

tearfund



SAHAARA, INDIA

The red light district of Mumbai, India is a dark place. Sahaara are working to bring light and hope to thousands of sex workers and their children.

WHY WE'RE WORKING THERE

Each year in India thousands of people are trafficked. Many end up being forced to work in the country's sex industry.

There are an estimated 3 million sex workers in India who, along with their children, are often victims of physical, sexual and mental abuse, economic oppression and social rejection. Many sex workers have been captured, smuggled and enslaved into prostitution and have little hope of breaking free. Often they have been enticed from their village with offers of jobs and sold into brothels.

Like Kajal, for instance, who was befriended by an older girl whose husband promised her a job.



She left her village with him, unaware of the risks. The man sold her to a brothel where she was beaten and forced into prostitution.

Many of those forced into sex work have no way of escaping, and even if they did, they would have nowhere to go and no skills to help them find another job. It can begin to seem like there is no way out.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Kajal didn't give up. After two years and a dramatic escape through a skylight, she arrived at Sahaara, a Tearfund partner based in Mumbai's red light district. Sahaara are a long term Tearfund partner who work intensively with over 300 women, men, and children each year to give them a way out.

They run drop-in centres in Turbhe and Bhiwandi 'red light' areas, catering to trafficked women or women in prostitution. They build relationships with them, providing medical care and health awareness training as well as vocational guidance and training.

The staff also provide counselling to the women; helping them with their trauma - the drop-in centre is a place where women can come to receive emotional support and feel safe. The women receive spiritual counselling and prayer support. In the event that the women want to leave sex work, the drop-in centre acts as the first safe referral stop before they move out of the area to a safer location.



When she was at the centre, Kajal learnt a special kind of embroidery called Aari, so she would have a livelihood and be able to support herself. She is now a skilled worker, and continues to show great improvement. She has recently learnt Hindi literacy too. Kajal can now travel by herself and is overcoming her past traumas, becoming more expressive. There was much joy as she recently met her sister for the first time in 12 years.

PROJECT IMPACT

The team at Sahaara help the sex workers of Mumbai and their children in a number of ways:

Spiritual growth: Having suffered terrible abuse, women trafficked into prostitution often have no self-esteem or self-worth. Participation in cell meetings, one-to-one prayer meetings and foundational Christian courses begins to give them back their identity.

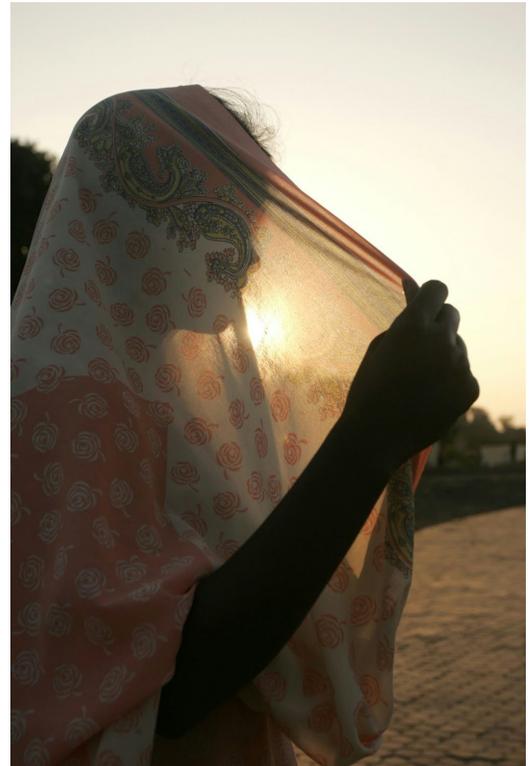
Medical care: This project provides sex workers and their children with education on hygiene, basic health and HIV awareness as well as providing a doctor and facilitating testing for HIV/AIDS.

Skills Training: Being knowledgeable of a trade not only gives these women an avenue to help themselves out of desperate poverty and abuse but also boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

Education: Teaching sex workers how to read and write in Hindi enables them to become more independent. This project also provides education for their children of sex workers so that they can go to mainstream schools.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

- £3960 will pay the salary of Sahaara's Youth Mentor, who looks after children who have dropped out of school or who are vulnerable because of their traumatic upbringing
- £825 will pay for visits to a medical clinic for 100 women and 60 children
- £132 will pay for health classes for 210 women and children in the red light district, teaching them how to look after themselves
- £110 will pay for educational materials like books and pencils for 130 children



JOIN US

With your help we can give sex workers hope of a future free of abuse and neglect, restoring their self-esteem by building relationships with them and offering them life changing care and training.