burden mostly outside the red light area and inside her own locality now she is identified as a girl joining school at 8. She is teased by her friends in her area. For few days when she joined school her mother had to drop her and pick her up from the school. She perceives that she has been a talk in the whole area for joining school so late and she is shy about it. The teacher in her class has strictly warned the students to stop teasing her.

At a very early age Meetu has faced a lot from being taken away from home and staying in hostel and then running away with her elder sister from hostel back to home. Meetu did not like to stay in the hostel because she said that in hostel the madams asked
them to wash clothes, cook food, clean the dishes, mop the floor and to clean the house. When the lady in charge of the hostel was enquired about the two sisters, she said that the two sisters didn’t like to stay in rules and regulations. They did not like discipline. The hostel in charge didn’t want the children back to hostel because she feared that the others were also getting influenced by them.

Meetu is happy to live at her own home but she has no future plans and goals. She faces the daily struggles of her life and somehow manages to escape or cope with them. Had it been a child who was over protected and guided by family then it would had been difficult to take life on daily basis as Meetu. She has been handling life as it comes. The systems described in the Ecological system theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner were all identified in her case and the systems were working against each other thus leading to unhealthy development of the child. Meetu has low self-esteem. She feels that she is not worth and is not able to do as well as most people and she feels useless at times. She perceives that the perception of other people outside the red light area do not look at them as a normal child and does not allow their children to play with them.

For Meetu the socializing agents were different when she stayed in the hostel. For the first time she was exposed or introduced to the other agents of socialization. May be because a girl who has not even been in school and is always at home for the first time being away from her mother was difficult. She and her sister are the only ones who went to hostel and ran away from there. Other children who stay in the hostel have not left the hostel and are doing well there. The mothers go and meet them sometimes. The children are also allowed to go for outing with their mothers during holidays but they are not allowed to stay in their home in the red light area. This way the young children gradually loses the identity of being the child of a sex worker and slowly starts to gain a new identity which is accepted by mainstream society and they feel inclusive about themselves and gradually become a part of the larger society.
No. 4
Name: Sohan Khan
Age: 11
Gender: Male

He studies in Siliguri Boys High school in Class 5. There are 65 students in his class. He said he was in upper kindergarten when he failed and lost one year as he was not able to appear for his final exam due to illness. He had to repeat his class that year. He said he goes to a very big school where the strength of the students in a class in each section is more than 60. There are children mainly from the mainstream coming to this school. He goes to school by auto rickshaw. He said that every day his mother gives him 10 rupees for travel. 5 rupees to travel to school from home and another 5 for his return journey. Actually the fare is 10 rupees for one way but for students it is half the fare. His school starts at 10am and ends at 4pm. He takes tiffin to school. He demands his mother for home cooked items for tiffin and he said his mother prepares tasty tiffin for him. He also goes to tuition after his school. His tuition starts from 6pm to 8 pm and his tuition fee is 350 rupees monthly.

Sohan has many friends in school and at home. He does not smoke or drink. His mother seems to be strict and would beat him up if he would take alcohol or smoke like some of the young boys in the red light area.

He comes from a Muslim family and has two siblings. They are girls. He loves to play with the younger one who is just 2 years old. Sohan respects all religion. In his book he had pictures of Lord Ganesh, Durga and Jesus.

He loves to play cricket but he said that they don’t play cricket in school. Football is the only game that is played in his school and he is not much interested. He plays cricket with his local friends during holidays. His favorite player is Virat Kholi. He keeps updates of cricket matches. His favorite team is India followed by Australia. He could identify Australia’s flag during the group work activity.

Sohan’s ambition is to become an engineer. He wants to design houses and buildings and become a civil engineer. He takes his studies seriously and believes that if he studies properly he will get a better job and later in future he can leave the area.
and live somewhere else with his family. He perceives that the people outside the red light area do not think good about the girls and boys living there. If it’s a girl, they think that she will also become a sex worker like her mother and if a boy, he will turn into a pimp or drug seller or thief. He thinks that his status in a society is very low. He told even in movies they never show a good side of the red light area; it is always the filthy things that has been portrayed in the movies so far. The media as an agent of socialization plays a vital role. By concentrating and stressing on some topic, the media can create, manage and control the impression of the audience and receivers. Sohan believes that the media has portrayed the children of sex workers in such a way that their influence is considered as a bad influence to the children living in the mainstream society.

Sohan has never disclosed his identity in school. His friends know that he comes from Khalpara red light area but does not know that his mother is in the sex trade. He said he can never disclose that to anyone outside the red light area because it’s a shame and others will start discriminating him. But he said that he respects his mother and tells that whatever she is doing she is doing for him and his sibling’s future.

He does not like to talk much about his father who is not his biological father. He said that his father drinks every night and quarrels with his mother. His expression didn’t look happy when he talked about his father. When I visited his house, I had a chance to meet his father. His father had worn dirty clothes and the belt of his left foot’s slipper was torn but he was managing to walk somehow. He smelt of alcohol in the morning at around 10. He looked at me in a suspicious manner but as soon as his wife (Sohan’s mother) told that I am Sohan’s teacher, he left the house without exchanging a word. In the red light area, I was commonly known as a teacher who took classes with the children on Saturdays. I observed that the relation between Sohan and his father was just nominal. There was not much interaction between them. He shared more with his mother but his mother too did not seem to know much about Sohan’s likes and dislikes when I interacted with her. But she kept him disciplined when it came to consumption of alcohol and tobacco. It was noticed in her conversation with her son that she would sometimes tell Sohan not to act like his father when Sohan misbehaved or returned back words to his mother out of anger. Every child sees their parents as a role model but it is different in the case of the children of sex workers. The parenting
style is also different. It is not common to hear from the normal mothers saying don’t be bad like your father, in fact we hear them say to be good like your father. This influences the thought process of the child and the child starts to believe what the mother tells. Particularly when the child’s intimate relation is more with the mother.

Sohan is growing up in an environment which is confined but yet he tries to explore beyond his area by reaching out to school outside the red light area and making friends with the children who comes from the mainstream society. He has maintained his friendship with the other children in school. At the same time, he knows that he should not tell them that his mother is a sex worker. He knows what he is doing in his life. His ideal self and real self does not have much disparity. Therefore, making his identity stable. He knows what he wants to achieve in life and his dreams are not superficial. He has gone through the conflicts of the psychosocial development and have overcome them. At his age, industry followed by role confusion are the common conflicts faced. But it was observed during the period of two years that Sohan has dealt with these conflicts and has successfully overcome them. But along the way he has faced lot of challenges. During one interview he said “my friends knows that I live in Khalpara, they are inquisitive to know about the sex workers and they ask me how do the sex workers look like and how do they live. I try to avoid such questions but for how long will I be able to avoid”. The children of sex workers when they go to school and reach higher classes, there is tendency for their identity to be exposed because at that age all children and curious and have many questions. This creates problem for the sex worker’s children and this is also one of the reason for drop out among the children of sex workers.

No. 5
Name: Sushma Khatun
Age: 10
Gender: Female

Sushma is thin and has tan complexion. She always has a very neatly tied hair. She lives with her mother and her mother’s babu. She has an elder brother who is married and has a son. Sushma is fond of this baby who is just two years old. She plays with him and takes care of him when his mother is busy. She said that this baby’s first birthday was celebrated and they had bought cakes and balloons and all the kids from the
surrounding area was invited. The only thing that she doesn’t like doing for her little cousin is to wipe his bottom after he poops. Other than that she does everything for him.

Sushma is studying in Class 5 and is good in studies. She has never failed in school and her favorite subject is mathematics. She fears her class teacher and tells that if the students don’t do their homework then they get beating in school in front of the whole class but she has never got sticks so far. Her school starts at 10am and ends at 4pm. She eats her breakfast and then goes to school. For breakfast she loves to eat puri which is sold in a shop just near her house. Her mother usually doesn’t make breakfast. For breakfast they usually eat biscuits, buns, puri, breads etc., which they don’t have to cook. They usually buy and eat. Only once or twice they make breakfast like chapattis and potatoes. Sushma doesn’t have to take tiffin to school because the lunch is provided in the school. Her mother gives her money when she goes to school. Sushma has saved 600 rupees. She has asked her mother to keep the money for her. Her mother said that she keeps asking to show that money and therefore she has to show the money to her every time she asks for it. Her mother is proud that she has saved so much money and she praises her daughter in front of her neighbors for her saving habit.

When Sushma doesn’t want to go to school, her mother doesn’t insist her. But she fears her elder brother. Her elder brother beats her up when she doesn’t listen to him. One day Sushma did not want to go to school without any reason and her brother insisted her to go to school but she didn’t listen to him and she kept loitering. Then her brother came and pulled her by her ears and took her home to get ready for school. She started crying and wore her school uniform and went to school. Her school uniform and books are provided from the school itself. The name of her school is Vidya Sagar.

She loves watching television. Her favorite is to watch dancing and singing reality show. But she is little shy to dance and sing during group work activities. In a group work her performance is active and up to the mark. But when it comes to individual performance, she is shy and always needs a company to perform dance or sing. She has many friends who supports her. She has never been found fighting or having an argument with her friends. She has a friendly nature and has skills of initiating new relationship and maintaining the old ones.
According to Sushma’s age, she is attending the right class unlike most of the children of Khalpara red light area who attends classes below their standard age. She is a girl who is aware about her surroundings and thinks twice before making any decision. This was observed during the group work activity. Sushma is living a disciplined life even in such condition where every day is unpredictable. Her mother told that Sushma gets up on time and does her daily activities without any failure. She doesn’t like to miss her school and always sits for study in the evening. The reason behind her routine life could also be the presence of her elder brother who keeps a check on her. She fears her brother and at the same time respects him. Whenever she talks about her brother she speaks with respect. She doesn’t show that respect when she talks about her mother’s counterpart. She has nothing much to talk about him. Her expression changes when she talks about her father. One day while interacting with Sushma, she told ‘my father used to take all the money from my mother in the morning and returned late at night to home in a drunk state. One morning my brother (who is elder by almost 9 years) got very angry with my father when he was asking money. My brother shouted at him and nearly used hands on him because he was so angry. Since then he does not forcefully take money from my mother. I feel good for what my brother did. My mother has been saving money and I too save money”. When I asked for what reason she needed money. She said she would need it for medical purpose in future. Being a girl of 10 years and thinking about saving for medical purpose is not something very common to find.

Sushma has matured more than her age. She at her early age thinks about saving money, moving out from the red light area, studying hard and getting a job. She knows that the identity that she has, i.e. being the child of a sex work is not an acceptable identity in the society. In school she somehow manages to hide but she said that it would be difficult to hide when she reaches higher classes. Therefore, she said that she remains quiet in class and has limited friends. She added “everyone in school talks about their home and family and I feel very awkward. I mostly stay quiet or ignore them”. Because of the identity of being a child of a sex work, the children face so many challenges and it creates boundaries and limitations to their exposure and opportunities. The socialization gets limited. The identity possibility gets all intermingled to one identity i.e. the child of a sex worker. This identity is hard to erase and the problems attached to it is reflected in the study. Sushma’s identity is attached to Khalpara and she is
seeking and exploring other possible identities, if she finds one she will definitely not take time to commit to it because she said it's like a curse to be born in a red light area and whenever she gets an opportunity to move out from this place, she will definitely go and never return back.

NO. 6
Name: Tashu Roy
Age: 9
Gender: Female

Tashu is the second child of her mother. She has an elder sister who is 17 years old and does not go to school. Her elder sister studied up to class 7. Tashu lives with her sister, mother and her mother’s counterpart. Tashu is a very thin girl and looks underweight. Her hair is never properly combed and she wears torn dresses like most of her dresses have spoilt zips and she holds her dress with safety pins. Her sister also was never seen wearing proper stitched clothes like every time I met her, she was found wearing torn kurtas or pyjamas and she didn’t bother to stitch them and use it.

Tashu lives in a house with one room. The kitchen is outside the house where other sex worker’s family also cook, it’s a common kitchen. The room has only one bed and two tools to sit. In that bed the customer is entertained and in that same bed Tashu sleeps with her mother and her counterpart. Her elder sister sleeps on the floor.

She doesn’t have a proper place to sit and study. In the evening when she comes back from school, she does not have a place to sit and do her homework because that is when her mother has to attend the customer. She said that she goes to her neighbor’s house with her homework and after completing her work she watches television with her elder sister at her neighbors place along with other children who come there to study. Tashu’s mother do not show interest in her daughter’s education when I interacted with her, she was not excited about Tashu going to school and did not have much to say about Tashu’s school life. It was noticed that Tashu’s mother do no ask Tashu about how she spend her day in school, what did she eat with the money she gave to have during lunch break and who are her friends, how are they etc. There is not much conversation between her mother and her regarding the micro systems (as defined by Urie Bronfenbrenner) present in Tashu’s life and there is little or absence of
interaction between these micro systems. This hampers the development of the child because when the micro system works in isolation without much communication with one another then there is very less scope of development.

Tashu said that she doesn’t not have many friends in school. She said she doesn’t like having many friends. This thought of hers has been influenced by her sister and other elders in Khalpara who ask their school going siblings and children not to make many friends in order to hide the identity. At her age the major psychosocial crisis as explained by Erikson in his work of psychosocial development is Industry vs. Inferiority. Tashu seemed more inclined to inferiority than industry. It was observed that Tashu was never praised for anything. Her mother and her counterpart lacked that parenting style where you need to praise the children for their good work in order to see more improvement in them and motivate them to do better next time. If the children are not praised for their achievement, they tend to lose motivation and may develop a sense of inadequacy.

Tashu lived her daily life without any routine. The only routine that she had was she had to go to school. Other than that there was no certain time for her to wake up in the morning, eat her breakfast, sit for study after school, have dinner and go to bed. Every day the timing was changing. Her mother and her counterpart lived that way so she was bound to live in the same condition. Her elder sister who does not go to school get up around 9 am in the morning which is an early time for her. She loiters around the whole day in the afternoon and sits with her friends who are also drop outs and chat purposelessly. They usually conversed about how they wished their life to be. There is so much difference between the real self and ideal self of some of the children of sex workers. One example is Tashu’s sister.

Tashu is growing up in an environment which does not support her development psychologically or socially as well as physically. Physically because it was found that her mother most of the time do not prepare food at home and buys food from the shop and give her children. The only proper meal they eat is lunch because dinner time the sex workers are busy and for the breakfast Tashu’s mother usually buys. The parents do not supplement the food with other items like fruits, health drinks, dry fruits, red meat etc. which are all essential for nutritional diet. This leads to lack of nutrition in the child thus making the child unhealthy.
All these problems are attached to the profession of the mother. It was also noticed that Tashu’s sister was depressed most of the time. She said “I am uneducated; I have nothing to do in life. I feel very sad and depressed. I am a girl (emphasizing more on the word) child of a sex worker and I don’t have any future”. Tashu added, “someday we will leave this area and live happily”. No children in the red light area dream about settling their future in the red light area itself. But only very few are focused and show their goal directed behavior.

No. 7  
Name: Mohan Khan  
Age: 7  
Gender: Male

Mohan is the only child of his mother. He is a very gentle looking and a smart boy. He is always dressed up tidy and clean. His nails are always kept short and clean and his hair oiled and combed. He lives with his mother and her babu in a clean and a tidy house where they have their own kitchen. When the researcher visited Mohan’s house, she was served tea in a clean cup.

Mohan is loved by his mother a lot. He respects his mother and father. He loves his mother because she prepares for him food that he likes. He loves to eat aloo paratha and payeesh. His mother makes for him breakfast every morning at home. After having breakfast, he goes to school. He studies in class one. His favorite subject is English and he always tries to use English words while conversing. Mohan says he loves going to school and he has many friends there in school. He goes to school by school bus and he takes the school bus from outside the red light area in order for others not to know where he lives. In the morning his father goes to drop him in the cycle to the place he catches the bus and evening time Mohan walks back alone.

Mohan seems to be studious. His school books are neatly kept and has written very neatly in his copies. Whenever he came for group work, Mohan never forgot to bring his group work exercise copy and his pencil box. He would use them properly and take it back. Mohan believes that education is very important in life. He is influenced by his parents who teaches him that through education one can achieve a better career in future. Mohan enjoys going to school because he has many friends there.
He prefers going to school then staying at home. He says that his class teacher also likes him a lot because he always does his work on time. He said that for teacher’s day he had taken a gift for his class teacher. His mother takes part in such activities of Mohan’s life. She bought for his teacher a pen set and a card on teacher’s day. And on Mohan’s birthday his mother bought sweets for him to distribute among his friends and to give to class teacher. Mohan had also gifted me pen on teacher’s day.

Mohans mother as a primary agent of socialization is shaping Mohan and teaching values. She takes out time for Mohan to discuss what happened in school every day. She monitors his moves and tells him what is right and what he should not be doing. His mother has taught Mohan how to respect his friends and teacher and elders. His mother said, “When Mohan goes to school I ask him not to disclose to anyone about my profession, it is ok if the others come to know that he lives in Khalpara because there are many living here who are not involved in sex trade but he should not tell about the work I do because he has so many friends in school and they will stop being friends and boycott him”.

Mohan and his parents understand what the society calls them and where they stand in the society. But as a family they are working hard to come out of this isolated stigmatized identity. All of them are taking equal and active part. The mother always plays her role and responsibilities as a mother which is very difficult for the sex workers to maintain. Her counterpart is also helpful and cooperative. He helps Mohan’s mother with the household work and helps Mohan with studies. He works as a labor in a construction site. Mohan’s parents’ guide him and continuously praises him for his achievements which motivates Mohan.

Mohan has a support of his family which helps Mohan to overcome the crisis that are faced at his age. He is growing along the psychosocial development in a positive manner. It is because of his parents upbringing, they are motivated to be a part of the mainstream and are ready to leave the identity they have i.e. the identity attached to sex trade. They all work together as a team and support each other. So we cannot generalize and assume that all sex workers and their children do not work for their development and are not goal oriented.
No. 8
Name: Sannat Khatun
Age: 9 years
Gender: Female

Sannat is a slim girl with beautiful eyes and curly hair. She dresses up neatly and is always seen near her house and doesn’t loiter much around the red light area. She goes to Dr. Rajendra Prasad Girls High School which is a Hindi medium school. Her favorite subject is also Hindi. She studies in class 3. She said there are more than 40 students in her class. Her classes start at 7am and gets over by 10am. For breakfast she usually eats packet noodles like waiwai, biscuits, puffed rice or puri sabji. She said her mother gives her 5 rupees daily while going to school. Her school’s annual fee is 250 rupees.

She is the youngest one in the family and has two elder sisters and one elder brother who helps Sannat with her homework. Her position in the family birth order makes her the youngest and the center of attraction, attention and love but also allowing the elder siblings to dominate her. Living with many siblings she has learnt how to dominate or protect someone, how to appreciate another’s point of view and how to reciprocate favors or bully. This was noticed while conducting group activity with the children. The elder siblings act as some disciplinarians when Sannat does something that they disapprove of.

In a group work, she participates actively. She is not easily shy to dance or sing. She loves to draw and uses various colors when asked to make sketches. When the children were asked to draw on the theme of “my home”, Sannat had made a beautiful drawing with a house with rivers and flowers and what caught hold of my interest was that she drew herself and her siblings playing outside the house. She said she loves her siblings a lot and feels safe and protected when they are around. She and her siblings have a strong bond among themselves. She is proud of her sisters and brother and she knows very well that nobody can bully her in the red light area because she has her elder siblings backing her.

Her ambition is to become a doctor. Her ambition again seems to be influenced by hearing her parents and other elder talk in the area about how much doctors earn and the respect they get from the society. The sex workers have the belief that being a doctor...
is the best thing in the world because they attach the profession with earning lot of income and respect. The reason Sannat wants to become doctor was because she wants to check patients and help them cure their sickness. She feels that she has number of good qualities and told that even her class teacher likes her a lot. She said she is praised for her good work by her teacher. She always does her homework and takes to school and she always does it correct that is the reason why she thinks that her class teacher likes her. Sannat felt proud in saying that the monitor of her class is her friend. She believes that education plays an important role in person’s life by helping an individual to find a job.

Sannat always looks up to her elder siblings and hardly disagree to what they say. The elders are also very protective towards her. Her elder siblings do not allow her to loiter around alone in the red light area and she is not allowed to walk from some of the lanes to avoid encountering the customers. These are some of the ways they try in hiding their identity.

Sannat said she loves her mother and respects her. She comes from a Muslim family. It seems that she has a strong bond with her mother who spends most of her time with her when she is not working. She likes all religion but her favorite is Islamic because she believes it’s her own. And the second religion after Islamic is Christianity because she had heard the story about Jesus Christ and how he was crucified to wash away the sins of others and she really liked it. But she doesn’t hesitate to attend Hindu festivals as well. Her parents too do not stop her and her siblings from attending other religious festivals.

The relationship that is most important in Sannat’s life is her family. She feels happy to talk about her family. The house that she lives with her family is also very neat and tidy, something to boast about because most of the houses are small and clumsy. She has television at home and enough room for the children not to leave the house when the customer is present. Sannat spends most of the time watching cartoon network on television and also plays with her elder sister’s phone. She told that she always asked permission before using her sister’s phone.

Sannat giggled when she was asked if she had boyfriends. She pointed to her elder sister and said she has. Her elder sister looked at her with an angry look and Sannat was
quiet after that. Sannat who is studying in class 3 believes that boys and girls can never be friends. They can only be partners.

Sannat has never suffered from any illness where she needed to be hospitalized and she is grateful about that. She said “once my elder brother had suffered from jaundice and he was seriously ill and hospitalized. That time he had to put many injections. I fear injections a lot. I hope I never get that sick where I need to be hospitalized and have to put injections”.

Her aim in life is to complete studies and not to be a drop out. Her eldest sister has studied till class 8 and is a drop out. She doesn’t want to be a drop out like her. She is shy to talk about her mother’s identity and avoids questions that are related to it. She has a positive attitude towards life in spite of living in an isolated yet troubled society. She doesn’t know much of the household work, because all the household work is done by her elder siblings. She is loved at home and by her neighbors.

When I had taken the children to a water park as an excursion, she noticed that Sannat was always monitored and taken care by her elder sister. From getting in to the auto rickshaw from the red light area to changing the clothes at water park and keeping the dry clothes in a safe box and then getting in the water and then again changing back to the dry clothes and coming back, all this time Sannat was with her sister. Her sister guided her throughout the trip. Sannat did play here and there in the water park with her friends but she was also in the guidance of her elder sister.

Sannat seems to enjoy her life with her very small socializing agents. She understands that the identity of sex worker is regarded as a shameful identity in the society. Therefore, she doesn’t like talking much about it. In school, so far she has managed to hide her identity. The identity attached to her mother’s profession, the identity attached to her birth place, the identity attached to the place she lives. She lives in an environment that nothing seems to be guaranteed with certainty and at the same time she has to live and perform everyday as it comes.

Sannat’s socialization is limited to Khalpara itself. Outside Khalpara, she spends time in school with her friends for 3 hours in a day. After that she is back to home with her mother and her elder sister who doesn’t go to school. And once her other siblings
come from school, she goes out to play with them. The boundaries of her socialization are very much visible. She seems to be happy and safe within these boundaries. She doesn’t want to explore beyond the said boundary and experience what the world outside looks like. She knows that there will be trouble for her and she has to face difficulties when she crosses that boundary. Her identity is close to the status “Identity Foreclosure” defined by Marcia (SEE TABLE 2). It involves committing to an identity prematurely without exploration or choice. People in this status like to follow law and regulations, follow a strong leader, and become dogmatic when their ideas are threatened.

No. 9

Name: Prashant Das
Age: 14 years
Gender: Male

He is the only child of his mother. He lives with his mother and her counterpart to whom he calls “Kaku” or uncle. They have a house of one room with two beds and a common kitchen outside the room where other sex workers also prepare food. Prashant said he has respect for his mother and Kaku. This kaku works as an electrician and brings home the necessary supplies. He supports the family in terms of finance and also looks after Prashant’s studies. He also provides money for Prashant’s tuition classes. Prashant doesn’t have any siblings but there are many other children of his age in the surroundings with whom he plays and gets along. He is very close to his mother and respects her a lot. Unlike most of the other children in the red light area, he fears his mother and listens to her and doesn’t quarrel with her or back chat her. He is one of the children who is not found using foul language and is dressed up neat and tidy every day. He discusses with his mother what happens in school and his daily activities every day.

He belongs to Hindu religion and celebrates all the Hindu festivals and during Christmas also he had hung a Christmas star in the entrance of his house. He is one child who lives a routine life in the red light area. When I visited his home, I found that he had kept his books and other stuffs very neat and clean.
Prashant studies in Class 8. He said he enjoys going to school and has many friends in school. He said he has many friends in Facebook also. Facebook is a social networking site where you can make many friends from all over the world. Prashant says that it is easy to find friends and make friends through Facebook. He has a cellphone of his own where he can use apps that are for android phones and has 4G internet. He uses internet to watch songs, videos and listen to new music.

He has a positive attitude towards life and wants to continue his studies as much as he can. His dream is to complete his schooling and join college. His dreams are real and he works hard to achieve those dreams. He said he has never failed in school. He perceives examination and results to be an indicator of his worth. He is very sensitive about his identity. He doesn’t bring his school friends to his house. He has his own circle of friends in the locality with whom he goes out to play cricket. He is very fond of cricket and also watches cricket matches on television. He knows most of the Indian cricket team members and also foreign cricket team members, mostly the team captains.

For him positive relationship means supporting each other and being loyal. Prashant seems to be mature and acts like one. He knows where his identity stands in the society and he takes it positively by accepting his identity and not letting outsider know who he is or where he is from but at the same time planning for the future to move away from the red light area and to live far away from there.

The saddest time for Prashant is when his mother and kaku quarrel. He said that they hardly quarrel but when they do, it is very sad and he dislikes it so much. He wants his mother and kaku to be happy. He says that his relatives also talk about how nice his family is. He said that he will be very happy if one day he gets a job and leaves the red light area and takes his mother along. That is his ultimate dream and in it his kaku was not mentioned. It was found that most of the children of sex workers were more close to their mother than their father.

Prashant is an obedient son and during one year of field work in the red light area I did not find him taking tobacco or alcohol. There could be three reasons. Firstly, his mother who keeps a check on him and doesn’t allow him to take alcohol during occasions unlike other mothers. Secondly, his peer group in the red light area is not into alcohol and tobacco. Therefore, there is no peer pressure or influence. Thirdly, his
image in the red light area is of a decent boy who doesn’t consume cigarettes and drink alcohol so he has to maintain that even if that is out of pressure. His mother feels proud when she talks about Prashant and she always encourages Prashant to study well. His mother was worried about Prashant’s result in his first board exam. He still had two years to sit for his board exam but his mother was already thinking about how is he going to perform. Parental encouragement has an effect on the educational development of the child.

The thing that makes him angry is when someone calls him “randi ka bacha” or a child of a sex worker. One day Prashant and his friend had a small argument after the group work activity was over. This argument turned into a fight and they used hands on each other. The other children went running out of the room and started screaming that Prashant and his friend is fighting. Then quickly the mother of Prashant’s friend came and separated them and pulled her son away. Then looked at Prashant furiously and called him a child of a sex worker. Prashant broke down into tears and went home. After few days of the incident I spoke to Prashant regarding the incident and he said, “X is my friend and sometimes we quarrel and fight after all we are boys. In school also sometimes we fight among our friends but few days later we are ok and we walk in the same group. But it is not nice for X’s mother to come and tell me who I am. I understand that I am born to a sex worker. But my mother loves me enough and provides me with everything and she is doing everything for my future. Someday if I get a job, I will not ask my mother to work here. We will go somewhere far away and settle and never come back here.” There is a saying that a thief wouldn’t want to be called a thief even if he is a thief. Similarly, a child of a sex worker wouldn’t like to hear anyone calling him/her a child of a sex worker. They understand the position of their identity in the society.

Prashant is good in studies and brings home good result. His mother and father constantly tells him to do well in studies. They insist him to go to school every day and not to miss school at all. Prashant is also such a boy who would not miss school for no reason. When the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale was used on him, his self-esteem was not low. He feels that he is a person of worth and have much to be proud of. On the whole, he is satisfied with himself and is happy with his performance in school. He has saving habits and has saved some money to buy crickets set because he knows that it will be a burden for his parents if he asks them to buy. Prashant knows that being a
child of a sex worker he has to face many discrimination and stigma but he feels that being a female child of a sex worker is more burdensome because it is hard for the female to find a suitable male to get married than for a male to find his bride. He looks forward to move away from the red light area and live away where he can start a new life with a new identity.

**No. 10**

**Name:** Rishi Khan  
**Age:** 13  
**Gender:** Male

Rishi lives with his mother, his mother’s counterpart and two siblings, one younger to him and one elder. He lives in a house with two rooms which is poorly maintained. They have television in one corner of the room. The rooms have no sofas. They have beds in both the rooms. They have a hand pump near the house from where they draw water. The surrounding is dirty. All the neighboring houses use this hand pump water for washing clothes, utensils, bathing and drinking. The area is dirty and they blame one another for keeping the place dirty. The drainage system is not proper. Every time the water gets filled in the drain and in rainy season the water overflows from the drain.

He is 13 years and studies in class 5. He has a bullying nature and uses abusive language to his young ones and friends and sometimes to elders too. He was always noticed back chatting with elders. If his neighbors tell him something or scolds him, he has to say something in return like he would say to mind their own business. His neighbors are not very fond of him and doesn’t allow their kids to play with Rishi. They say that their kids will learn to smoke and walk purposelessly around the locality.

He is not regular to school. He doesn’t go to school when he doesn’t feel like. He doesn’t have to worry that his parents will scold him when he doesn’t go to school for no reason. His parents don’t say anything. During school days, Rishi is seen outside the red light area playing carom with his friends who are drop outs. His mother and father does not have control over him. He hangs out with the senior boys in the red light area.
He doesn’t have much interest in education. He said that studying is a difficult task and he cannot do it. He said he cannot concentrate in class and doesn’t understand what the teacher is teaching. He added that there are many other ways he can earn money so it is not necessary that everyone has to go to school and study to get a job and earn money. He has adopted so well with the condition of the red light area and doesn’t feel it’s a problem or he lacks opportunities in growing up in the red light area. His identity is thoroughly rooted in Khalpara and he doesn’t want to explore or look for other alternatives because he thinks he is the boss of his area.

Rishi belongs to a Muslim family but does not believe in the existence of God. He said that if there was God, all people would pray and God would listen to them and everyone would be happy. But because there is no God that is why all people are suffering and they are unhappy. When I asked him if he is unhappy, he replied “I am very happy with my life because I don’t believe in God.”

His favorite actor is Salman Khan and he dresses up like him. He tears up the sleeves from the t-shirt and wears them saying its Salman Khan style and also carries a scarf just like Salman in some movies. He owns a black and white mobile phone which he carries all time in his back pocket and has a style of walking. He walks like he owns the place.

While conducting the group work activity with the children, I noticed Rishi to be undisciplined and authoritative. He had not developed self-regulation, the ability to control his behavior so that it is appropriate to the prevailing situation. I had a good deal of attention to it. He distracted others in the group by taking away the other children’s pens and pencils, poking them with objects and pulling their hair. I had made him a group leader once so that he behaves well but he continued to act the same way and there was no change in his behavior. What helped me to stop him from acting this way was by praising him for all his good work. I would praise Rishi when he performed well in the group activity. I would say that Rishi is such a tidy boy and the next day he would come with his hair combed and wear tidy. But as soon as he would step out of the area where group work was conducted. He would pull his shirt out and pull up his collars and walk in his style.
Rishi’s parents are undemanding and unresponsive. Their aim seems to be to spend as little time with the children and to use as little effort as possible. The findings of this case study support the statement that “neglecting parents pay little attention to any aspect of the parental role that inconveniences them, and so the children do not have to meet standards concerning aggression or homework” (Maccoby and Martin, 1983: 224). Rishi’s parents do not show concern towards Rishi and Rishi do not behave like how a child of his age normally behaves for example he is not responsible for his homework, do not go to school regularly, do not respects elders. When the children were asked to describe themselves with any animals or birds, Rishi described himself as a bird because he said he is free as a bird and he can do whatever he feels like. Living in the red light area, he believes that he can do whatever he wants and there are no restrictions and obligations.

Rishi’s identity is as close to the identity described as “identity diffusion” in the identity statuses of James Marcia. It refers to the stage when an individual is not ready to explore or make any commitment. Rishi is happy to be in red light area and his goal or dream doesn’t include coming out form this area unlike the other children. Rishi is aware that his identity as a child of a sex worker is not regarded as a good one or a respectful one. He hides his identity from the people outside the red light area but he doesn’t seem to have a problem with it. When asked if he wants to shift to another area and live somewhere else given an opportunity, he said he wouldn’t want to move out.

He has attached himself so much to Khalpara and the society of its own. His agents of socialization area so limited and he has created boundaries for himself where he feels free to do whatever he wishes but he is not aware about the opportunists he has blocked for himself by not giving oneself a chance to explore and walk that extra mile away from the red light area.