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## From victims to sheroes: women survivors bring hope to their communities

Human trafficking has become the fastest growing crime and the second largest illegal trade in the world, generating over US \$150 billion (more than ₹9500 crores) a year globally, according to a 2014 International Labour Organisation report.

According to UN Women, “Adult women account for almost half of all human trafficking victims detected globally. Women and girls together account for about 70 percent, with girls representing two out of every three child trafficking victims. Women are often trafficked for sex, domestic servitude, forced marriage, and as labourers in the garment industry.” In India, around 27 lakh women are in the trafficking business, with 30,000 women being added to those numbers each year.

It is often the promise of a new job opportunity that lures women and girls away from the safety of their homes and into the dark world of human trafficking.

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found herself at a brothel in Kolkata. At the age of ten, Supriya was raped for the first time. For the next five years she would be sex trafficked until finally, in 2015, Supriya and six other Nepali girls were rescued by the Kolkata police, with the assistance of IJM.

Months after being rescued, Supriya found the courage to take the police back to the brothel where they rescued four more minors. That night Supriya bravely stated, "I want my traffickers to know I am helping the police."

Regardless of the horrific abuse they endure, many of the women rescued from trafficking become leaders in the fight against this brutal crime.

Renu Devi and her husband Raj Kumar were rescued from the kamiya system of customary agricultural bondage, where verbal and physical abuse was considered "normal" and where even her young children were forced to work in the fields. They were finally rescued by the government with assistance from IJM's partner organisation, Justice Ventures International (JVI) in 2014 and just two years later, in 2016, Renu Devi contested for the Panchayat elections in her village...and won.

"I know it is unusual for women in my village to be leaders," she said. "I am thankful and proud to start a new thing. I believe that the future will be different for my village."

Through their strength and fearlessness, female survivors serve as an inspiration to their male counterparts. According to IJM Aftercare Manager, Helen Barnabas, "While some men struggle to overcome addictions that they developed in bondage, women are more resilient because of their family. They want to start fresh. Often it is the women who are the motivation for many men to succeed."

Women rescued from trafficking are overcomers, unafraid to take hold of the opportunities now given to them – opportunities that once seemed like nothing more than a distant dream. Besides their roles as wives and mothers, they have also become leaders and entrepreneurs, empowering their communities as they raise their voices for those unable to speak for themselves.

[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_243201/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_243201/lang--en/index.htm)

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

<http://www.ijmindia.org/node/178>

*\*Name changed to protect identity*