

# OUR HOME, SAFE HOME



**Save the Children**

OUR HOME, SAFE HOME



Save the Children



Image & Text:  
Design and layout/printing:  
Published by:  
Copyright:  
First published:  
ISBN:

Mahmud/Map  
Masuma Pia/Matri  
Save the Children in Bangladesh  
©Save the Children  
June 2015  
978-984-33-9292-3



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Save the Children Korea. The contents of this publication are the outcomes of the project "Safe Home". Photos of this publication are taken with the permission of the children of the Safe Home following the standards and guidelines of Save the Children International. All rights reserved. No image and text of this book can be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission from Save the Children.



## PREFACE

*Our Home, Safe Home* captures the moving stories of girls who have lived or are still living in the Save the Children supported Safe Home at Daulatdia, Bangladesh. They are the children of sex workers who live in most difficult and vulnerable situations. They are deprived of their childhood and are at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Safe Home started as a residential care institution for the daughters of sex workers and over the years has focused to reintegrate them with their families and communities.

The Safe Home approach proved that despite of their identity and vulnerability, girls of sex workers can excel if they are given the required support, services and enabling environment to fulfil their needs. Their resilience is remarkable! It is truly inspiring to learn how the girls have overcome the challenges and realized their potential. Therefore, we have documented some of their stories, which share their pride and dignity, aspirations and determination and hopefully will inspire others to overcome the challenges of life.

We thank the local government representatives of Daulatdia Union, Goalunda Rajbari and local administration who played significant role in bringing changes in the lives of the children of sex workers. Our sincere thanks to our partner organizations - Karmojibi Kallayan Sangstha (KKS), Mukti Mohila Samiti (MMS) and their staff members for their passionate work.

Special thanks go to the mothers who took the first step by bringing their daughters to the Safe Home and believing they can have alternatives in life. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Save the Children Australia and Save the Children Korea for their financial support and the Child Protection team members of Save the Children here in Bangladesh who worked hard to fulfil the dreams of these children.

**Elizabeth Pierce**  
Interim Country Director  
Save the Children in Bangladesh





# About the Project



Safe Home project started by providing residential care support to daughters of sex workers, but over the years the objective has shifted to identify community based care solutions for those children. The project is located in Daulatdia Union of Goalundo Upazila of Rajbari District in Bangladesh. Daulatdia is not only the biggest brothel in the country, but one of the largest in the world. The children (especially girls) in the brothel are extremely vulnerable to abuse and sexual exploitation and live in an environment without appropriate care. So the project focused on ensuring that the girls were protected, and contributed to their empowerment to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Safe Home project emphasized on reintegration of the girls into family settings or wider community through case management system. Children's cases are supported by professional psychologist to develop individual care plan and assistance is provided for higher education, vocational training, and stipend for attending job placement, which prepare them for self-reliant lives. The project also assesses the potential of every child in transitioning from institutional care to more independent family and community life, and the decision on alternative care arrangement (e.g. kinship care, supervised living arrangement in the form of small group home) is taken by considering the best interest of the child.



Major interventions of Safe Home include ensuring a protective environment by providing accommodation, food, medical and basic care support to those who are staying there; arranging psychosocial counselling including individual or group counselling for the girls; preparing personal education plan, including access to basic or vocational education; capacity building and empowerment of the girls through trainings, workshops and awareness sessions on child rights and child protection issues; providing family counselling to mothers and other family members to support them to offer better care to their children; home visits to ensure a safe and smooth transitioning into families and communities; identifying job placements and livelihood options to support them in reintegrating into communities.

120 girls received support from Safe Home since the beginning. Among them, 79 girls have been reintegrated, 23 girls are in the process of reintegration, and 18 girls are in direct care services of Safe Home (will be reintegrated by 2018). 14 Girls are continuing higher education in different universities and polytechnic institutions; 35 girls have completed School Secondary Certificate; among them, 21 girls completed Higher Secondary Certificate; 23 girls received vocational training and among them 18 girls are continuing jobs.

Safe Home project is implemented by KKS with support from MMS. The project started in 1997 and till 2010 this was funded by Save the Children Australia. From 2011, Save the Children Korea is providing financial support.

URMILA



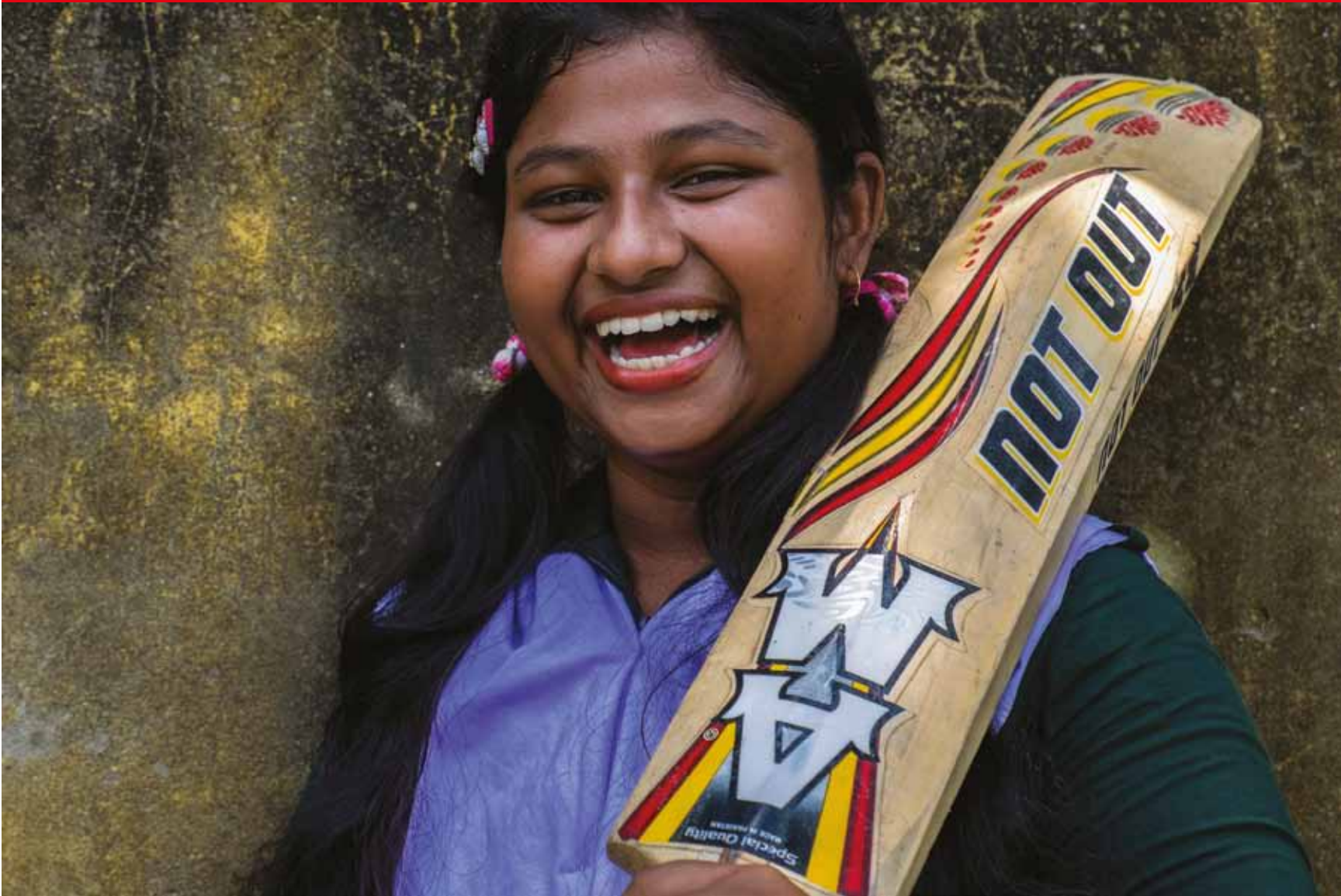
I love going to school...



“I love going to school. One day I hope to be a teacher and teach my mother to read and write, and to speak English. Education is very important. People will stop neglecting me once I am educated.”



NIPA



I pray people will learn to respect us...





“Our *Huẓoor* (religious teacher) taught us to pray and read the Holy Quran. He does not judge us the way others do. I pray to Allah that He gives sense to people to respect us. I hope that one day I will have the strength and money to take my mother away from the brothel.”



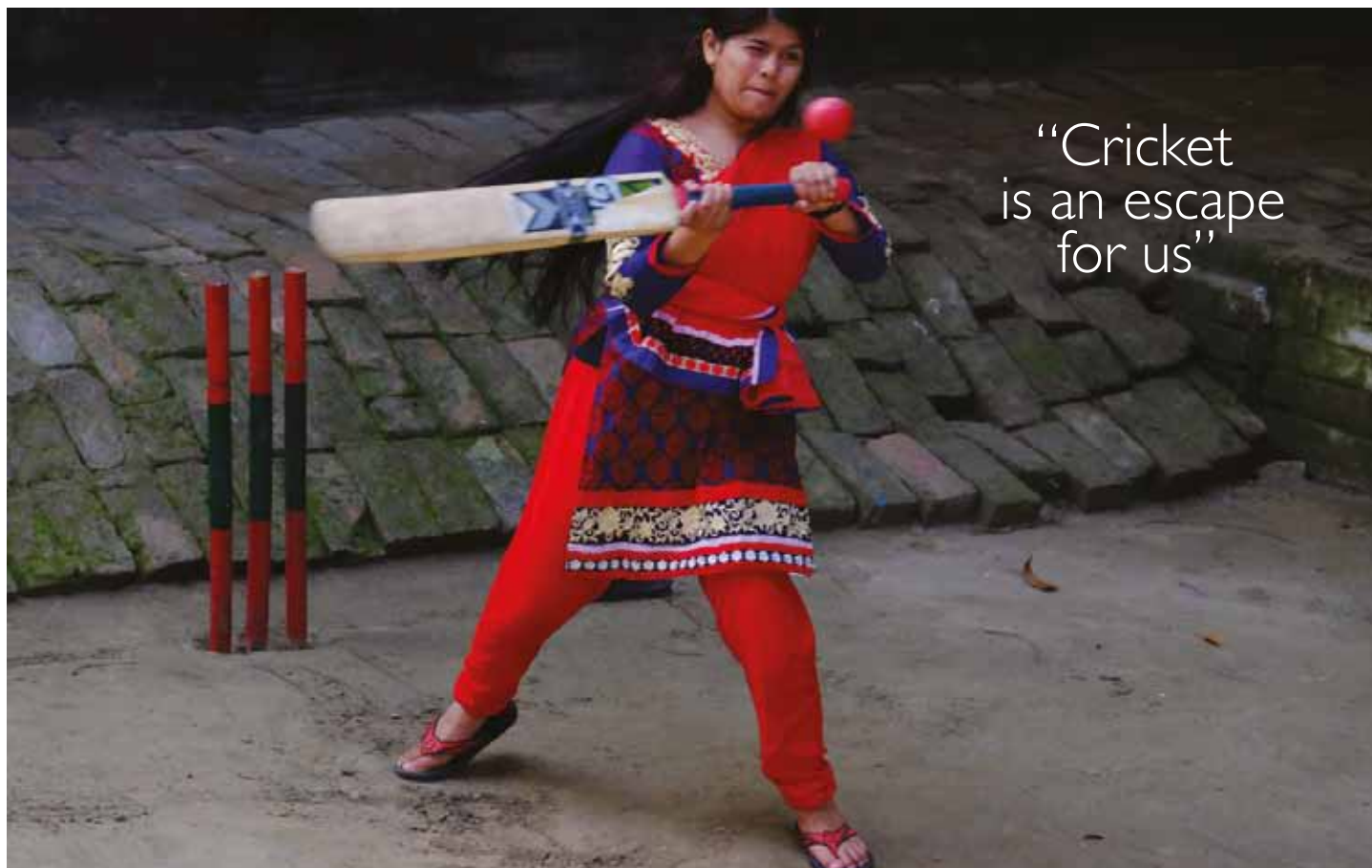
# MUNNI AKHTER



Safe Home has been my home...

"Safe Home has been my home for nine years now. I hope one day to have an important job that will help others; maybe teaching. In the future I hope to be able to help my mother escape from her vulnerable way of living."





“We love playing cricket and when Bangladesh National team is playing, we feel excited and are tempted to skip classes (for watching the Match on television), but that is not possible. Our Home mothers are strict and school van is in the gate to take us to school.”

“When we win in District level competitions and come back with the trophy, it makes us happy and proud.....”

Girls are trained by a professional coach, who train them in the evening and girls take part in school cricket tournament and in district level competitions. This boosts their confidence and capacity.

Through participating in these sports activities, children not only had the opportunity to interact with the wider community but performing in front of mass people and achieving awards brings a sense of dignity and honor for themselves.

MOU



We have love and care in the Safe Home...





“I didn’t like the Safe Home at the beginning of my enrollment. It seemed difficult to follow the routine and discipline.

When I started to accept the norms, discipline of Safe Home positively, gradually my attitudes changed. I started to show my respect, gratitude towards my elders. I started to realize how much caring and loving our Home mothers are!!!

After staying for a long time with peers in Safe Home, I learned the importance of love and being part of the family. Many of my elder sisters (senior girls) left Safe Home; now they have started a new life. Their struggles and achievements, their new identity gives me a window of hope.”

“Evening is my favourite time, it is quiet and the best time to study. Sometimes fireflies come into my room. I watch them, and envy their freedom and the magic of their light.”

“We have love and care in the Safe Home.”



# SHOHANA



I will start a different life than my peers...



A sex worker gave birth to a girl child, she didn't want to bring up her child in the brothel. She kept her infant child (Shohana) with a couple in her community. They fed her, clothed her, but didn't love and take care of her that much. They didn't educate her the social norms and values properly. When the child started going to primary school, her mother learnt about the Safe Home and she enrolled her daughter in the Safe Home programme.



Now the girl is sixteen. She wants to move away from the brothel area, and start a new life. Shohana shared her views confidently, “I want to start a new life after coming out from the Safe Home like my elder sisters. I find myself blessed than my step brothers and sister (who live with their father). Through attending education classes and vocational training I have gained knowledge and skills, which is ultimately helping me to start a self-reliant life.”

# URMI & SHIMA - Sisters

Safe Home shading us like a banyan tree...





“Me (Shima) and my elder sister (Urmi) both are blessed; I have completed school final examination from Safe Home this year and I want to be an Accountant. My sister is continuing her higher education at Rajbari Degree College under National University. Safe Home gives us the confidence and courage to be part a of boarder society. Urmi lives in a private hostel at Goalunda financed by our mother. From next year, I will live there also. Mother is hopeful enough to support our education expenses. Safe Home is shading us like a banyan tree, as it protects us from abuse, exploitation and ensures basic needs. It wouldn't be possible for our mother to walk a long journey without support of Safe Home.”



KANIZ



I have overcome my unhappiness...





“When I was in grade six, my mother died and my uncle grabbed all properties that she had left for us. Even my sister left me to get rid of responsibility and it was pure suffering.....But I am being cared for and loved by Safe Home, I am continuing my education, now I am a grade ten student. I will participate in school final exam next year.

From the beginning my sister didn’t come to Safe Home to meet with me. But nowadays, she has started visiting me at the Safe Home through participating in monthly meetings, this makes me feel happy and encouraged to continue and concentrate in my education properly. My sister works inside the brothel and there is no one in the family to take me back into family. My senior fellows of Safe Home are doing well in their job and education and that has also increased my hope, I want to be self-reliant and have a different life than my elder sister.”





PURNIMA

My mother is investing in land for my future...





“Every person lives with a dream and mine is to continue my study. The Safe Home has been my life since my mother sent me here. My mother is also working towards fulfilling my dream by investing her money in buying a piece of land.

In the early morning our day starts at Safe Home by reciting the Holy Quran. Then we receive tuition from our math tutor. School is a place for both learning and recreation, where we play outdoor games. We enjoy playing cricket on the school playground regardless of whether it is raining or there is bright sunlight. In evening time, Caregivers helps us to prepare home works.”





Purnima's mother and aunt sell food inside the brothel, they saved their earnings and built a house. "We would like to help purnima to finish her education. Besides the Safe Home support, I saved every single coin to secure my daughter's future, I am grateful to Safe Home for the overall services and I always pray for Purnima. I do Hope that she would never regret our relationship due to our profession. I wish her every success....."







RITU



NODI

## The meaning of life...

Ritu lives with her older sister Nodi in the Safe Home. She is 14 years old and loves writing poems:

"I know a little, the meaning of life,  
Life is security, away from a brothel;  
Life is to be educated, to be useful to one's family."



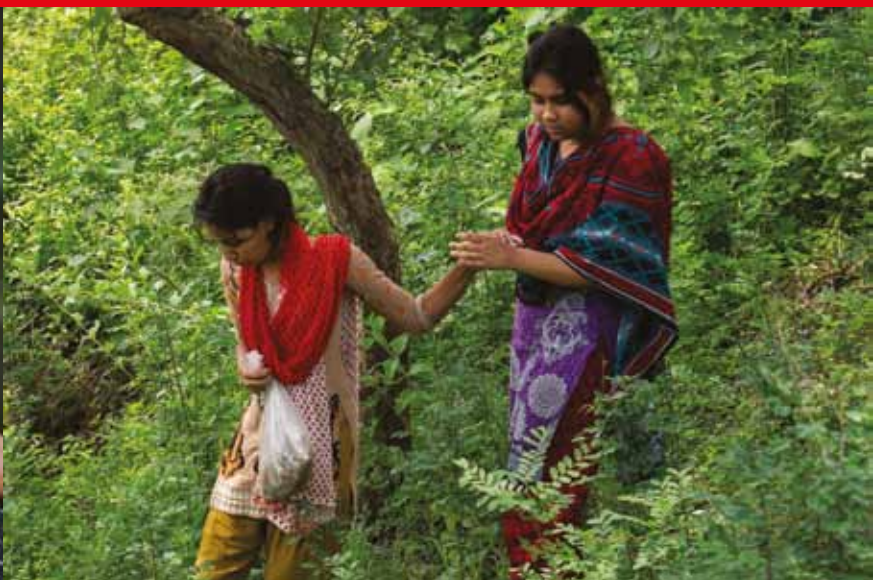


## RUMA

“My day now starts with the recital of prayer and not verbal abuses. I wish for this to be the same for everyone, everywhere.”







# SHOMA

“My name is Shoma, I have been at the Safe Home for nine years. It’s my dream to be a journalist and travel. I would like to be known for my compassion and kindness and not as a child from the brothel.”





MOUSHUMI-A Senior Girl  
Safe Home is like a mother...



“Safe Home is like my mother, it has cared for me and helped me to grow. I dreamt of being part of a happy family with my two brothers and parents. My father is not a very nice person and lives on my mother’s brothel earnings. He refuses to take us to him and he lives with his other family in the village. I am continuing my higher education and living in a private hostel at Goalunda, financed by mother.

In July 2015, I started an independent life in hostel setting like my senior fellows of Safe Home. In my new living place, everyone knows my background as a girl who was brought up in a Safe Home, I have been treated extremely well by my peers. I think of my fellows (senior phased out girls who live independently at Goalunda) good reputation as well as my manners and good behaviors will make my community reintegration smoother.”





SHUROVI  
Bird lover...



“My mother visits me as often as she can. She bought me two pigeons, I now have four. When I leave the Safe Home I will take my birds with me.”

My mother works hard, she has saved her brothel earnings and has bought a small piece of land, we will build a house and live there.”



RINKU

I want to be known by my name...







“I am ready for a new chapter in my life. We have been nourished and cared for in Safe Home for a decade. I completed higher secondary exam and then took admission in National University for higher education. In my family, nobody has access to higher education. I think it never would have been possible if my mother had not enrolled me in Safe Home, when I was only six years old.

Last year, I was extremely busy to complete one year screen printing trade from a renowned vocational training center. Now I am prepared for designing and printing work in readymade garments factory and I am very hopeful about my upcoming independent life.

Now, I can realize that family reintegration for girls living in Safe Home is crucial. We have been living in a cocoon in the Safe Home and it can never make us strong enough to face the world. The process of social inclusion especially in the wider community is challenging, but I think it is essential to have a self-reliant life.

I want to be known by my name, by my work and nothing else. The past is useless. It is time to prove my worth.”



# MOUSHUMI-3

Now I have full time job...





“When I lived in the Safe Home, I had to study hard. My mother lost her earnings, she was cheated by her *Babu* (lover or fake husband who plays the role of a partner) who stole all of her savings and reported her to the police. My mother had to spend three years in prison. At that time, I was totally broke but Safe Home provided me the confidence and courage to fight against my fate. I completed my school final from Goalunda, then I joined a Small Group Home at Gazipur to attend vocational training and also completed higher secondary education. I have joined a full time job in textile section under a group of companies and dreaming to continue my higher education also.”





# AFSANA & IREEN

The girls from inside...





AFSANA

I will be an engineer..

“I am a third year student of my Diploma Engineering course, it will take another one year to complete the course. After completion of my education, I shall find a job and build my career as an engineer. When I will get a good job I shall take my mother with me. I wish my mother can have a peaceful life in her old age. Now my mother is in jail and my first duty is to take initiative to free here. I hope that one day I shall become a worthy citizen of the country. Safe Home made me educated and confident.”





## IREEN

Life is hard, but I am happy for what I have...

“I don’t tell people about my past, I am afraid about their reactions. When I was living inside the brothel, my classmates, community and village children used to bully me; they used to call me names, distanced themselves from me in the streets and in the classrooms. I felt like an outsider. I moved out of the brothel and joined the Safe Home when I was only eight years old. My new life started.....with new routine.....”





“I am now in my final year of electronic engineering at college. The work is very difficult and I spend my whole time studying. My mother used to push me to come and join in the brothel business and stop studying. When I was living in the Safe Home she came and tried to take me away. My determination for higher education and hard work always saved me from joining the brothel business”.

“Life is hard but I am happy for the opportunities that I have been offered. I am looking forward to complete my studies and start a job. I have already applied for internship program and hoping that my performance will be outstanding.”





SHUMI & LUCKY  
We can...



“We work in a factory in Narayanganj, close to our house (Small Group Home). We have been sharing this room for over a year. There are many challenges in day to day life: the long working hours at work and continuing education while being in a job, but on top of everything living outside the Safe Home. However, misdeed and indecent words are not found here as like brothel community. We work so hard that we don’t realize when weekend comes and goes. We earn our money with physical efforts which brings us dignity and makes us unique. When we visit Safe Home during vacation, young girls hear about our daily struggle, they are amazed at what makes us so brave to live outside the Safe Home. I help my mother during her financial crisis and pay my younger sister’s school fees from my earning.” Says Lucky in a very confident voice.





Jesmin Ara, House Mother of Safe Home said, “The transition from the Safe Home to independent life has been a shock but every girl brought up in Safe Home must face this real life challenge. It is the appropriate choice for their future security and for bringing them back into the wider community”





AKHI

Listens and advises...

“Life in the brothel was unbearable, the uncertainty and disgrace touched my thoughts. I am now a counsellor, working for MMS. The work is rewarding and I am able to help many women and children, who come and share their distress and ask for suggestions. I try really hard from my level to do something for them. Community people, adolescent members of Child Club address me as “Counsellor *Apa* (Sister)”. Safe Home helped me to get this professional identity and honor.”





# MUKTI & LOKKHI

Friends in need...



“Many years ago we left the brothel, KKS supported us at the Safe Home. We are now at University and on the way to start our independent lives.”

Both girls are now working, Lokkhi is working as a “House Mother” in the same institution where she was brought up (Safe Home).

“Today my dream has come true – I never thought that one day I will become a staff of Save the Children. The moment I had read the advertisement for the position of Social Worker in the newspaper I took the decision to apply for this post. After applying, when I received the call from Save the Children for written and viva test I became tensed and thought– will I be able to get the opportunity?” Mukti a self-confident young girl shared her achievement of joining as Social Worker in Rajbari Drop in Center of Save the Children.

Mukti and Lokkhi live in same house, Lokkhi’s two year daughter also lives with them. They are able to help each other while also continuing their studies. Their mothers are still working in the brothel.



Mukti’s mother visits her every day with food which she cooks. She tells that when Mukti was only ten years old she was enrolled in Safe Home, now she is a young adult of 22 years old. She shared “If I had not taken this wise decision, I would be considering myself as an irresponsible mother now and would never be able to forgive myself.”





“After I left Safe Home, I got married, I failed to identify a good life partner, he was dependent on drugs, and even he used to visit brothels and would abuse me often. One day he treated me very harshly and I had to be taken to hospital, my mother and Save the Children paid for the medical bills and saved my life. I am separated now and feel happier.”

Two years ago Lokkhi started working as a House Mother at the Safe Home. “Going to visit the brothel was a massive shock. I was fortunate to be able to escape that dark place. I regret going through a bad relationship, but feel happy that I have been able to end that. Life in the brothel is hard, there is no kindness there.”





SABINA ISLAM PUTUL  
Students turned teacher..





I teach at the school that I once attended. I try my best to give the children what I have been deprived of – respect. I encourage the girls to study and to get a good education.



15 years ago, when I was a student I faced a difficult time, the children from the brothel were called names. There were only a handful teachers who received us positively, helped us and made us feel cared for. I feel blessed, that now I am working with one of them, and she is our Headmistress.



“I teach many children whose mothers are living in the brothel, I try my level best to make sure that there is no discrimination among brothel children and children from community or village or wherever. I wish that everyone has equal opportunity.”







ANISA

The paramedic...

“I am one of the first five girls admitted at the very beginning of Safe Home. Before I lived in a room in the brothel where my mother used to work. It was terrifying to be surrounded by unknown clients frequently. I was always scared that my mother would force me into the sex business. I studied hard to escape that unbearable condition. The love and care of the House Mother’s was an amazing gift to me.”



“I am now a Paramedic and in full time employment of the same organization that once cared for me. I visit the brothel to conduct health check-ups and survey on health issues. When I meet my childhood friends, they tell me how lucky I am to be away from the life I was once part of. Some lament with deep signs. Some feel jealous.”





“I am lucky to have found a husband who respects me knowing my past.”





## JESMIN ARA

### Being a second mother...

“I spent my entire life for the girls, I started as a House Mother a decade ago. I have cared for many of them since they were children. I want them to have good lives, and to find happiness, honor and dignity. All children deserve to be treated with respect and equality.”





Monowara Begum  
Tumpa's mother...



“When my daughter was a toddler, I joined Daulatdia brothel with the aim of getting work. I was in great need but failed to identify any dignified job, it was really difficult to find a decent job without education, skills or confidence. My brothel life started. I was introduced to a man who became eventually my *Babu* and I gave birth to Shohag, son of this man.

Tumpa is the daughter from my previous husband. I was able to secure her education and protection through enrolling her into the Safe Home when she was only five years old, that arrangement made me relaxed. I was determined to secure my children’s future; I save money for her besides spending on her education.”







“Tumpa was very tidy from her beginning and a goal oriented child. With the support of Safe Home it was easy for me to rear my girl child, which would have been really difficult inside the brothel. I never had great suffering due to my daughter. I dreamt of escaping from the brothel. I want to live with dignity and honor in the community. When my children grew up, I spent all my deposited money to build a house outside the brothel. Now I am working as a Field Facilitator in PKSF (Palli Karmo Sahayak Foundation), an NGO. I work for HIV prevention, bringing awareness among brothel community about HIV/AIDS. My daughter works as a House Mother besides her education in the Safe Home where she was brought up. My son is also continuing his education. I think my determination and good efforts brought all the positive changes which are completely missing among most of my peers.”





## SHUMI-I

### Goalundo Bazar...

“I lost my first husband when my child was young, he was murdered. I am now married to a classmate, he accepted me even knowing my past. His parents don’t show me kindness, I will never be good in their eyes. My son will never be treated as their grandchild’



“I tried to open a beauty parlour in a rented room but the landlady did not agree. I hold dancing classes, but people do not pay on time. I wish I had studied harder, and completed my exams, if I had a better education I could find a good job with security.”

“I now realise how much the Safe Home meant to me; the safety, security and the love. Life was sweet, but I did not know it”





# BABLY

## A love story turning sour...

“I fell in love with my classmate, we married. The sweetness of romance passed. My husband’s parents will not let me forget my past, they tell me I am an orphan who brought no dowry, they show me little kindness or love.





I dream of continuing my education, of getting a good job so that I can prove my worth.'





## Salma

### The curse of early marriage...

“I was in class five when my mother took me out of the Safe Home to be married. I was so scared. My husband is addicted to drugs, he visits brothels when he wishes. My mother-in-law is abusive at times. My friends from the Safe Home (Munni and Purnina) sometimes visit me on their way to school. We talk about the old days, the games we played and the silly quarrel we used to have.”



# PICNIC... PICNIC...





Quarterly picnic arranged inside the Safe Home, as part of children's recreational activities. On that day children do everything by themselves, they decorate their rooms, hall room, reading room. They go to the local market to buy ingredients for cooking. They cut and slice vegetables, fish, and meat. On that day they cook and other staffs support them but finally they cook by themselves. After cooking the meal, girls serve the food to their teachers and other staffs in the Safe Home. It generates pleasure and affection among children and existing staffs.









For further information, please contact

**Save the Children**

House - CWN (A) 35, Road - 43

Gulshan-2, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

Tel: + 88-02-986 1690-1, Fax: 88-02-9886372

Web: [www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)

