Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors in Nepal

Dhungel, Rita

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Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors in Nepal

by

Rita Dhungel

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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ABSTRACT

The United Nations has recognized trafficking of girls and women for sexual exploitation as a most serious global social issue that requires attention from national and international communities. While the most focus has been on prevention of trafficking, protection, and reintegration of survivors has never become a priority for the Government of Nepal and the community as a whole, making their lives vulnerable to socio-economic marginalization. Previous studies emphasize that the challenges for reintegration can be influenced by the various forms of structural inequality, such as poverty, discriminatory gender practice and stigma.

Within the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of programs with a focus on reintegration, mostly initiated by nongovernmental and not-for profit agencies in partnership with the Government of Nepal, however research in this area is limited. In particular, there is a need was identified for a study to construct knowledge on the term ‘successful’ reintegration for trafficking survivors and their own roles for ending the violence against them.

This dissertation used a participatory action research as an emancipatory methodology grounded in a collective and solidarity approach with an intersectionality analysis to engage eight trafficking survivors as co-researchers/peer researchers, in Kathmandu, Nepal. Through a process of action-reflection-action, the peer researchers collectively chose and used a number of liberatory methods including peer interviews, photovoice and solidarity group meetings for both knowledge generation and some collective actions, including a press conference, educational campaigns (workshops/interactive discussions and street dramas) and writing a letter of recommendations for the policy makers.

The study provided the co-researchers with opportunities to advance their leadership role and address reintegration issues that the group identified by the group. The peer researchers were
significantly involved in analyzing data and an Onion method was used to critically analyze what successful reintegration means. The study found the key challenges faced by survivors in their reintegration and they include: gender oppression, systemic enablers of oppression, social and religious exclusion and microaggressive behaviors. The study further identified the cumulative negative impacts of these reintegration issues on survivors including biological and physical trauma, emotional and psychological trauma, behavioral trauma, cognitive trauma and social trauma.

Based upon what was learned in this study, an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model was developed that reflects a multi-layered and multi-faceted approach to promote reintegration of survivors. The emergence of a survivors-led action group, Community-based Action Research Group, was an important action outcome of the research. This study contributes to the exploration of new and potentially liberatory ways to address reintegration issues and promote transformative impacts.
In 2004, as an anthropologist, I had an opportunity to conduct an ethnographic study on “the experiences of trafficked women being in brothels in India”. The goal of the study was to explore the issues and problems of the women in Delhi and hear their frequently silenced voices. I visited more than 40 brothels in Delhi. Visiting those places and talking to the women, particularly those from Nepal, provided me with opportunities to become connected to the women and explore their experiences of being in brothels. In the beginning, I entered the study in a bit of a contradictory position as both an “outsider” and simultaneously a Nepalese woman. I realized the complexities of my multiple positionalities and attempted to place myself as an “insider” by speaking them in Nepali languages and letting them know that I was also from Nepal. This changed the dynamic of our conversations as they were very friendly and open to talk more. For instance, the women who had told me five minutes ago they were happy in brothels as they were making money and also sending money to their families in Nepal, asked me with eyes full of tears to take them with me. While we were talking in our own language, the madam of the brothel got suspicious and asked me what language we were speaking. Once she found that I was also from Nepal, she became very upset and immediately asked me to leave the brothel and sadly, I left the building with my eyes full of tears. While I was leaving, the women said, “Didi (sister), when will you come to take us from here?” I indeed felt very helpless, hopeless and of course vulnerable. I was angry then. I still am now. However, while their voices are still echoing in my ears, I have never gone back to the brothels to help them out.

This made me question what benefits the women got from providing me the information. What benefits had they received for their time and help? I truly wanted to improve their lives – but was this the case? This powerful experience made me angry at the unjust society and oppressive
culture but this elevated my social justice aspirations towards the ending of structural violence. The result was a promise to myself to get involved in social justice inquiries in the future (Personal Reflective Journal, 2007).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge traditional Blackfoot territory and land of the Treaty 7 people, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuu T’ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. This is the land upon which I have studied and lived, and where I submit this dissertation.

My gratitude to the Community-based Action Research Group, eight co-researchers for making this research possible. The level of the group’s participation and their collective actions are greatly appreciated.

My sincere appreciation for Shakti Samuha for their support in coordinating and hosting a meeting with potential co-researchers and supporting them to come to the research meetings during the week days. Shakti Samuha also provided a meeting space and tea for our research meetings, which is much appreciated.


A special thank you to the supporters and friends who contributed to this study: Earl Raaz, Dilli Joshi, Timothy Wild, Umesh Khadka, Udvasika Puri, Uddhav Puri, Nishan Shrestha, Bhagwoti Sangraoula, Nayen Adhikari, and the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare, Sukra Secondary School, Laliguras High School, Kathmandu University, and Chelsea International Academy in Nepal.

My appreciation for other members of My Community (mental health advisers, cooks, bakers, technical supporters, confidents): Susan Ramsundarsingh, Liza Lorenzetti, Ruska Adhikari, Auska Adhikari, Earl Raaz, Andrea Newbury, Stasha Huntingford, Sheba Rahim, Christine Walsh, Lemlem Haile, Doug Murphy, Uma Aryal, Nirmal Parajuli, Pinki Thapa, Sakuntala Palak, Marina Pant, Nayan Adhikari.

I appreciate the Research Project Funding: Open Doctoral Scholarship, Graduate Students Travel Grant, University of Calgary.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father (Dai), Dhruba Nath Dhungel, who was always my inspiration. His compassion and generosity made him a memorable human being to our family and relatives. My father became very excited when he learnt that I enrolled in the doctoral program at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary and he gave me his blessings for my success in this new adventure. My father knew that pursuing doctoral education in Canada was my dream since my childhood. My father was very exhilarated when I called and advised him that I would be coming to Nepal for my research and staying with them for a year. I know my father was incredibly proud of me for this study plan. He was not expressive in sharing his feelings and love, but it was demonstrated when he started telling this study plan to all. My father was counting the days for me to come, and unfortunately, in the meantime, his health deteriorated and he passed away in August 30, 2011. Although my father’s physical body is no longer with us, I can sense his presence within me and around me – this gives me peace and happiness - and more inspiration to work on this social justice path.

Thank you Dai for your great guardianship and continued support to make me who I am today.
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Personal Transformation

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Emotional and Psychological Trauma

Biological and Physical Trauma

Microaggressive Behaviours

Microassaultive behaviours

Use of derogatory language

Hidden demonstrations of rejection

Exoticization and objectification

Microinsultive behaviours

Assumptions of ignorance and inferiority

Assumptions of personal life

Microinvalidation behaviours

Dismissal of feelings and experiences

Assumptions of poor abilities and skills

Section III: Cumulative Negative Impacts on Survivors

Biological and Physical Trauma

Emotional and Psychological Trauma

Behavioural Trauma

Cognitive Trauma

Social Trauma

Section IV: Transformational Changes

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Personal transformation for peer researchers

Collective knowledge creation

Bonded social capital

Skills development:

Transferable skills

Technical skills

Interpersonal skills

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<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CREPS</td>
<td>Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoWCSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization/not-for-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Trafficking in Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVPA</td>
<td>Trafficking Victims Protection Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<td>YRTEP</td>
<td>Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>WOREC</td>
<td>Women’s Rehabilitation Center</td>
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EPIGRAPH

“I was very worried about my past, it made me feel afraid and constantly think what would happen if other people came to know my reality, but now I am a different person - this study helped me understand it was not my fault - I don’t feel shame anymore! I don’t care if my family finds out my past. If someone says something against me, I have an answer for everybody.”

(One of the Co-researchers)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Trafficking is a global phenomenon from which “no nation is exempt” (Hodge & Lietz, 2007, p. 163). Human trafficking is an increasingly complex social issue in this global society (Cree, 2008; Huda, 2006; Winterdyk, Perrin, & Reichel, 2012), drawing the attention of the United Nations (UN) and the international community (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Piper, 2005; Skeldon, 2000; Troubnikoff, 2003; Winterdyk, Perrin, & Reichel, 2012). Statistics on human trafficking are difficult to obtain, although the United States Department of State (2011) estimated that one million people are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide, of which 70 to 80 percent are female and approximately half are under the age of 18. Among all females trafficked, approximately 60 percent are forced into commercial sexual exploitation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2012) estimated that approximately 20.9 million people are victims of forced labour globally, with 18.7 million (90%) exploited in the private economy by individuals or enterprises. Out of these, 4.5 million (22%) are victims of forced sexual exploitation and 14.2 million (68%) are subjected to forced labour exploitation in economic activities such as agriculture, construction, domestic work and manufacturing. The remaining 2.2 million (10%) are exploited in state-imposed forms of forced labour, such as “in prison under conditions which contravene ILO standards on the subject, or in work imposed by the state military or by rebel armed forces” (p. 2). Overall, estimates of the numbers of people trafficked each year vary due to the obvious difficulties in obtaining accurate data on human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Smith and Kangaspunta (2012) argued “slavery has a long history throughout the world. Its occurrence is recorded as early as 539 BC and was not completely illegalized until the late 1900s” (p. 20). While slavery is considered an ancient form of human rights violation, the
antislavery movement emerged to promote human rights (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2017). Smith and Kangaspunta (2012) reported “The early United Nations was formed as a result of human rights against slavery” (p. 21). Quirk (2007) affirmed, “In the aftermath of the cold war, the antislavery agenda has been increasingly dominated by the issue of human trafficking” (p. 181). Although human trafficking existed in the mid-nineteenth century, the issue “exploded into the public consciousness” only in the beginning of the 21st century (Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanik, 2005, p. vii). With heightened international recognition of the recruitment of women and children into the sex trade as a form of human rights violation (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003; Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2005), the UN has put sex trafficking prevention on its agenda (Huda, 2006). It is at the center of discussion within academia and popular culture, and also a major priority for many countries, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International NGOs (INGOs) (Richardson, Poudel, & Laurie, 2009).

Samarasinghe and Burton (2007) posited that the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation can be viewed as “the darker side of globalization” (p. 51). Sex trafficking has globalized. In many cases, for instance, a young girl is recruited in one country, sold and traded in another country, and delivered to other destinations (Hodge & Lietz, 2007). The UN has assessed the regional trends of international trafficking by classifying them into the nations of origin, transit, and destination (Troubnikoff, 2003). Women and children are trafficked mostly from developing countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, through Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, and then to destination countries of the industrialized world such as Italy, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Greece, and Thailand (McCabe, 2008; U.S. Department of State, 2006).
The largest number of trafficked women and children are from Asia, representing nearly half of the overall world total (Troubnikoff, 2003). The issue of trafficking of women and children has become a serious concern in Asia (Huda, 2006; McCabe, 2008). Additionally, Crawford and Kaufman (2010) claimed that South Asia, including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan and Nepal, is one of the most vulnerable regions for human trafficking in Asia. Over the last decade, the issue of trafficking of women in South Asia has become acknowledged as a human rights violation and is a topic of national and international discussions (Cameron & Newman, 2008). Human trafficking of Nepalese women has also been given considerable attention in the public sphere since 1990 (Cameron & Newman, 2008). One significant piece was the Times of India 1989 report of 100,000 Nepali women working in brothels (Ghimire, 1997). Later reports re-emphasized these early findings, showing that Nepal has one of the highest number of sex trafficked women and children in South Asia (Troubnikoff, 2003; U.S. Department of State, 2006).

Nepal is now well-known as a source country for sex trafficking, especially of women and children (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagain, 2009; Parker, 2012; Sharma, 2014; U. S. Department of State, 2016). However, researchers have largely been unable to gain accurate replicable numbers of sex trafficked women and girls in Nepal since trafficking is an illegal activity and done secretively (Buet, Bashford, & Basnyat, 2012; Frederick, Basnyat, & Aguettant, 2010). An International Labour Organization report (Crawford & Kaufman, 2010) estimated that in 2001, 5,000 to 7,000 thousand Nepalese women and girls were trafficked to Indian brothels. A study ten years later, the Human Trafficking Assessment Tool Report of the American Bar Association (2011), estimated that 5,000 to 15,000 Nepalese women and girls are trafficked annually to India for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Ali (2005) put the annual figure at 30,000
Nepalese women and girls who are trafficked globally for this purpose. Despite these statements, the authors reported that “no further research has been conducted to validate those figures” (Buet, Bashford, & Basnyat, 2012).

Arguably, the 1950 treaty between Nepal and India which established an open border between the two countries, Nepal India Treaty 2050 has contributed to the growing numbers of women and children being trafficked from Nepal (Richardson, Poudel, & Laurie, 2009; Sharma, 2014; Simkhada, 2008). Further, Frederick, Basnyat, and Aguettant (2010) identified the rise of new markets in new destination countries beyond India—notably Korea, Japan, Thailand, China, and countries of the Middle East—and a rise in domestic trafficking for labour purposes, mainly in restaurants and massage parlors.

Important to understanding sex trafficking of Nepalese women and girls is the subjective experiences of those who are directly impacted. Currently, the literature is limited and at times contradictory in providing concrete knowledge on both the trafficking experience, and the struggles of those who leave or are emancipated, and attempt to repatriate back to their home country in the Nepalese context. Buet, Bashford and Basnyat (2012) conducted an in-depth review of an India government operation that removed 484 trafficked women from the red-light areas of Mumbai in February 1996. Looking specifically at the 238 women who identified themselves as Nepali, the study noted that three died in the remand homes in Mumbai where the women were first taken and treated very badly. A further 32 Nepalese escaped from these homes and 75 chose not to return to Nepal. Of the 128 women who were repatriated back to Nepal after five months, only 50 percent were reunited with their families after they returned to Nepal. More simply put, in this instance, only 64 of 238 women were reunited with their families. The results of this operation put many questions onto the research agenda of academia, NGOs and INGOs.
Can trafficking survivors be reintegrated to the Nepalese society? And if so, how? Under what conditions?

Nepal has demonstrated significant anti-trafficking efforts by developing national plans, laws, and policies, and a variety of approaches including preventive and protective measures such as the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Trafficking in Women and Children 2012, and Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act 2007. However, most intervention models adopt a welfare approach that focus on prevention but do not adequately address the needs of trafficking survivors, specifically reintegration into families, communities, and society (Buet, Bashford, & Basnyat, 2012; Chaulagai, 2009; Chen & Marcovici, 2003; Frederick, 2005; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Sharma, 2014). Studies of survivors’ struggles with reintegration and ongoing social exclusion suggested that limited attention paid to these issues by government decision-making and policy formulation processes is a major factor (McNeill, 2008; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007; Sharma, 2014). What exactly governments should do in the social service sector remains unclear; however, a number of studies asserted the need for further study focused on reintegration of trafficking survivors (Adhikari, 2011; Buet, Bashford, & Basnyat, 2012; Chaulagai, 2009; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Locke, 2010, McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). This dissertation explores this gap by providing insights into how female Nepalese trafficking survivors experience reintegration and what successful reintegration means to them.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The study was designed to employ participatory action research (PAR) as an emancipatory research methodology for the exploration of how female adult trafficking survivors perceive reintegration after returning to Nepal from India.
The research aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To engage, build relationships, and work with trafficking survivors through praxis;
2. To explore collective voices of trafficking survivors associated with intersectional oppressions in reintegration;
3. To promote transformational and experiential learning opportunities for survivors and the student researcher;
4. To achieve transformational changes;
5. To underscore the gaps and construct knowledge in the limited body of literature on reintegration of trafficking survivors;
6. To develop an emerging theoretical practice model for reintegration of adult female sex trafficking survivors, specifically in Nepal but perhaps more widely applicable.

The purpose and objectives outlined above provided the researcher with a preliminary organizing framework to help begin the study. However, given the participatory imperatives and evolutionary nature of the work, as the inquiry proceeded, the participants were provided with opportunities to develop other research objectives that they wanted to explore and develop collective actions in response to their knowledge and aspirations. For instance, when participants expressed their interest in learning more about participatory research methods such as photovoice, peer interviews, and conversation cafe, and strengthening their knowledge in performative actions including street dramas, press conferences, and meeting with government officials, the following additional objectives emerged:

7. To develop facilitation and interviewing skills of survivors;
8. To build knowledge of the photovoice method and its application;
9. To explore collective experiences towards understanding socially constructed root causes of trafficking of women and children;

10. To explore the health implications of reintegration challenges faced by trafficking survivors.

Research Design and Setting

Research Methodology

The research design was created based on the study’s purpose and objectives developed by the student researcher. Given the nature of my purpose and objectives, PAR as a community-based research was used for knowledge creation. PAR originates from the “action research” of Kurt Lewin, an American social psychologist at the Center for Group Dynamics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, USA, in 1946 (McTaggart, 1997). Kurt Lewin suggested that by working with those who practice in a field to generate information and knowledge through actions, transformative impacts will be achieved. Action research is the way in which groups of people can organize the conditions under which they can learn from their own experience and make this experience accessible to others.

By engaging in a co-operative inquiry with participants, PAR minimizes the distance between participants and researchers and promotes group dynamics (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). In PAR, the subject-object relationship of traditional research is transformed into a more democratic subject-subject relationship through critical dialogues (Fals-Borda, 1988; Herr & Anderson, 2005). More importantly, this process changes the traditional role of the researcher from the “objective” external researcher to a “committed” co-investigator or facilitator, and the customary participant role as “informant” to “co-researcher” in the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
Recruitment Criteria

I utilized purposive sampling aimed to recruit individuals who were knowledgeable and experienced with the issues being investigated (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). The use of a combination of purposive sampling strategies can enhance the credibility of an investigation (Patton, 2002). For this study, criterion sampling and convenience sampling were used for the recruitment of participants. In fact, I had chosen a combination of maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling for the recruitment of participants prior to beginning this study, however, once I met the potential participants for the first time at an orientation session, I came to recognize that to use maximum variation sampling for this study would be a challenge. Further in this section, I discuss how I switched from maximum variation sampling to convenience sampling.

Criterion sampling is a sampling strategy that selects participants for a study who meet some criterion. This provides a direction to a researcher for the sampling recruitment and also limits the researcher’s biases regarding the selection of participants (Patton, 2002). Upon using this strategy, a researcher cannot select a participant if they do not meet a certain criterion and therefore, this sampling strategy provides everyone who fits within the criterion with an equal opportunity to participate in this study.

Maximum variation sampling involves achieving a wide range of variation on dimensions of the population from which the sample is to be taken (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009). This sampling method captures a great diversity of sampling populations and also provides high quality and detailed description of each individual. For the purpose of this study, I had attempted to maximize sample variation in the areas of ethnicity, religion, marital status, age, education, employment and the amount of time participants spent in and out of rehabilitation shelters.
However, I found it was a significant challenge to achieve diversity for small samples and to find trafficking survivors who had variations in different areas, especially for a PAR study. Therefore, I used convenience sampling which allowed me to recruit all the participants who worked one of the anti-trafficking agencies, Shakti Samuha, and attended an information session and expressed their interests to be a part of the inquiry process. For the purpose of the study, female trafficking survivors were invited to participate in an information session of the study who met the following criteria:

- Were 18 years or older;
- Had been trafficked to India for sexual trade;
- Had returned from India to Nepal;
- Were currently living in a shelter (rehabilitation center) for more than two months or used to live in the shelter in Kathmandu after they returned from India.

Qualitative research focuses on the richness of the data rather than quantity and so there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), especially in PAR. Rather, the degree of participation was given greater priority (Cornwall, 1996; Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Eight participants were recruited and consented to the study. The research design and methodology is presented in depth in Chapter Three.

**Data Creation Process/Methods**

Smith, Willms and Johnson (1997) pointed out that participatory researchers should choose the methods of data collection and analysis that are grounded in the context and issues of the community for which the research will be based upon. Therefore, this study was primarily focused on the issues identified and the actions developed by the participant group. Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) suggested using the term “data creation or generation” instead of the term
“data collection” in PAR as this allows both researchers and co-researchers to get involved in a meaningful way in a knowledge creation process. By adopting the framework developed by Cornwall (1996), this study centered on research with and by, rather than research on, people. This study, for example, promoted transformational/learning opportunities with a vision that the women would take a shared responsibility and an ownership of this study. One example was when I introduced predetermined data collection methods that had been used in previous PAR studies (e.g., semi-structured individual interviews, participants’ discussions, photovoice) and the group spent an enormous amount of time to understand these methods and their applications in our study.

The group identified some new methods such as a poetry and a personal diary that they were more comfortable with for our study. In addition, the group also got involved in action/activities such as educational campaigns and a press conference. Overall, by recognizing the goal and objectives of the study, the women collectively decided to use the following methods for this inquiry: (1) solidarity group meetings; (2) peer interviews; (3) photovoice; (4) interviews with stakeholders; (5) daily diaries; (6) poetry; (7) reading newspapers; (8) semi-structured individual interviews; and (9) educational campaigns (interactive sessions (presentation and conversation café), street dramas, educational posters and evaluations with audiences of street dramas). However, as we went through the inquiry process, some co-researchers did not feel comfortable with two methods (writing daily diaries and reading newspapers) for a variety of reasons that will be presented in Chapter Four. Solidarity group meetings were primarily used for praxis purposes, action-reflection-action however this also expanded the horizon of critical analysis on structural violence and oppression, especially violence against women. Overall, the study was conducted from November 2013 to June 2014.
Applications of those methods in knowledge construction process and collective liberatory intentions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

It must be noted that all the data creation methods were used as vehicles for meaningful dialogues in this study, which provided the participants with an opportunity to develop their critical knowledge related to structural barriers for their reintegration. More importantly, this process also helped participants to identify issues in their reintegration and to develop performative actions for transformative change. In addition, I kept a reflective journal and field notes on every solidarity group meeting and individual interview as suggested by Johnson and Christensen (2012). I followed Coleman and Unrau’s (1996) suggestion and added pauses, laughing and crying to the transcripts of focus groups and face-to-face interviews to provide as much meaning as possible to the transcript. Furthermore, I captured data on how collective actions such as street dramas and conversation cafes impacted the perceptions of communities around trafficking survivors through evaluation forms distributed at the events, as discussed in Chapter Four.

**Data analysis process/tools.** The process of data analysis began simultaneously with data creation and interpretation, following the suggestion of Boakye (2007). All tape-recorded interviews and participants’ group discussions were transcribed in Nepali and then translated into English. In collaboration with the co-researchers, the transcripts were analyzed in the first phase to identify, verify, and clarify themes to ensure they reflected participants’ views. The second phase of analysis included detailed reviewing of data from the reflective journal and semi-structured individual interviews. Data was analyzed in such a way that themes and interpretations emerged from the process, addressing the original research question and objectives (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). However, I did not invite the co-researchers to participate in analyzing the data
gathered from semi-structured individual interviews. This is because the participants had clearly stated that they did not feel comfortable sharing their personal interviews with other participants. As such, the interview transcripts were not shared to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. Overall, data analysis took place in a participatory way at different stages so the women could validate and provide feedback on the themes they identified from the research process. Data creation and analyzing processes are presented in-depth in Chapter Four.

Data analysis methods adhered to the requirements of the data creation method decided by the co-researchers. The co-researchers were significantly involved in the data analyzing process through coding and categorizing the data (see Chapter Four). Through the analysis process, co-researchers developed themes in a number of specific areas such trafficking of women and girls, reintegration of trafficking survivors, cumulative impacts of reintegration issues faced by survivors as discussed in Chapter Five.

In addition to the data analysis method implemented in this research the Onion method (Prah & Yeaboh, 2011) was used to create an emerging reintegration model (see Chapter Five). The Onion method has been used as a tool of analysis by many groups to understand dynamics which are at play in contexts of conflict (Ardón, n.d.; Best, 2006; Prah & Yeaboh, 2011). The process is “based on a metaphor of an onion whose layers are gradually peeled back, first those that area readily visible, then the hidden protected inner section. This tool helps uncover the hidden elements that are at the core of resolving a conflict-people’s deeply felt needs” (Ardón, n.d., para 6). The Onion method speaks to three layers of knowledge including needs (what we need), interest (what we want), and position (what we say what we want) (Conflict Analysis Tools, n.d.; Prah & Yeaboh, 2011). A facilitator can also use this tool to facilitate dialogues
between groups that are in conflict, or during post-conflict reconstruction to ensure the needs of both parties are fully understood (Ardón, n.d.).

In order to depict trafficking survivors’ insights on successful reintegration in the same manner as they shared in group and in individual interviews, I modified the original terminology used for the layers to centralize the self-empowerment of the co-researchers. The “needs”, “interest”, and “position” layers were renamed “human rights”, “environment”, and “demands” respectively. Indeed, these layers reflect the inner strength and uncompromising stands of trafficking survivors, and clarifies what successful reintegration means to them. I then asked the group to verify if this analysis captured our group discussions and the knowledge that we gathered from this research. The analysis of the Onion method is presented in-depth in Chapter Five.

**Study Assumptions**

This study was primarily grounded in the following components:

1. Co-researchers/Peer researchers: The survivors who were involved in the process of this study with transformative capacities are known as co-researchers or peer researchers. The degree of their participation increased a shared responsibility and accountability during the process of the study.

2. Power Dynamics: From the beginning of this study, my efforts to promote group dynamics and promote equitable power with co-researchers allowed them to engage in meaningful critical discussions. Power was shifted from the student researcher to co-researchers as we went through the process of PAR, with limitations, which are discussed in the Chapter Four.
3. Praxis/Dialoigcal process: In this critical inquiry process, praxis as a tool or a vehicle was employed to develop transformative dialogues and dialectical interactions among the student researcher and co-researchers for collective knowledge creation and transformative impacts.

4. Social Justice-oriented: As a social worker, my social justice aspirations and ethical stance against oppressions and structural human rights violations led me to move to a social justice inquiry path for transformative impacts. I moved to “a social justice-oriented approach…. that recognizes the dynamic interplay of group work, research, and community change” as described by Jacobson and Rugeley (2007, p. 21).

5. Solidarity Team: This inquiry promoted solidarity among the research group and subsequent a solidarity team was formed which moved beyond the student researcher and co-researchers to allies including editorialists, police officials, teachers, political leaders and business people who were similarly interested in collective liberations.

A Note on Language Used

Readers should note that the following key words have been used interchangeably throughout this dissertation, mainly in the first and second chapters: Sex trafficking, trafficking for sexual exploitation, trafficking for sex slavery, trafficking for the sex trade, trafficking for the sex industry and trafficking for prostitution.

In order to promote and underscore the strength and courage of the co-researchers, the term “survivors” is used throughout this dissertation. The terms woman/women, co-researchers team/group, peer researchers team/group and survivors are used interchangeably to reference the women who experienced sex trafficking and who participated in praxis.
Solidarity group, solidarity team and research team all refer to the same group of people—the researcher and the peer researchers. More importantly, during the process of praxis, the solidarity group selected a name, “Community-based Action Research Group” and then they used this name throughout the entire research period. In order to eliminate confusion, readers should note that participants refer to those: who the co-researchers interviewed and they are called stakeholders in this paper, the people who participated educational campaigns such as conversation cafe, interactive sessions and street dramas.

**Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation is structured into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter is the Literature Review (Chapter Two), which review studies on human trafficking for sexual exploitation with a focus on Nepal. Theoretical underpinnings and methodology discourse together with data creation methods and data analysis processes will be captured in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will discuss the process outcomes of the study and substantive outcomes will be presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Six provides the discussion, limitations, and conclusion.

The project and the issues this study addresses are very important. It is incredibly critical to acknowledge co-researchers for their knowledge and wisdom and the time they invested in this study. By recognizing the fact that there is no one correct way to structure or organize a liberatory/PAR dissertation, and it is not unusual for these to be a bit on the lengthy side, the Chapters, mostly Chapter Four and Five are fabricated to capture all key discussions, activities and collective actions from the study period.
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to: (1) critically understand the issues of trafficking of women and children and reintegration of trafficking survivors; (2) examine current anti-trafficking approaches with a focus on reintegration policies and programs; and (3) identify and analyze gaps in the literature on reintegration faced by survivors and its implications for further studies on their reintegration. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section assesses the two most influential international protocols and frameworks for the elimination of sex trafficking and international agreements for anti-trafficking interventions. The second section provides an overview of Nepal with a focus on demography and socio-political conditions. The third section reviews the studies of human trafficking including causal factors of trafficking of women and the current practices of anti-trafficking interventions in Nepal. Finally, the last section concludes by exploring reintegration issues experienced by another vulnerable group to examine whether there are any learnings that could enhance an understanding of reintegration more generally.

Section I: International Protocols and Frameworks

The section examines a commonly accepted definition of human trafficking and also discusses the two most influential international frameworks for the elimination of sex trafficking - the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and the United States’ Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) - both established in 2000. In addition, a review of selected international conventions and conferences related to human rights and human trafficking, which are designed to encourage nations to develop and implement their own anti-trafficking national policies and legislation, will be presented.
Defining Human Trafficking

Historically, human trafficking was defined as the trade of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation. More recently, human trafficking has been defined more broadly to include other types of force, fraud, or coercion beyond commercial sexual exploitation (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Attempts are now being made to develop more widely accepted definitions. For instance, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000) defined human trafficking as:

…the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbourings or receipt of person, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (p. 2)

Similarly, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2000) defines trafficking as “the moving, selling or buying of women and children for prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking” (p. 51). This official definition of trafficking has facilitated each nation in South Asia to develop plans, policies and approaches as means to curb trafficking.

Human trafficking occurs in a number of sectors including agriculture, entertainment, forced labour, removal of organs, and sexual exploitation. This study focused on the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation which is also known as sex trafficking. Trafficking for sexual
exploitation entails the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of commercial sex acts made by force, fraud, or coercion or a person is forced to perform such acts. This refers to prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sex tourism (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Overall, the United States government’s definition of sexual trafficking consists of two categories: persons forced, deceived, or coerced into sex work; and persons under the age of 18 induced to perform a commercial sexual act. Although the areas of their involvement varied from brothels and streets to pornography, for the purpose of this study, the term “sexual trafficking” encompasses the movement of women from Nepal to India for sex trade with the use of physical coercion, deception, and fraud. While this is the focus of my literature review, recognizing my need to understand and broaden my knowledge on the experiences of trafficking survivors for other labour purposes, such as domestic work, war, and agriculture, I also review selected studies on programs and services available for former child soldiers in their reintegration later in this chapter.

**International Frameworks and Agreements for Anti-Trafficking Interventions**

Recognizing that the current practices of human trafficking and existing laws were inadequate to combat trafficking and bring traffickers to justice, the United States Congress passed the TVPA of 2000 and the UN established the TIP (2000) with a goal to address the issue of trafficking by a joint effort from every source, transit, and destination country (Kaye & Winterdyk, 2012; Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2005). By October 2014, TIP had been signed by 184 countries including both source and destination countries. The TIP is an important tool that facilitates international cooperation. The countries that sign and ratify the Protocol are
required to make a commitment to prevent trafficking and protect its many victims (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

The United States defined a set of minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking through TVPA. Subsequent Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Acts of 2003, 2005, and 2008 offer a framework for current and future anti-trafficking efforts, both worldwide and domestically in the United States. It addresses prevention of trafficking, protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, and prosecution and punishment of traffickers, known as the “3 Ps”. Although US anti-trafficking policy has long emphasized the 3 Ps, the Trafficking in Persons Report (2006) introduced a new focus on the “3 Rs”—rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims—to focus more on the protection of trafficking survivors in both source and destination countries (U.S. Department of State, 2006, 2011).

In addition to the TIP and TVPA, some binding and non-binding international conventions guide governments on how to address aspects of trafficking in persons, such as the UN Conventions for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, and Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery (1957). Further, other relevant treaties focusing on human rights are crucial components of developing, exploring, and arriving a multi-faceted solution to combat trafficking especially trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation including the Conventions of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2004). Additionally, the Vienna Conference (2008) reported the need for comprehensive strategies to combat sex trafficking by focusing on the implementation of relevant anti-trafficking laws and the creation of national laws adapted to
international anti-trafficking standards (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Together, these various acts support a multifaceted approach to anti-trafficking interventions, including prevention, prosecution and protection. In fact, by complying with international laws and conventions, many countries such as India and Nepal have developed anti-trafficking policies and legislation (at least to some degrees) that have led to the development of a range of programs and approaches for the elimination of trafficking. In order to recognize socio-political situation of Nepal, which makes sex trafficked women from Nepal particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, I present the overview of Nepal in the proceeding section, before I embark to the discussion of the issues of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation and their reintegration in Nepal.

Section II: Overview of Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia, bordered to the north by China and to the south, east, and west by India. It spans an area of 147,181 square kilometers and has a total population of approximately 27 million people. Nepal is divided into three geographical regions: the Southern Terai (Plains), the Central Highland (Hills), and High Himalayan Mountains (Mountains). About one-half of the population resides in the Plains bordering on India, with the remainder living in the Hills and Mountain regions (Nepal Census, 2012).

According to the 2011 census, 65.9 percent of the total population is literate; the male literacy rate is 62.7 percent whereas the female literacy rate is 34.9 percent (Nepal Census, 2012). The census estimated that there are approximately 102 castes (Brahmin, Chhetri and Vaishya) and ethnic groups (Rai, Limbu, Gurung, etc.). There are 92 different living languages spoken in Nepal; 80.6 percent of the population speak Nepali as a national language followed by Tharu (5.8 percent) and Tamang (5.1 percent). Religion is very important to Nepalese people; Hinduism is practiced by 80.62 percent of the population, followed by Buddhism at 10.74
percent, 4.2 percent Muslim, 3.6 percent Kirant/Yumaist, 0.45 percent Christian, and 0.4 percent other religions or no religion (Nepal Census, 2012).

The economy in Nepal is dominated by agriculture; 66 percent of the total population is agro-based and contributes about 34.7 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (http://www.doanepal.gov.np/). In addition, tourism is the second largest industry in Nepal as it is the source of foreign exchange and revenue generation. A large number of natural and cultural heritage sites attract tourists including mountaineers, trekkers, and pilgrims (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Nepal).

Nepal is currently governed by the Constitution of Nepal, which came into effect on September 20, 2015, replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007 (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015). According to the Constitution, “rights of gender and sexual minorities are protected with provisions of special laws and this clearly states that women shall have equal ancestral rights without any gender-based discrimination” (Section 18). This element of women’s rights was not new to this Constitution as it was also in the Interim Constitution of 2007. However, studies reported that despite the constitution’s guarantee of equality between men and women, women still have a subordinate position within the society in practice. Women primarily depend upon the social and economic positions of their husbands and fathers, perpetuating a patriarchal paradigm that facilitates gender-based discriminatory practice in family, society and political realms (Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008). Aengst (2001) highlighted, “the lack of economic alternatives for girls and ingrained cultural beliefs regarding gender roles make young girls particularly vulnerable to trafficking” (p. 5).
Section III: Trafficking of Women in Nepal

This section is divided into six parts: (1) historical context of trafficking; (2) traffickers, perpetrators and the characteristics of trafficked women; (3) contributing factors to trafficking, (4) current anti-trafficking approaches; (5) promising anti-trafficking practices; and (6) gaps in programs, policies and research.

Historical Context of Trafficking

Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions for human trafficking, with the number of those trafficked representing nearly half the world’s total. The issue of trafficking women and children has become a serious concern, particularly in South Asia (Huda, 2006). The United Nations estimates that the issue of trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, particularly in South Asia, has been a serious issue for 30 years (Cameron & Newman, 2008). Over the last decade, the issue of trafficking of women and children in South Asia, particularly in Nepal, has been a social problem and thus it is crucial to discuss this issue through a lens of human rights violations in both national and international levels (Cameron & Newman, 2008).

Since trafficking is an illegal activity and is done under cover, it is hard to obtain data (Roby, 2010); thus, there is no accurate figure of sex trafficking of women and children from Nepal. In the literature, authors have reported various estimates. For example, it is estimated that thousands of Nepalese women and children are trafficked for sexual exploitation each year to the Asia Pacific region, especially Hong Kong, and India (Troubnikoff, 2003). Approximately 5,000 to 7,000 Nepali girls and women are believed to be trafficked each year to different destinations including Dubai, Thailand, but mostly to India (Crawford & Kaufman, 2010; Poudel & Carryer, 2000). Approximately 20,000 Nepali women and girls are believed to be trafficked to Hong Kong, Bangladesh, and India each year (Ghimire, 1997; Pradhan, 1994).
Poudel and Carryer (2000) stressed that trafficking of women and children is primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The issue of sex trafficking came to the public attention when one of India's leading newspapers, The Times of India, identified that 100,000 Nepali women were working in brothels in 1989 (Ghimire, 1997). Despite the lack of authentic information on the history of trafficking of women and children in Nepal (Ghimire, 1997), different schools of thought and debates pertaining to the genesis of trafficking are worth considering. The history of trafficking of women and children in Nepal goes back to the 19th century when the Ranas, a dictatorial regime, held power from 1846 to 1951 (Lama & Bory, 2002; McNeill, 2008). During this time, indigenous girls from the Himalayas and Middle Hill regions were brought to Kathmandu as housemaids with the false hope that they would be working for the queen; later the women were presented to the Kings of India as gifts. Their role as house cleaners was to entertain the Ranas with dance and song (Asman, 2009; Richardson, Poudel & Laurie, 2009). Those women were called “rakhauti” (mistress), and “nanis” (babysitter) and were considered to be the private property of the Ranas (National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, 2008). As a result, the practice became a tradition and continued even after the Ranas Regime collapsed in 1950 (Lama & Bory, 2002). Some Ranas fled to Indian cities such as Kolkata and Mumbai along with their families and the women, who were later sold in brothels in India. Afterwards the women were compelled to work in Indian brothels for their survival (Asman, 2009). The women started to run brothels in India and to bring other women and children from their place of origin in Nepal (National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, 2008). These women assured the women in the villages that employment opportunities would improve the quality of their lives (Asman, 2009; Subedi, 2009).
The treaty that was signed between Nepal and India in 1950 established an open border between the two countries and also attributed to the growing trafficking of women and children in Nepal (Human Rights Watch as cited in Richardson, Poudel & Laurie, 2009). The trafficking of women and children to India continued to flourish even in the Panchayat regime, a rule of monarchy from 1960-1989. “A criminal network was developed from villages to brothels, from elite to the local police and to the national political elite” (Human Rights Watch/Asia as cited in Subedi, 2009, p. 12). Trafficking of women and children proliferated during the Panchayat regime because no trafficking laws were introduced until 1984 (Subedi, 2009) and because of the regime’s misuse of power (Chaulagai, 2009).

As rural to urban migration increased in the 1980s and 1990s and carpet factories (a predominant source of urban employment in Nepal) started closing in the late 1990s, many women and children were transported across the border and were urged to get involved in sex work to provide their families with food and clothing. In 2002, once the Government of Nepal prohibited bonded labour in domestic work, agriculture and brick kilns, people who were freed from bonded labour became involved in commercial sexual activities as they had no home and no any other resources to support their families after their freedom (Frederick & Basnyat, 2010).

To elaborate, bonded labour has two different but related forms - the indebtedness of poor farmers and migrants who are forced into servitude when they cannot pay back loans from landlords or money lenders and the indebtedness of their children who are born into bondage. Chaulagai (2009) confirmed that this traditional practice that made women and children vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation is still grounded in the new Democratic landscape. For instance, Frederick and Basnyat (2010) argued that trends and purposes of trafficking of women and children changed rapidly when it was expanded into the Middle East,
Korea, China, and Thailand. From the beginning of the 19th century, the purpose of trafficking of women and children was exclusively for prostitution in brothels. Today, women and girls are also trafficked into exploitative domestic services and other exploitative labour situations, such as sweatshop labour, agriculture, begging, and organ removal.

**Traffickers, Perpetrators and the Characteristics of Trafficked Women**

 Trafficking can be on a large scale, initiated by organized crime groups through abduction, falsified documents, violence and coercion, or on a small scale carried out by relatives or acquaintances (Roby, 2010). Previous studies clearly show that a variety of people are involved in facilitating trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation in Nepal (Frederick & Basnyat, 2010; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Subedi, 2009). Most traffickers are found from the same place of origin as the women and children they will traffic, such as the Makwanpur, Sindhupalchok, Nuwakot and Jhapa districts of Nepal (Subedi, 2009). Subedi further confirmed that while both males and females, ranging in ages from 18-55, are involved as traffickers in this industry, the majority are male. Subedi (2009) further suggested that parents, relatives, neighbors, and friends are often found to be facilitating the traffickers. In his study, he identified that 19 per cent of the women and children were trafficked by their parents. McNeill (2008) claimed that parents sold their children for sexual exploitation in some areas in Nepal, noting that a house with a tin roof signified that the daughter of the house had been trafficked and a house with a straw roof that she had not. Findings from Fujikura (2001) disagreed, arguing that parents were not involved in selling their daughters. Hennink and Simkhada (2004) pointed to other members of the family, finding that 22 percent of the women in their study reported being forced into the sex industry because of threats and coercion by their husbands, aunts, uncles, brothers or stepfathers, or cousins who act as pimps. In many cases, women were sold to
Dalals (pimps) either by their husbands or by a stranger giving a false hope that he would marry her when they reached India (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Subedi, 2009).

According to Crawford and Kaufman (2008), many women and girls were trafficked with the promise of fake employment opportunities. Further, Jha and Madison (2007) found that in some cases women and girls were abducted while carrying grass and fodder for cattle or going to fetch water, and later sold into prostitution. Bohl (2010) identified that corrupt police and state officials supported traffickers by helping them to cross borders with the girls and women they were trafficking. Most women traffickers are either former sex trafficked or sex workers who are now brothel managers or owners who revisit their place of origin and recruit women and children into the sex industry (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004). Frederick and Basnyat (2010) suggested that brothel owners are the primary perpetrators since they typically make an enormous amount of money, much more than the traffickers themselves. The same study reported that “the brothel owner makes up to 20 times more ‘profit’ than the trafficker for each trafficked person” (p. 19).

Hennink and Simkhada (2004) stated that the majority of the women are trafficked between the ages of 13 to 18 years of age, and most are unmarried and illiterate. The same study indicated that no women older than 25 years were trafficked for sexual exploitation. Similarly, the study reported that that the youngest and oldest women who were trafficked were the age of six and 26 respectively (Buet, Bashford, & Basnyat, 2012). The study further claimed that some of the women were unable to remember their age when they were trafficked.

Buet, Bashford and Basnyat (2012) argued that “traffickers often target socially marginalized groups” (p. 15). The dominant group of trafficked women and children belong to the ethnic community known as Mongoloid and/or to the Dalit (untouchable caste) from different regions, particularly from the hill and Terai region, such as Nuwakot, Chitwan.
Sindhupalchowk and Makwanput. Most were naive and innocent girls who can be easily tricked or kidnapped by strangers (Evans & Bhattarai, 2000).

The study reported that 75 percent of the victims of girls trafficked in Nepal were followers of Buddhism (Lama & Bory, 2002). The study concurred with the findings found earlier as 58.8 percent trafficking survivors belong to the Tamang community who believe in Buddhism (Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012). The variations of survivors’ ethnicity, religion, age, and geographic locations, the factors causing women and children to become vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation and leading traffickers and perpetrators to take advantage of their vulnerability are examined in the subsequent section.

**Contributing Factors to Trafficking**

This section explores different factors contributing to trafficking and different ways in which they have been grouped/categorized to illustrate the interrelatedness of factors. The determinants of human trafficking are complex and they often mutually reinforce each other (U.S. Department of State, 2006, 2016). Trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is a collection of interconnected issues (Locke, 2010). Several authors have presented categories/groupings of factors to reflect this. The section first discusses individual causes of trafficking and then explains that some authors have presented ways of categorizing factors contributing to sex trafficking to illustrate how factors are interrelated in their contribution.

**Individual causes.** The most commonly cited individual causal factors are: (1) gender-based discriminatory practices; (2) traditional cultural practices; (3) family dysfunction; (4) armed conflict; and (5) inadequate anti-trafficking laws, protracted criminal justice procedures and corruption. Each will be discussed below.
Gender-based discriminatory practices. Embedded in a male-dominated culture, gender-based discriminatory practices are one of the major factors facilitating sex trafficking (Bohl, 2010; Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012; Chaulagai, 2009; Crawford & Kaufman, 2008, McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). As Hennink and Simkhada (2004) suggested, the issue of human trafficking in Nepal needs to be critically understood through the lens of gender-based discriminatory practice. This discriminatory practice focuses on gender inequalities perpetuated by patriarchal values (Kaye & Winterdyk, 2012). Hackman (2000) pointed out that a patriarchal society contributes to undermining the power and personal freedom of women. The value system of the patriarchal society denies equality of status to women, leaving them in a powerless position in the society and making them especially vulnerable to the tactics employed by human traffickers (Kaye & Winterdyk, 2012).

Nepal has the highest rate of gender inequality in South Asia (Banskota & Manchanda, 2001). According to the Gender Inequality Index, with a higher workload, lower literacy, earlier average mortality, and countless discriminatory laws women seem to be discriminated at home and work (Banskota & Manchanda, 2001). A substantial body of literature reported that a systemic manifestation of gender-based discriminatory practice is entrenched in the Nepalese societal value system in a number of ways, increasing the vulnerability of women to trafficking. These include gender roles, labour force, education, public participation, socio-cultural values, and economic activities (Chaulagai, 2009; Hennink & Simkhada, 2008; Locke, 2010; Parker, 2011; Poudel & Carreyer, 2000; Sangraula, 2001; Sharma, 2014; Subedi, 2010). For example, women are largely confined to domestic and household duties and their status is defined as daughters, wives and mothers, whereas men are still considered to be family "breadwinners"
(Sharma, 2014). Women are not expected to challenge their position in society and are taught to be submissive (McNeill, 2008).

Moreover, women’s access to knowledge, skills, resources, opportunities and power remains low (Hennink & Simkhada, 2008; McNeill, 2008; United Nations Chiedren’s FICEF, 1996). The adult literacy rate reflects disparities in education, with only 23 percent of adult women achieving literate compared with 64 percent of men (National Census Report, 2012). Locke (2010) reported 70.7 percent of trafficked survivors are either illiterate or barely literate. Chaulagai (2009) suggested the huge burden of household work on daughters prevents them from educational opportunities in schools. For example, daughters are responsible for helping their mothers in their daily household chores and also looking after their younger siblings. The traditional concept related to girls’ education is still dominant; sending girls to school means "wasted limited income of the family" (Sharma, 2014, p. 13). The same study argued that, “women and girls are still considered second class citizens” (p. 41).

Furthermore, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (1996) identified that Nepal has a high incidence of son preference. In Nepal, sons provide economic insurance for parents but daughters do not. Daughters provide care for their husband’s family after they get married and therefore their birth families tend to invest less in their future. Also, Nepali laws have historically discriminated against women in property laws and inheritance rights. For example, parental property goes automatically to the male lineage after the parents’ death and once married, a daughter has no rights to claim the property as long as her brothers or the sons of her brother are alive (DFID, 2005). Aengst (2001) explained, “the lack of economic alternatives for girls and ingrained cultural beliefs regarding gender roles makes young girls particularly vulnerable to trafficking” (p. 5). Chaulagai (2009) characterized gender inequality as
“institutionalized” in the patriarchal society and an escalating factor in the vulnerability of women to trafficking. There is strong consensus in the literature that trafficking of women is inextricably linked to the socio-economic status of women in Nepal (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Evans & Bhattari, 2000; Hennink & Shimkhada, 2004; Parker, 2011; Poudel & Smyth, 2002; Sharma, 2014).

**Traditional cultural practices.** Traditional cultural practices are perceived as one of the causal factors of trafficking. Nowhere is this more clear than with the marginalized Badi community in the southwest part of Nepal (McNeill, 2008, Subedi, 2009). Badi parents commonly act as pimps and find customers for their daughters and the daughters are obliged to accept the decisions made by their parents (McNeill, 2008). The Badi community has been labeled as a prostitute caste whose traditional role is mainly to entertain elite groups and religious leaders (Richardson, Poudel & Laurie, 2009). The same study argued that “the localized traditional prostitution practice can be transformed into criminalized cross-border trafficking” (p. 261).

Second, traditional cultural values support the practice of early marriage. For example, parents of particular caste systems get a spiritual credit if they marry off their daughters before their daughters reach puberty. Parents sometimes choose a groom for their daughters without checking into their backgrounds and the girls are eventually sold to brothels in India by their husbands (Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008; Simkhada, 2008). These early and forced marriages often become a fake marriage and expose girls to sex trafficking (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Frederick & Basnyat, 2010).

**Family dysfunction.** Family dysfunction is also identified as one of the factors increasing vulnerability of children and women to trafficking. Divorce in family, re-marriage, absence of
mothers or fathers, loss of a primary breadwinner, and domestic violence can leave girls and women highly vulnerable to harm and exploitation (Frederick & Basnyat, 2010, p. 13). One study found a majority of the trafficking survivors came from a dysfunctional family (Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012). Surprisingly, family dysfunction is not identified as a causal factor to trafficking in many studies although many women report they were trafficked because of family disturbances in their life.

**Armed conflict.** While migration from Nepal to different cities in India is not a new phenomenon, the armed conflict from 1996 to 2006 between the Maoist forces in Nepal and the Government of Nepal brought a large-scale displacement and forced hundreds of thousands of Nepalese women and children to flee from their homes (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Singh, Sharma, Poudel & Jimba, 2007; Sharma, 2014; Upadhyay, 2011). The migrated women, who had left their homes in search of security and a better quality of life, were forcibly sold either to Indian brothels or to other countries including Dubai and Qatar to work in hotels and factories (McNeill, 2008; National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, 2008; Subedi, 2009).

During the last decade, the long-term armed conflict impacted people’s lives in a variety of ways. On the one hand, people living in rural areas, particularly youth, ethnic minorities, and “untouchables”, experienced death threats if they avoided joining the rebels or providing them food and shelter. On the other hand, state security suspected them to be insurgents and rebel group allies, and consequently interrogated, tortured, and sometimes even killed people without careful investigation. Rural people felt trapped in this untenable situation and began to run away in search of a better quality of life to the capital or to different cities in India, where they further experienced discrimination. Renting a home or a room in a new city was almost impossible for them as they were perceived as “different” just because they were from predominantly Maoist
areas (Cameron & Newman, 2008; Singh, Sharma, Poudel & Jimba, 2007). The multi-layered discrimination created a situation where women of these groups from the rural areas were at increased vulnerability to trafficking.

**Inadequate anti-trafficking laws, protracted criminal justice procedures, and corruption.** Although the Nepalese government has ratified all the international agreements and conventions, these are not well incorporated into Nepali laws and police enforcement (Cameron & Newman, 2008; McNeill, 2008). Cameron and Newman (2008) highlighted that “poor compliance with the conventions and treaties may also be considered a push factor for trafficking” (p. 239). The authors further stated that more than 100 discriminatory laws are being influenced by patriarchal values and should be required to be amended immediately to demonstrate the state’s commitment to the protection of the rights of women and children. Sharma (2014) concurred that “effective implementation is lacking” (p. 42). The National Code 1963 declared making someone a slave, trafficking human beings outside the country for sale, and taking minors under age 16 without parental consent is illegal. However, parents who take their daughters to India and later sell them for prostitution are not accused of trafficking under this Code (McNeill, 2008).

The Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act (2007) sets the maximum punishment for the people who are involved in trafficking as up to 20 years imprisonment and a minimum of 5 years depending on the nature of crime (Acharya, 2008). The Act, however, only criminalizes those who are involved in the selling and not the purchasing of human beings (McNeill, 2008). The existing anti-trafficking laws and policies together with poor law enforcement and government corruption are identified as major forces contributing to trafficking of women in Nepal (Chaulagai, 2009; Sharma, 2014).
The protracted process of the Nepali justice system has been identified as helping traffickers leave the country or change their identity to avoid prosecution. When a survivor, for example, files a case to police personnel, the police personnel need to get permission from the court to investigate the case before they can issue a warrant to arrest an accused trafficker. Further, a victim’s statement taken in the presence of a public prosecutor is required to be verified by the court (Acharya, 2008; McNeill, 2008). The victim is cross-examined to determine whether or not she was trafficked. In this sense, the survivors are treated as if they were criminals who put themselves in a position for further exploitation and re-trafficking (Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008). In addition, studies report that police officials help traffickers while crossing the India-Nepal border with women and girls they are trafficking (Bohl, 2010; Chaulagai, 2009; Lama & Bory, 2010; Locke, 2010). Given the significant legal challenges faced by survivors there is a need for advocacy and protection for those who escape trafficking (Sharma, 2014).

**Groupings/categories of factors.** Cameron and Newman (2008) grouped causes into two categories: structural and proximate. Structural causes refer to social, economic and political factors that increase the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking. Proximate causes refer to the policies that do not adequately address trafficking issues, the lack of enforcement laws, and poor governance. The authors further suggested that it is essential to understand the structural context and its relationship to proximate factors in response to the issue of sex trafficking on both national and international levels.

Additionally, Roby (2008) classified the causal factors into two levels: macro and micro. Macro level includes the international, national, and local expressions of the social, economic, ethnic and cultural environments that make women vulnerable to sex trafficking. The micro-level
dimensions consist of individual and familial risk factors such as family breakdown, drug addictions and domestic violence.

Furthermore, Amin and Sheikh (2011) categorized the causal factors of trafficking women and children into two groups: push factors and pull factors. Push factors encompass the situations which are responsible for trafficking of women and children from one country to another country such as poverty and lack of awareness, and whereas pull factors include the support and demand for trafficked victims such as better job opportunities and influential power of media.

Moreover, Frederick and Basnyat (2010) offered the categorization of root causes and activating causes. Root causes include poverty, gender discrimination, caste/class discrimination, official corruption, poor education systems and lack of employment opportunities. Activating causes push women and children into vulnerability for trafficking and include family dysfunction, critical poverty or family economic crisis, separation from the family, violence, humanitarian crisis, having disabilities or special needs and traditional marriage customs.

Besides, Frederick (1998) suggested there are two types of trafficking: “soft” and “hard”. Soft trafficking is when families and relatives sell women and children to traffickers who promise to provide them a better quality of life, whereas hard trafficking is when women are “unwillingly and unknowingly abducted, drugged, duped or otherwise dragged to the brothels” (p. 3). Aengst (2001) defined these two types of trafficking quite differently, using soft for cases when a woman and/or a young girl goes to India for the search of job and a better quality of life and hard for “when a girl’s parents knowingly sell their daughter to a trafficker, garnering a price anywhere from US $200 to $600” (p. 6).
To conclude, Sen (2006) made the point that “undoubtedly, poverty is the single most important factor contributing to the increase in trafficking” (p. 2). Poudel and Smyth (2002) also asserted that trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is inextricably linked to poverty. Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik (2005) identified absolute poverty and relative poverty as the main factors making women and children vulnerable to sex trafficking. Absolute poverty includes the inability to satisfy basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing, whereas the relative poverty encompasses lack of control over resources, lack of education and poor health. The same authors suggested that specifically in the South Asian context, both absolute and relative poverty need to be analyzed in responses to trafficking.

Taken collectively, these classification systems clearly suggest that multi-faceted factors have contributed to forced migration of women and children legally and illegally, leading them eventually into the sex trade. While poverty and economic inequality, as root causes of trafficking of women and children, are implicated in some literature, these studies do not capture the collective voices of survivors in analyzing comprehensive root causes of trafficking from an intersectionality approach. Overall, the evidences in literature have exemplified the needs for an intersectionality analysis of the issues of trafficking of women and children, especially in academia and the study will address the gaps that will be discussed in the Chapter Five.

**Current Anti-Trafficking Approaches and Practices**

With the Government of Nepal’s failure to effectively prevent sex trafficking of its girls and women citizens, INGO and NGO have stepped in to play a significant role of advocacy and program provision. Their role in helping the Government of Nepal make some strides in implementing the provisions of TIP is examined in the next section.
The following section examines current anti-trafficking interventions suggested by the TIP that are characterized by a “3P Approach”: (1) prevention of trafficking; (2) protection for victims of trafficking; and (3) prosecution of traffickers. In Nepal, several UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and governments are involved in developing strategies not only to fight against human trafficking but also to address the needs of trafficking survivors, especially in employment opportunities and minimizing stigmatization.

**Preventive approach.** Although the areas of “3Ps” overlap and are equally important, the major focus of anti-trafficking efforts is in preventive activities. Preventative approaches are dominated by two major approaches: prohibitionist approach and rights-based approach. The prohibitionist approach emphasizes mechanisms to monitor strangers in communities and women who are leaving their communities and crossing borders (Bohl, 2010; Sharma, 2014). A variety of prohibitionist programs have been initiated in Nepal, especially in at-risk communities and at the Nepal-India borders. These programs include the formation of village surveillance committees and the creation and operation of monitoring groups to watch out for the well-being of women who run away or leave their community and who cross borders (Bohl, 2010; Chen & Marcovici, 2003; Evans & Bhattacharai, 2000; Sharma, 2014; Subedi, 2009). For instance, if strangers are seen talking to women in communities, they may be considered suspect and monitored by community residents. The surveillance committee may interrogate the stranger if they get caught leaving the community with women (Evans & Bhattacharai, 2000; Sangroula, 2001).

A rights-based approach, on the other hand, is rooted in a conceptual framework based on international human rights standards. This approach emphasizes awareness-raising campaigns, funding for schools and poverty alleviation strategies, such as capacity-building and employment opportunities. Awareness programs are launched to a wide range of audiences together with
targeted powerful stakeholders including police officials and village development committee officials and community residents such as parents and families, especially in at-risk communities (Chaulagai, 2009; Evans & Bhattarai, 2000; U.S. Department of State, 2016). Non-formal community education such as street theatre, folk song and dance performances, and vocational training in prevention homes have been found to be helpful (Frederick & Basnyat, 2010; Pearson, 2004; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007, Shakti Samuha, 2013).

Samarasinghe and Burton (2007) suggested that “prevention efforts must, at least address some of the fundamental issues that render women vulnerable to sex trafficking” (p. 54). This next section will look more closely at the major preventive efforts that have been implemented in Nepal, and see the connections between: (1) awareness raising campaigns; (2) poverty alleviation strategies; and (3) village surveillance and border-monitoring strategies.

**Awareness raising campaigns.** A variety of awareness raising campaigns have been developed in Nepal by various actors, especially INGOs and NGOs. The Asia Foundation has been involved as a leader in a number of anti-trafficking awareness raising campaigns including both “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches (Evans & Bhattarai, 2000; The Asia Foundation, 2005). Top-down interventions include sensitization programs (lectures, workshops and street dramas) aimed at increasing the awareness of a broad audience, including targeted education programs for those who can or should play key roles in preventing trafficking or prosecuting traffickers. For instance, in collaboration with the government, the NGOs Maiti Nepal and Shakti Samuha have provided awareness programs through seminars and workshops to powerful stakeholders such as police officials, Village Development Committee officials and key leaders in a community (Evans & Bhattarai, 2000; Fisher, 2008).
The “bottom-up” popular education programs, including street theatre, folk song and dance performances are also widely practiced in Nepal (Adhikari, 2011; Cameron & Newman, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Evans & Bhattarai, 2000; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007). These types of initiatives directly address the vulnerability of sex trafficking for a wide range of audiences including parents and families, specifically in at-risk communities.

The Nepalese government has recently been introducing trafficking prevention material into the school system. The government is planning to incorporate material into the Social Study Textbook of grades eight and nine, and has developed the course module of human trafficking for grade seven and launched it as a pilot project in 100 schools of 10 districts (Government of Nepal, 2013).

Poverty alleviation strategies. With varying levels of government support, NGOs and INGOs such as the Asia Foundation have implemented a number of poverty alleviation programs for women and children, specifically in high-risk communities. These programs include women's leadership training, family life education, livelihoods skill building program, free education for girls, and the formation of women's cooperatives such as group savings and micro credit loans (Bohl, 2010; Huntington, 2007; Sharma, 2014; United Nations Office Drug and Crime (UNODC), 2008, 2011).

Adhikari (2011) reported that with the support of the government, Women’s Learning Centers formed in rural areas are “providing literacy education, life skills training and secondary schooling for disadvantaged girls from the ages of 9-15” (p. 56). For example, recognizing the disparity between boys and girls in the education sector, local NGOs such as Maiti Nepal provide girls with non-formal education and vocational trainings in a series of prevention homes, which
have been established in major high-risk districts in Nepal (Adhikari, 2011; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007).

**Village surveillance and border monitoring strategies.** Village surveillance has been initiated as part of community-level participatory preventive efforts. *Aama Samuhas* are “Mother Groups” that watch over women and girls of high-risk communities to protect them from trafficking (Bohl, 2010; Chaulagai, 2009; Chen & Marcovici, 2003; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007). If a stranger, for example, is seen talking to girls and women in these communities, village residents have been taught to stop and interrogate the stranger, especially if s/he gets caught leaving the community with women and girls.

Maiti Nepal uses a border monitoring prevention strategy and has deployed staff to monitor people while crossing borders (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007; Sharma, 2014). This is a difficult strategy to implement since the open border policy between Nepal and India has created challenges in the effectiveness of interception while people are crossing borders (Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Simkhada, 2008). There are no accurate figures to examine the effectiveness of these practices in reducing the number of trafficked women.

**Prosecution approach.** In the area of prosecution, the Government of Nepal developed a number of anti-trafficking strategies through the establishment of anti-trafficking laws and policies under a number of human rights instruments such as the TIP and TVPA, and international conventions such as South Asia Association of Regional Convention and Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 promotes the rights of children and women and makes trafficking of human beings—be it slavery, serfdom, or forced labour in any form—
prohibited and punishable by law. The National Code 1963 declares that it is illegal to make someone a slave and to sell human beings inside and outside the country. However, the application of this law is extremely limited; parents who take their daughters to India and later sell them for prostitution are not accused of trafficking under this Code (McNeill, 2008). Furthermore, the Act only criminalizes those who are involved in the selling and not in the purchasing of human beings. Similarly, the Human Trafficking Control Act 1986 proclaims that those who are involved in selling a human being, taking someone to a foreign country with the intention to sell or force them into prostitution, get a maximum punishment of 20 years imprisonment and minimum 5 years. Recognizing that rehabilitation and reintegration were not addressed and victims were not entitled to file an appeal under the Act, a new Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act 2007 was introduced with the provision of funding for rehabilitation and reintegration. By providing compensation to survivors which shall not be less than half of the fine levied as punishment to offenders, the government has tried to be more progressive to combat trafficking (McNeill, 2008).

Despite these existing laws, the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) is the focal ministry to implement anti-trafficking strategies through coordination with INGOs and NGOs. It has also formed the National Coordination Committee and National Task Force in 26 districts (out of 75 districts) to prevent trafficking of women and children. Also, Ministry of Education and Sports provides scholarships to marginalized and disadvantaged children up to the secondary level (Subedi, 2009).

Despite these efforts, studies claimed that Nepal is not successful in implementing the laws and policies for a variety of reasons (Acharaya, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Locke, 2010; McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). First, this Act fails to provide a clear definition of reintegration
or a comprehensive reintegration strategy. This makes it difficult for NGOs to develop programs for reintegration of trafficked women. Second, the lack of law enforcement, and police corruption and the reciprocal links between traffickers and law-enforcement authorities cause investigation and prosecution procedural difficulties in Nepal. Third, the lengthened Nepali criminal justice system allows traffickers to leave or change their identity. In summary, for example, the lengthy Nepali justice system has been identified as enabling traffickers to leave the country or change their identity which protects the trafficker from prosecution. As a result, many trafficked women do not want to file a case against traffickers. Lastly, NGOs experience difficulties in supporting victims who report their cases due to insufficient funding. Although most grants coming from foreign governments and INGOs often go directly to the Government of Nepal for anti-trafficking initiatives, the money never reaches those for whom it is intended due to the various manifestations of corruption (Acharya, 2008; Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Cameron & Newman, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Fisher, 2008; Locke, 2010; McNeill, 2008; Simkhada, 2008; Subedi, 2009)). While greater emphasis on prosecution in Nepal would facilitate justice for victims, a focus on protecting survivors is necessary with a vision to move beyond their oppression towards a better quality of life and reintegration which will be discussed in the following section.

**Protective approach.** In the area of anti-trafficking protective efforts, the creation of multi-pronged NGO programs has attempted to address the needs of trafficking survivors. Based on the “3 Rs” approach (rescue/repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration), the following sections examine the programs and services offered for trafficking survivors.

**Rescue/repatriation efforts.** Rescue from their place of captivity and repatriation to their country-of-origin is the most appropriate intervention of anti-trafficking initiatives (Kempadoo,
Sanghera & Pattanaik, 2005; Locke, 2010; U.S. Department of State, 2006). Locke (2010) suggested that escaping from “brothels in India is almost impossible because the trafficked women and girls are often guarded and supervised by older prostituted women, pimps and owners of brothels, as well they are often put behind barred gates and windows” (p. 77). Kara (2009) noted that women have no energy to escape from brothels and they are threatened with punishment if they attempt to escape. Furthermore, most victims do not want to go to police as they believe that police officials will arrest them and return them to the brothels (Terre des Hommes, cited in Locke, 2010).

Women often are more willing to create their own ways to escape sex trafficking. Some will make a false commitment with owners that they will recruit new women from their place of origin (Kara, 2009). Others escape with the help of their regular clients, or find themselves released by the brothels when they are deemed too old to attract customers or are HIV-positive (Simkhada, 2008).

Some NGOs have been significantly involved in attempts to rescue victims from brothels. However, they have not been greatly successful due to the lack of funding and the lack of support of the Nepalese Government (Bohl, 2010; Fujikura, 2001). In 1996, for example, the Maharashtra police in India raided several brothels and rescued 200 Nepali girls and asked Nepalese government for their support in the process of repatriation. When the government was reluctant to repatriate the rescued girls, several NGOs submitted a petition to the Maharashtra High Court for the release of the rescued girls and eventually the girls were released and sent to rehabilitation centers in Kathmandu. As a result, some government officials accused NGOs of being a “parallel government” and making Nepal a “dumping site of AIDS” (Fujikura, 2001, p. 36).
Integrative rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. In comparison to rescue and repatriation efforts, rehabilitation practice appears easier to implement (Huntington, 2007). However, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2008) claimed that “where preventing trafficking and rescuing trafficked victims is a difficult job in itself, rehabilitating them is even more difficult because victims of trafficking are often treated as social outcasts and suspects even by members of their own family” (p. 131). However, the development of integrative rehabilitation and reintegration approaches is contributing to support for trafficking survivors for their rehabilitation and reintegration process, at least to some extent (Chaulagai, 2009).

Despite these difficulties, governments, INGOs and NGOs are continuously working to protect trafficking survivors and help to reintegrate them into their society by providing an array of services that incorporate rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Prior to embarking on a discussion exploring programs and services offered for reintegration, it is important to define the term “reintegration of sex-trafficked women”. There is no universally accepted definition of the term reintegration; it varies depending on the context. However, the Asia Foundation, which is focused on reintegration of sex-trafficked survivors, offers a very comprehensive definition. The Asia Foundation defines reintegration as “the process of inclusion and rebuilding relationships within a community in the country of origin at four levels: physical, socio-economic, socio-political, and cultural” (2005, p. 20). The Asia Foundation (2005) further defined reintegration as:

The financial and sustainable independence of the reintegrated person, bringing young people back into a condition where they can take care of themselves and their dependents, and having gained a certain level of confidence in their ability to function in
society, coupled with getting a job, were all deemed important components of reintegration. Perhaps the most comprehensive definition was the following, provided by a government representative: We regard it as reintegrating the client back into their home town and providing them awareness, skills, proper skills for them to return with the capacity to earn their living (p. 39).

The Asia Foundation further suggested there are three different stages to an overall comprehensive rehabilitation approach:

1. Recovery (3-4 weeks) which would include dimensions such as rest, medical care, and counselling;

2. Rehabilitation (3 weeks-12 months) composed of counselling, social support, and schooling for children, considering employment options, life skills, numeracy and literacy classes, followed by vocational training; and

3. Reintegration (6-9 months) where women leave the shelter and follow-up visits are provided on a 1-3 monthly basis or more frequently if necessary for a period of two years.

In the context of Nepal, Chualagai (2009) suggested the term reintegration is often used to describe the process of reunification with family members, and further defined the term in the context of sex trafficking as: (a) obtaining the level of social respect and identity that she had before she was trafficked; and (b) having equal access to resources and control over their resources similar to other members of the respective community. Similarly, Fujikura (2001) identified family reunion and reintegration of former sex-trafficked women as the ultimate goals of rehabilitation processes. Chen and Marcovici (2003) recommended that in order to support survivors in their reintegration, programs and trainings that meet their needs should be offered rather than just focusing on family reunification which is commonly understood as reintegration.
Sharma (2014) suggested that programs and services offered for trafficking survivors should be needs and aspirations oriented. With the intent to support survivors in their reintegration, a number of different programs and services are being provided in Nepal such as: (1) rehabilitative centers; (2) counselling and medical care services; (3) educational and vocational trainings; and (4) preventing stigmatization.

**Rehabilitative centers.** Rehabilitative centers play a significant role in comprehensive efforts to address human trafficking, especially the trafficking of women and children. Most trafficked survivors after being rescued from brothels spend some time in rehabilitation centers opened with the support of government and INGOs (Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012; Chaulagai, 2009; Fujikura, 2001; GoN, 2013; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; Locke, 2010, McNeill, 2008; Shakti Samuha, 2013; Simkhada, 2008). The goal of the rehabilitation centers is “to prepare victims, through psycho-social care, education, vocational training and legal services, for their eventual reintegration into either their home community, if appropriate, or into a new community” (USAID, 2007, p. 16).

The Government of Nepal (2013) reported that the since 2010, the Ministry of Women Children and Welfare has been providing financial support to eight rehabilitation centers which are being operated by NGOs such as Maiti Nepal and Shakti Samuha. In addition, through Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare, the Government of Nepal has also created a separate fund for the rehabilitation of trafficking survivors. Rehabilitation centers, including emergency, transit, short term, and long term shelters, are varied in terms of the nature of the services they provide to trafficked survivors. For instance, Maiti Nepal has also operated transit shelters in three different districts to intercept women and girls in the process of being trafficked, and provide a protective home with shelters (Adhikari, 2011; Sahara Group, 2004). Similarly,
Shakti Samuha has four shelters, including safe homes in two different places, an emergency shelter home, and a women’s rehabilitation center. Through the safe homes, Shakti Samuha is providing “direct shelter support, health support and case management”, a friendly environment for women to overcome trauma, and vocational training and job placement so that “they can live independent and dignified lives in the society (Shakti Samuha, 2013, p. 23).

Locke (2010) reported that some centers allow parents of survivors under the age of 16 to visit the centers and then assess the family’s income and level of support the family will provide to the formerly trafficked child. Once the centers go through the process of family identification, a report is submitted to the Women Children and Social Children Welfare Committee on whether the children can go home or not. Depending upon available resources, some NGOs visit and re-visit the family and community of trafficked survivors and make an arrangement to send them back home with some financial support so that they can be involved in some small livelihood activities such as animal husbandry or tailoring (Evans & Bhattrai, 2000).

Counselling/medical care services. Most trafficking survivors commonly experience severe physical and psychological trauma after being trafficked. By recognizing the need for psychosocial support and counselling for trafficking survivors, many rehabilitation centers provide supports not only to help free people from their trauma but also to rebuild their self-confidence (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; Sharma, 2014). Tzvetkova (2002) suggested that “counselling centers provide a safe and supportive environment for survivors where they can share their experiences and receive non-judgmental support and understanding” (p. 62). For instance, Shakti Samuha (2013) reported that out of 182 trafficked survivors, 12 repatriated women were provided psychosocial counselling in 2012. Further, many rehabilitative centers have adopted a more holistic healing approach as a new integrative model of reintegration. This
approach includes peer support, mentoring and experiential therapies such as dance and theatre, play and recreation (Adhikari, 2011; The Asia Foundation, 2005).

*Educational and vocational trainings.* Most trafficking survivors who stay in rehabilitation centers or transitional centers are provided with non-formal education, such as literacy classes, and vocational and skill building trainings to help promote their economic independence. These include catering and food preparation techniques, sewing and weaving, and handicraft making (Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012; Chen & Marcoveci, 2003; Fisher, 2008; Frederick, GoN, 2013; Shakti Samuha, 2013; Sharma, 2014). However, general trainings such as vocational and skills development (candle making, sewing, and knitting) offered at rehabilitation centers are identified as significant obstacles to successful reintegration since they do not provide survivors with the skills necessary for sustainable economic independence (Adhikari, 2011; Chen & Marcoveci, 2003; Evan & Bhattarai, 2000; Sharma, 2014). Further, Sharma (2014) called for rehabilitation centers to develop an alternative economic strategy since most women stay less than four months in these types of work they are currently being trained to do. Recognizing this, some NGOs have provided micro loans to survivors so that they can run a small business such as grocery shops and tea shops, with the aims of establishing independent and economically viable lives for themselves in new communities (Adhikari, 2011; Shakti Samuha, 2013).

*Preventing stigmatization.* Efforts to prevent the stigma attached to trafficking survivors are significant. Trafficking survivors experience social exclusion and ostracism when they return to shelters. The survivors are usually rejected by their families and societies because of the high level of stigma attached to them (Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012; Frederick, Basnyat & Aguettant, 2010; Kempadoo, Sanghera & Pattanaik, 2005; Sharma, 2014). Women report being doubly victimized in the rehabilitation and reintegration process in the way they are treated after

The stigma against women is expressed in communities where victims are called names such as “besya” (prostitute), “characterless woman” (Chaulagai, 2009, Fujikura, 2001; Sharma, 2014), and “community polluters” who are often suspected of being prospective traffickers (Chen & Marcovici, 2003). The women are indeed scared of being further stigmatized and also of the possible reactions of the community that make their parents feel humiliated (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; Simkhada, 2008). For instance, some families are forcefully migrated from the place of their origin once the community has rejected their daughters. Once a girl is trafficked from a community, a question arises in relation to the character of other girls living in the same community, and this restricts families in the community in their search for a good groom (Bohl, 2010; Chaulagai, 2009). Similarly, marriage chances for the siblings of trafficked girls and women are very low (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004). Therefore, some women are systematically returned to sex slavery because of the experiences of social stigma, rejection from their families and communities (Chaulagai, 2009, Fujikura, 2001), and their limited skills for alternative employment (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004).

Recognizing the need to prevent stigmatization attached to trafficking survivors, UN agencies and NGOs have reinforced the requirement that efforts addressing the stigma be a core part of trafficking awareness raising campaigns. With the aim of preventing stigma through increased community understanding, many NGOs are involved in grassroots-level interventions. For example, Maiti Nepal meets with the parents of trafficking survivors in their community, explains to the parents how their daughters were trafficked and encourages the parents to take them home. Also, by meeting community leaders to advocate for community support and
subsequently providing awareness raising campaigns through workshops and group meetings, Maiti Nepal is playing a significant role to prevent, or at least reduce, the stigmatization of trafficking survivors, and thus helping in the process of accepting survivors back into the community (Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Chaulgai, 2009; Sharma, 2014; The Asia Foundation, 2005, WOREC, 2002).

Anti-stigmatization programs are particularly important in countries like Nepal which operate from collectivist perspectives. In such countries, regaining respect and acceptance in their society is very important (Fujikura, 2001; The Asia Foundation, 2005). Tzvetkova (2002) claimed that reintegration support is an area of concern that NGOs cannot respond to in isolation, and community support, financial support and government support are critical to prevent women from being doubly victimized.

Despite the anti-trafficking efforts outlined in this section, the United States put Nepal in the Tier 2 rank of countries because of its noncompliance with minimum standards of TIP protocol. In other words, the U.S. Department of State (2011) ranked 184 countries based on the extent of government action to combat trafficking, with Tier 3 as the lowest ranking. A Tier 3 rating is made up of countries whose governments are neither compliant nor are they making significant efforts to become so. Tier 1 is made up of those countries such as the United States and Australia which have recognized the problem of human trafficking, have made efforts to address the issue and have fully complied with the TVPA’s minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2016). While the current anti-trafficking interventions do not adequately address trafficking issues, specifically reintegration issues, some gaps in programs, policies and research have been recognized and will be discussed in the following section.
Gaps in Programs, Policies and Research

Anti-trafficking program models, especially preventive and protective measures, adopt a welfare approach that focuses on meeting the immediate needs of both women and children to prevent trafficking and support reintegration of trafficking survivors. Programs do not tend to explore the aspirations of girls and women at risk of trafficking or trafficking survivors. Dhungana (2010) suggested that these anti-trafficking programs that focus on encouraging women not to leave their village may hinder them from achieving their needs and aspirations.

Most awareness-raising programs are primarily offered to grassroots populations through workshops, campaigns and education, yet, they are not focused on government officials and government attorneys who also need to gain a critical understand gender discriminatory practices and the subjectively constructed experiences of trafficking survivors (McNeill, 2008). Most awareness campaigns launched by NGOs at the community level, especially in high-risk communities, are focused on prevention of trafficking and thus these initiatives do not adequately address the issues of reintegration. Furthermore, raising awareness through posters, flyers and media are not always effective prevention tools, especially to those girls and women who are uneducated and illiterate. Alternative activities such as door knocking are promising practices in rural areas (Adhikari, 2011).

In dealing with reintegration of trafficking survivors, the victim-centered approach such as counselling and vocational training seems to be pre-designed and generalized under a one size fits all model and does not adequately address the issue of reintegration (Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Chaulagai, 2009; Sharma, 2014). For instance, those who want some professional trainings including health care and hotel management as opposed to vocational trainings, such as sewing and knitting, are not provided with these opportunities. Adhikari (2011) asserted that due to the
lack of sustainable income generating programs, survivors still experience challenges in their reintegration. Adhikari (2011) argued that “it is important for NGOs to strengthen their strategies to facilitate in economically empowering and independent living of the trafficked women returnees” (p. 83).

Stigma attached to trafficking survivors hinders reintegration. Trafficked women have reported that they experience continued stigma from their family and community even after their reintegration into society (Chen & Marcovici, 2003). Few activities have been developed to reduce their stigma; only a few NGOs have been educating survivors’ families and communities about what survivors have endured and the importance of welcoming them back into the community. The government has not demonstrated an improvement in developing strategies for reintegration of trafficking survivors, despite commitments outlined in the Human Trafficking Control Act 2007.

Another significant gap is the lack of follow-up provisions to ensure that the survivors who return to their families are safe in their communities. NGOs do not get funding from the government for reintegration, especially to practice follow-up. It is not the case that such funding is unavailable. International organizations including the World Health Organization, International Labour Organizations and The Asian Development are major sources of funding for these programs, but this funding first goes to the Nepalese government and is only later allocated to the agencies (Adhikari, 2011; McNeill, 2008). Furthermore, agencies receiving international aid are required to work in the areas prioritized by funders (Sharma, 2014) which limits their ability to be responsive to the needs on the ground, including the need for reintegration programs.
There are significant gaps in the Nepalese prosecution approach, despite the government having ratified many international frameworks and conventions and having developed anti-trafficking laws, policies and strategies. The government has failed to incorporate these measures into its work due to the poor enforcement of existing laws, the lack of comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies and various manifestations of corruption (Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). In practice, for instance, the experiences of intimidation and harassment during case proceedings in a court discourage survivors to file a case against perpetrators (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008). Chaulagai (2009) suggested that victim-friendly judicial procedures are needed in addressing reintegration issues.

Despite the recognition that gender inequality is a contributing factor to trafficking, existing government policies do not promote gender equality. The government pays little attention to gender issues in decision-making and policy-formulation processes. One current law, for example, directs parental property to be inherited by a son and not a daughter. For policy to be an effective tool in combating trafficking, it must address the contributing factors. Parker (2011) argued that “without the full, active support of government in development, human trafficking will continue to pervade the country” (p. 103).

As discussed above, the procedures and approaches of the legal response to trafficking are also problematic. When a survivor files a case with police personnel, the police personnel need to get permission from the court to investigate the case before they can issue a warrant to arrest an accused trafficker. Further, a victim’s statement taken in the presence of a public prosecutor is required to be verified by the court (Acharya, 2008; McNeill, 2008). The victim is cross-examined in the determination of whether she was trafficked. In this sense, the survivors are treated as if they were criminals, putting them in a position for double victimization
(Chaulagai, 2009; McNeill, 2008). Because of this, many victims do not want to file a case against traffickers.

Lastly, NGOs experience difficulties in supporting victims who report their cases due to insufficient funding. Although most grants coming from foreign governments and INGOs often go directly to the Government of Nepal for anti-trafficking initiatives, the money never reaches those for whom it is intended due to the various manifestations of corruption (Acharya, 2008; Adhikari, 2011; Bohl, 2010; Cameron & Newman, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Fisher, 2008; Locke, 2010; McNeill, 2008; Simkhada, 2008; Subedi, 2009).

In terms of gaps in research, it is significant that most of the information about human trafficking is gathered in NGO and INGO publications. A considerable number of documents and reports are prepared by the United Nations, which focuses on the causes, consequences and process of trafficking, and policy recommendations and program development. Only a few scholars have directly explored the experiences of trafficking survivors with a focus on reintegration. Most knowledge has been created through the use of quantitative methodologies and analyses of secondary information from various sources. The narrative voices of survivors have been captured through qualitative date collection techniques, mainly interviews, such as in studies conducted by Acharya (2008), Chaulagai, (2008), Chen and Marcovici (2003), Locke (2010), McNeill (2008), and Sharma (2014).

Despite these gaps, most research findings are congruent regardless of the methods chosen. Overall, studies substantiated that resettlement and reintegration of survivors is always a challenging and difficult process. Studies reveal the complexities of authentic and long-lasting reintegration. While some studies reveal there are survivors who are reunited with their family and are successfully involved in income generating activities, no studies have assessed whether
any survivors have obtained the same social status they had before they were trafficked after they returned home. Such studies would look more to women’s aspirations as they reintegrate into society and such studies are sorely needed.

Another research gap is in the lack of accurate figures that could be used to assess how many trafficked women have successfully reintegrated into their families and communities. Some studies do discuss trafficking survivors’ experience of reintegrating with their families and running some tea shops and working in agricultural sectors (Adhikari, 2011; Buet, Bashford & Basnyat, 2012; Cameran & Newman, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Frederick, Basnyat & Aguettant, 2010; Shakti Samuha, 2013; Sharma, 2014; Women’s Rehabilitation Center (WOREC), 2009) and these are important. But we also need more statistically based studies to understand the scale of what has been accomplished and what more is needed.

Research has undoubtedly allowed trafficking survivors to share their lived experiences of reintegration, however no studies have provided survivors an opportunity to become a part of participatory research and understand their situations critically so they can provide input for anti-trafficking policies and program development. Research has yet to understand or promote the value of involving survivors in research for social justice and personal and social transformation.

While little literature exists on the reintegration of formal sex trafficked women in Nepal, related fields of study, such as research into trafficking for reasons other than sexual exploitation and research focused on other social locations than girls and women of Nepal, may provide insight. The subsequent section will review the studies conducted on former child soldiers trafficked in civil wars in Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda, and their experiences of reintegration.
Section IV: Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers

The section begins with an overview of the context related to children who were involved in armed forces and armed groups and then examines what the literature says of their reintegration experiences. It uses the UNICEF (2007) definition of child soldiers: both males and females, who are under 18, and who were involved in regular and irregular armed forces and had different responsibilities.

Background/Context

More than a half million children of all ages were abducted and forcibly recruited into military forces and rebel armed groups in 87 countries over the past decade (CSUCS, 2002). During the Sierra Leone civil war, for instance, approximately 15,000-22,000 children were abducted and forced to serve military groups and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from 1991 to 2002 (McKay, 2004; McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Child soldiers of both genders reported physical and emotional difficulties during the war time. The children were required to play multi-faceted roles including carrying heavy loads such as weapons and water, cooking food and doing laundry, and report being treated badly and abused even for their small mistakes (Betancourt, Simmons, Borisova, Brewer, Iweala, & Soudiere, 2008; McKay, 2004; McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Additionally, girl soldiers were sexually abused by the members of RUF, forced to use drugs and alcohol (McKay, 2004) and treated as slaves and “bush wives” (Betancourt, Simmons, Borisova, Brewer, Iweala & Soudiere, 2008, p. 578).

When the war was about to end, the short-term Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program was initiated with the purpose of preparing children to return home. This program was designed “to demobilise soldiers, remove guns from circulation, and enable ex-combatants to return to civilian life” (McKay, 2004, p. 23). The study further
suggested that very few girls benefitted from this program since girls and women were not seen as appropriate recipients of this initiative. Therefore, most girls in Sierra Leone were forced directly back to their families and relatives without any training, and undoubtedly, they experienced challenges upon their return to civilian life. Even those who went through the DDR program reported challenges in the post-war reconstruction. The following section will briefly explore the challenges experienced by the former child soldiers.

**Challenges Experienced by Former Child Soldiers**

A number of issues including psychological, social, and physical health are identified in former child soldiers’ reintegration during the post conflict era (Betancourt, Simmons, Borisova & et al., 2008; McKay, 2004; McKay & Mazurana, 2004). The children, for instance, report difficulties in attending schools since school fees and materials were very expensive and NGO assistance was not enough to cover the various expenses for schools (Betancourt, Simmons, Borisova et al., 2008). They also spoke of their discomfort in being put into school classes with much younger students; research notes an increased number of students dropping out from such schools (Annan & Blattman, 2006; Wang, 2007).

Psychological trauma related to their roles and experiences during the war is another challenge for former abductees in their reintegration. During the war, child soldiers learned survival mechanisms including the display of aggressive behaviours, use of offensive language, use of drugs, and killing and eating people’s domestic animals (McKay & Mazurana, 2004) which could hinder their reintegration (McKay, 2004). Also, past exposure to extreme violence and presence of trauma hindered former child soldiers in their post conflict psychological well-being (Bayer et al., 2007; Derluyn et al., 2004). Studies on the reintegration of former child soldiers confirm that they have severe mental health and trauma-related symptoms including
PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Song & Bring, 2013). Children reported feeling sadness, fear, and anxiety. Some of the major coping strategies such as studying, playing, meeting families, friends and community elders were found helpful in reducing their psychological challenges (Betancourt, Simmons, Borisova, Brewer, Iweala & Soudiere, 2008). Moreover, McKay and Mazurna (2004) report that many child soldiers return with physical disabilities, chronic pain from the injuries in war, and also diseases such as malaria and parasites, that further complicate their reintegration experience.

Upon return, a key psychosocial issue that former girl soldiers faced was shame. McKay (2004) claimed that the girls experienced a great deal of negative attitudes from communities as “they are no longer virgins” (p. 27). Traditional gender norms and patriarchal worldviews reinforced judgments against the girls. In addition, girls with tattoos, carvings and scars on their bodies from the war felt more shame because these markings forced them to recall their past life (McKay, 2004). Girls who returned with children conceived as a result of forced sexual relations during the war felt resentment towards their children. In Sierra Leone culture, there is a stigma associated with unknown paternity and a perception of these children as being the inheritance of rebels (McKay & Mazurnana, 2004). McKay (2004) found that one of the best strategies for reintegration of former child soldiers is secrecy because many simply did not want to share with others what happened to them.

Programs/Services in Reintegration

Studies on reintegration of former child soldiers identify some programs and services developed in facilitating the process of their reintegration which include: (1) educational and vocational trainings, (2) traditional rituals and ceremonies of welcome, and (3) contributions of older women in girls’ reintegration. Each will be examined in the following section.
Educational and vocational trainings. According to Wang (2007), the government of Sierre Leone launched two programs to address the formal education needs of former child soldiers: Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) and Rapid Response Education Program (RREP). However, these programs could not meet the needs of target groups due to the poor quality of services and high absenteeism. Additionally, some development partners such as UNICEF and USAID ran youth programs. For instance, Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program (YRTEP) was initiated to provide informal trainings, including literacy skills, life skills and vocational trainings, and other supports for behavioural changes the former child soldiers would need to embrace in order to more fully reintegrate into society. However, pregnant girls and girls with children were not able to attend schools and skills-related trainings due to the lack of child care services and their poor financial conditions (McKay, 2004).

In collaboration with INGOs, community-based organizations provided financial supports to former soldiers to attend schools and also for medical care and psychosocial treatment; however, the number of children who dropped out of school increased once the program ended in 2005 (Alexander, 2006). Also, this program excluded girls who were not enrolled through the DDR programs as the funding was only available to children who had attended a formal DDR program (McKay & Mazurana, 2004).

Traditional rituals and ceremonies of welcome. A traditional religious practice to welcome former child soldiers upon their return to communities is found to be a promising approach in their reintegration in Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda. According to McKay (2005), this ceremony is perceived as a cleansing ritual and a sign of forgiveness, and returning child soldiers report feeling more supported by their community. The ceremony includes prayers
and talks with religious leaders to “drive out dead spirits, protect communities from contamination, call upon ancestors for assistance” (p. 27). This ritual also imposes rules of community behaviour on all attendees that are very helpful for psychosocial reintegration and reconciliation with families. Stricture against using words such as “rebel wife” or “rebel baby” for returning girls and working with community to develop and enforce these new social norms can help returning former child soldiers feel safer and welcomed in their communities (McKay, 2004).

**Contributions of older women in girls’ reintegration.** Older women played significant and meaningful roles in facilitating the process of reintegration of former girl soldiers. One study demonstrated the significance of older women in the community empowering the girls by talking to them, mentoring them with positive female behaviour, and building their self-confidence and self-esteem (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). The returning girls reported that the women provided them with financial assistance, clothes and medicine in addition to providing counselling (McKay, 2004). The study further suggested that the girls were educated in using medicine and their roles in their own communities.

These studies can be helpful in better understanding the situation of returning trafficked girls and women in Nepal and in suggesting promising program and policy directions. These studies suggested that stigma attached to trafficking is the most challenging experience for survivors regardless of the types of trafficking and also that the particular stigma attached to women’s experience of sexual violence, forced marriage, and forced childbearing requires specific measures. They also point to the need to mobilize community to address stigma in a multitude of ways, including through traditional ceremony and contemporary social programming.
Summary

Drawing on the existing literature on trafficking of women and children in Nepal, it is clear that the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation in Nepal is a serious social issue and a criminal matter. The problem needs to be discussed, analyzed and addressed, both locally and globally. For example, in large part, the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is related to the implications and structural practices of globalization, including economic injustice and the undervalued status of women and children. Solutions need to be discussed too. During the past two decades, INGOs and NGOs have launched a variety of interventions to prevent sex trafficking in Nepal. Their strategic and political role in the anti-trafficking movement in Nepal is considerable. As many have noted, the most effective campaigns of anti-trafficking initiatives seem to be those organized in coordination and cooperation with local organizations and grassroots populations (Bohl, 2010; Evans & Bhattarai, 2000; Samarsinghe & Burton, 2007).

NGOs play a vital role in the rescue and repatriation of trafficked women and children from Indian brothels. Trafficked survivors in rehabilitation centers are provided with a range of educational and vocational training which contributes to their reintegration into society. However, this is not always an easy process. The term reintegration for survivors is more than to be reunited with family; they want to reclaim the social identity they had before there were trafficked and they also want to be treated as other women are treated in communities. Yet despite these aspirations, due to the high level of stigma attached to trafficking, the majority of these women and children experience rejection from their families and communities. As a result, despite the current practices of anti-trafficking interventions initiated by government, INGOs and NGOS, survivors are still struggling with reintegration issues and face continued stigma and
social exclusion due to the limited attention paid by the government to gender issues in the
decision-making and policy formulation process. There is a grey area between policy and
practice, supports, and sanction. Although Nepal is a signatory to many international conventions
and treaties related to anti-trafficking and reintegration, the government has failed to incorporate
them into Nepali law. This failure has become an obstacle to ending trafficking and helping
people to address the issue of reintegration. At the root, most intervention models adopt a
welfare approach which does not adequately address the issue of trafficking, specifically
reintegration (Kelley & Lee cited in Hennink & Simkhada, 2004).

Over the last 10 years, the number of studies focusing on trafficking and the sex trade
industry has been increasing globally, yet there is a limited focus on reintegration of trafficking
survivors. In the case of Nepal, as discussed earlier in the section, a considerable number of
studies and agency reports have examined: (a) the process of recruitment and exploitation of
trafficked women and girls; (b) the contributing factors making women and children more
vulnerable to trafficking; and (c) the implications of trafficking on health with a recommendation
for policy change. However, while these studies and reports contribute to the knowledge, policy
and action base, they have failed to adequately consider systemic issues, including discrimination
based on caste, class and gender, poor governance, and non-compliance with international
commitments and treaty obligations. The context and implications of the semi-feudal social and
political system is also not considered in studies.

However, a few scholars have expanded their studies exploring the experiences of
trafficked survivors with a focus on reintegration. This has been achieved through the use of
quantitative methodologies and/or an analysis of secondary information from various sources.
Additionally, the narrative voices of trafficking survivors and employees in NGOs and
rehabilitation centers are also captured through qualitative date collection techniques, mainly interviews (e.g., Acharya, 2008; Chaulagai, 2009; Chen & Marcovici, 2003; Locke, 2010; McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). Although researchers have chosen different methods to collect information, most findings are congruent. Those studies confirmed that resettlement and reintegration of trafficked survivors is always a challenging and difficult process. They also reveal the complexities of authentic and long-lasting reintegration. Despite experiencing the difficulties, some studies have identified survivors who are reunited with their family and are successfully involved in income generating activities. Yet, other studies reported that due to continued stigma and social exclusion, some were forced to return to sex slavery and some chose to work in rehabilitation centers. More research is needed to understand which policy and program interventions lead to the greatest likelihood of success.

It also reveals the need to study what reintegration entails, as it is clear that a person can be at “home” without really being “home.” NGOs have published reports highlighting that many survivors have succeeded in returning to their families, however, no studies were found which attempted to understand if the survivors have obtained the same social status they had before they were trafficked, after they return to home. Further research in this area is critical in order to design effective programs to address the issues of trafficking and reintegration of trafficked survivors as suggested by Chen and Marcovici (2003) and Simkhada (2008).

Further research is also needed to determine if the current intervention approaches of anti-trafficking are effective in the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked survivors. A quantitative and qualitative study is needed to help practitioners and decision-makers who develop public and legal intervention strategies to effectively reduce sex trafficking of women and children to Nepal (Huda, 2006). However, no studies have been conducted from social
justice and anti-oppressive lenses in the area of sex trafficking and reintegration of trafficking survivors using a participatory action research approach.

In addition, there is a dearth of evidence-based research exploring narrative voices related to anti-trafficking initiatives, particularly trafficking survivors and their experience in reintegration. As Evans and Bhattarai (2000) suggested, it is crucial to understand the creation and development of a survivor’s group and their networking activities that empower women and girls, leading them to be involved in gender rights programs. Academic attention needs to be paid towards this issue (Richardson, Poudel & Laurie, 2009), specifically the social worker’s role in a major social problem that requires structural change through a participatory approach (Fujikura, 2001). Lama and Bory (2004) argued “Although the issue affects the whole community as a whole, the responsibility for dealing with the issue falls on the shoulder of just a few social workers” (p. 4). Social workers can play a central role in the creation of a socially acceptable place where all negative public images of women can be removed through the involvement of anti-trafficking initiatives (Fujikura, 2001).

In conclusion, given the scarcity of studies, study involvement of survivors in advocacy for social justice and social transformation is still not understood or promoted, thus further study is indispensable for action and transformative change. By promoting transformational and experiential learning opportunities to survivors who were trafficked for sexual exploitation, this emancipatory research was initiated to bridge gaps, especially in academic investigations, and construct overarching and inclusive definitions/meanings of reintegration experiences of trafficking survivors.
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the knowledge-building process, theoretical foundations, and PAR as an emancipatory knowledge creation methodology. This chapter is divided into five sections: (1) theoretical foundations; (2) my journey to a social justice inquiry path; (3) participatory action research as an emancipatory methodology; (4) knowledge-building methods; and (5) ethical considerations.

Section I: Theoretical Foundations

This section presents the contributions of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive practice theories to understanding the issues that trafficking survivors face in their reintegration into society and ways to enhance successful reintegration experience. These three theories are not mutually exclusive as there is a great deal of congruence between and among them. As will be discussed in this chapter, the overlap in these theories includes recognition of inequality and oppression based on class, race, sex, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, and the work needed to counter oppression. To provide a comprehensive overview of how the three selected theories contribute to the possible actions for reintegration, each theory will be explained, followed by a discussion as to how these theories, individually and together, support the reintegration of trafficking survivors in Nepal.

An Overview of the Critical, Feminist, and Anti-Oppressive Practice Theories

The section begins with the review of critical theory, an umbrella theory of the other two theories (Agger, 2006; Baines 2011; Payne, 2005). This is followed by a discussion of feminist and anti-oppressive practice theories. The background and context and theoretical foundations of each theory are briefly discussed.
Critical theory: background and context. Critical theory is based on an analysis of the existing social orders from a conflict perspective (Heinomen & Spearman, 2006; Mullaly, 1997, 2010). Karl Marx is recognized as the founder of critical theory (Agger, 2006). Marx examined capitalism through the lens of class oppression, with an expressly emancipatory intention. His immensely influential work was not an integrated theory; later scholars would have to make his class-based theories more reflective of other interlocking forms of oppression based on race, sex, age, physical abilities, and so forth (Mullaly, 2010).

Critical theory itself was extended and developed in two different periods: the mid-1900s by Antonio Gramsci, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm; and the present day by Jurgen Habermus. According to Hoffman (1987), Horkheimer’s effort to develop critical theory was shaped by three beliefs: society was in needs of radical transformation instead of simply reform; theory should be dependent on existing forms of social consciousness; and the ideal of the objective, disinterested, independent theorist, which might hold true for the natural sciences, did not hold true for the social sciences.

Critical theory does not monopolize this intellectual space. The terms “critical” and “structural” are sometimes used synonymously to describe this approach to the study of the nature of society. For example, the term “structural social work theory” is used interchangeably with critical theory in certain social work literature (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006; Mullaly, 1997, 2010). Structural social work theory recognizes inequality within social environments and social arrangements as the biggest source of social problems.

Critical theory: theoretical underpinnings. Critical theory recognizes multiple realities, the multiple ways in which people who are oppressed find their own voices, and the need for solidarity between researchers and people who want to change oppressive societies (Agger,
Critical theory does not accept “the prevailing ideas, actions and social condition as unchanging or immutable and also refuses to accept the existing rules of society, the boundaries of action and knowledge as natural and inevitable” (Hoffman, 1987, p. 233).

Critical theory is both descriptive and constructive in its theoretical intent. It argues that simply understanding and explaining the issues of oppression are not sufficient; rather all practitioners and people impacted by oppression ought to be informing practice and suggesting actions for change (Depoy, Harman & Haslet, 1999; Hoffman, 1987). Critical theory “seeks not simply to reproduce society via description, but to understand society and change it” (Hoffman, 1987, p. 233). In addition, Leonard (1990) defined critical theory as:

Theory having practical intent. As its name suggests, it is critical of existing social and political institution and practices, but the criticisms it levels are not intended to show how present society is unjust, only to leave everything as it is. A critical theory of society is understood by its advocates as playing a crucial role in changing society. In this, the link between social theory and political practice is perhaps the defining characteristic of critical theory, for a critical theory without a practical dimension would be bankrupt on its own terms. (p. 3)

As outlined above, the major focus of the critical theory is to analytically understand socio-political environment and its oppressive culture. To work collectively for change against oppressive structures is the key underlying assumption of the critical theory.

**Feminist theory: background and context.** Feminist theory focuses on analyses and responses to the roles and the oppressed positions of women in society (Baines, 2011; Dominelli,
Martin (2003) suggested that gender should be prioritized in a public discourse for a better society that benefits everyone. Feminist theory recognizes the fundamental values of women, their rights to equal treatment, and their rights to be viewed as individuals (Garner, 1999). Feminist theory appreciates and values the diverse lives and experiences of women based on their own perceptions and interpretation (Payne, 2005). Feminist thought primarily is concerned with gender oppression, sexism, and patriarchy (Maguire, 1996; Rampton, 2008).

Positing that exploitation and oppression of women are embedded in a patriarchal society, early theorists initiated what we now think of as the first wave of the feminist movement in the late 1800s to demand equal opportunities for women. They focused on gaining political and legal property rights for women. The second wave (1960s to the 1990s) centered on concerns with how the “inequality of opportunity to work, political influence and the public sphere generally connected with attitudes toward women in the private sphere interpersonal relationships” (Payne, 2005, p. 252). As Rampton (2008) noted, this wave began to critique patriarchy, capitalism and the woman's role as wife and mother, arguing that gender identities are socially rather than biologically constructed. The third phase of feminism began in the mid 1990s and continues until today; it is informed by postmodern thinking which focuses on destabilizing many constructs such as universal motherhood, the body, and gender.

**Feminist theory: theoretical underpinnings.** Feminist theory asserts and acknowledges the diversity and commonalities among women. With a vision to critically analyze gender relations, feminist theory examines the role and position of women and the domination of men (Flax, 1997). However, feminist theory also appreciates the fact that individual men are not always dominating and oppressing women, and that sometimes women can oppress other women.
Increasingly, a feminist approach examines and addresses the intersectionality of oppression such as class, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, and physical abilities which lead women to exploitation and marginalization by men and women (Dominelli, 2002). Heinonen and Spearman (2006) stated that “a feminist approach is not only for women, but also for all people in society” (p. 286).

Within this broad brushstroke of feminist theory, there are various forms of feminism including liberal, radical, socialist or Marxist, Black, and postmodern feminism, each offering differences and similarities (Williams, 1989). However, all these theories share the emphasis on the critique of patriarchy, the principles of equal opportunities and social justice in which women are no longer marginalized, oppressed, and directed to work exclusively in disparaged roles such as cleaning and cooking (Dominelli, 2002; Thompson, 2006). They all advance the notion that the personal is political (Thompson, 2006). They all “have argued that women’s ability to speak for themselves, to describe their own needs and their own objectives and, most importantly to have their voices heard, is paramount to women’s empowerment” (Meyers cited in MacKenzie, 2009, p. 202).

The differences among the many versions of feminist theory revolve around the weight given to any one factor (economics, psychology, sexuality, racialism, etc.), to where the theory sits on the nature/nurture divide, and to whether the theory attempts to integrate rather than privilege any factor. Saulnier (1996) provided a clear definition of many of the versions of feminism:

Radical feminism argues that society is psychologically structured on male needs, and that to maintain that order women’s needs are subjugated, and that the fabric of society must be fundamentally altered. Lesbian feminism challenges the organization of society
around both heterosexual and male dominance and the ongoing enforcement of that arrangement. Cultural feminism holds that women are more peaceful, cooperative, and nurturing than men, probably because women reproduce and nurture the species.

Ecofeminism is the application of women’s culture to efforts toward peace and ecology. Socialist feminism blames the economics of capitalism in combination with patriarchy for women’s subordinate position in society. Womanism defines sexism as one of multiple, interlocking systems of oppression functioning simultaneously and interdependently, inextricable from each other theoretically or experientially. Postmodern feminism argues that, since woman is a socially defined and inherently distorted term, which cannot be defended on empirical or theoretical grounds, we have no reason to think females have an inherent nature or role. Thus, social organization rooted in gender based on an invented concept. Global feminism seeks to explain the interconnectedness of disparate feminist struggles by examining how worldwide economic factors combine with national histories of colonialism, religion, and culture to oppress women. (pp. 173-174)

As outlined above, by recognizing the dominance of male dominated society and intersectional gender oppressions, the feminist theory regardless of its versions argues the need of environment for women to advocate for their rights and fight for social justice themselves.

**Anti-oppressive practice theory: background and context.** Anti-oppressive practice theory is part of critical social theory which is concerned with the existing oppressive society characterized by exploitation, inequality, and oppression, and which promotes equality and freedom from domination (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005). Anti-oppressive practice theory adheres to and builds on critical theory; however, it mainly
emphasizes the multiple and intersecting nature of power and oppression (Barnoff, George & Coleman, 2007; Mullaly, 2010).

The concept of anti-oppressive practice theory developed in the 1960s, with the advent of the second wave feminist movement and its rejection of *expert-led professional practice* in which practitioners made decisions about the services that their clients required. As anti-oppressive practice theory developed, it provided guidelines for professionals and practitioners to adopt *user-led agendas* in their practice with the vision of empowerment (Dominelli, 2002). The traditional concept of services significantly moved forward to anti-discriminatory practice which focuses on the needs and aspirations of oppressed people through awareness (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Thompson, 2006).

Anti-oppressive practice theory is centered in social work practice, social service delivery, and social work education (Campbell, 2002). The theory in social work recognizes multiple layers of oppression and domination for distinct and overlapping constituencies of women, elders, racialized peoples, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer community, people with disabilities, people with mental health challenges, and so on. This theory seeks fundamental change in the social structures/systems that contribute to marginalization and oppression of people, and the procedures for service delivery through building liberating agenda items (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010; Strier, 2007).

**Anti-oppressive practice theory: theoretical underpinnings.** Anti-oppressive practice theory focuses on the analysis of the experiences of people who are categorized in accordance to social divisions such as class and gender, and unpacks the social structure which plays a key role in the distribution of power, status, and opportunities (Baines, 2011; Mullaly, 2010; Thompson, 1993, 2006). This practice aims to eliminate and reduce discrimination and oppressions with a
focus on challenging different forms of discrimination such as sexism, racism, ageism and ableism (Thompson, 1993).

Dominelli (1998) described anti-oppressive practice as:

A form of social work practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities in the work that is done with people whether they be users (‘clients’) or workers. [Anti-oppressive practice] aims to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people’s needs regardless of their social status. [Anti-oppressive practice] embodies a person centred philosophy; an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people’s lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together. (p. 3)

As mentioned earlier, anti-oppressive practice theory recognizes the values and principles of diversity, social inclusion, and social justice, and attempts to support oppressed people to improve the quality of their lives. Anti-oppressive practice theory is grounded in the work of pursuing social justice (Baines, 2011; Dominelli & Mcleod, 1998; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010).

An anti-oppressive approach to practice recognizes the complex interconnections between the personal and the political. This theory contends that “nothing is neutral, and everything involves an overt struggle over power, resources and affirming identities” (Baines, 2011, p. 6). The practice theory supports transformative actions, through work with diverse individuals, groups and communities, with a vision of an egalitarian future (Bains, 2011; Dominelli, 1998; Thompson, 2006). Anti-oppressive practice theory adopts a number of tenets
including awareness of the mechanisms of oppression, domination, and injustice; acknowledgement of the structural elements at play relating to human behavior; acceptance of diversity and difference; and recognition of the complexity of power and the necessity for action (Campbell, 2002). Overall, anti-oppressive practice means recognizing power imbalances and working toward the promotion of change to redress the imbalance of power (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006).

Contributions of Critical, Feminist, and Anti-Oppressive Theories in Understanding and Addressing the Issue of Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors

The historical development and theoretical base of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive practice theories demonstrate that the theories are interconnected and aimed at personal and social change. The major goal of critical theory is to recognize the existence of domination and oppression in all forms - structural, interpersonal and personal - and their impacts on people, as well as the need for liberation through the fundamental reorganization of social systems. Similarly, the major dimensions of feminist theory center on diversity and understanding the experiences of oppressed women through their own interpretations, and inviting them to lead emancipatory processes. Likewise, anti-oppressive practice theory supports oppressed individuals in fighting against their oppression through empowerment. Anti-oppressive theory focuses on challenging oppressive forces that benefit from and perpetuate inequality and oppression. Overall, all three theories primarily focus on exploitation, domination, and oppression. These theories recognize the complex interconnections between the personal and the political and emphasize combating all forms of oppression and discrimination for social change and liberation. Based on the foundations discussed earlier in this chapter, the tenets of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive practice theory are extremely valuable in understanding how the
reintegration of trafficking survivors should be both understood and what forms of actions should occur.

Consistent with the emancipatory heritage of each of these three theories, emancipation is a cornerstone of how the issues of reintegration of trafficking survivors should be addressed. Recognizing this, I present six major themes or core insights that are shared by critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories which also led me to choose PAR as an emancipatory methodology for this study. I also discuss how these six themes connect with the selected theories and provide a concrete framework for understanding and actions to respond to identified issues of survivors’ reintegration. These themes include: (1) recognizing the structures of oppression; (2) understanding of false consciousness; (3) supporting empowerment and awareness-raising; (4) focusing on collective works/collective actions for change; (5) advancing personal transformation; and (6) promoting social transformation/social change.

**Recognizing the structures of oppression.** Recognizing various forms of oppression and how they interrelate is a core element of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive practice theories. It is extremely important for oppressed people to understand the intersectionality of oppressions which make them vulnerable to trafficking (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002, Mullaly, 2010). In the case of sex trafficking, women are the subordinated group who experiences different forms of exploitation and oppression such as class, caste, and gender inequality. Men are the dominant group who maintain and reinforce the ideology of patriarchy and the oppressive structures that make discriminatory laws and policies that determine women’s socio-economic locations. However, an intersectional approach acknowledges that women also play a role in supporting patriarchy and other oppressive structures, even as they suffer greatly – and diversely – from the effects. Men too suffer from oppressive structures and attempt to subvert them, often
simultaneously rejecting some aspects of patriarchal control while embracing others. It is therefore important for survivors to understand that their oppressions are constructed socially, legally, and historically by dominant values, attitudes, and actions, making them marginalized and disadvantaged.

The factors that contribute to the trafficking of women are varied and interconnected. Studies emphasized that a dominant patriarchal worldview is the greatest contributing factor to the trafficking of women in Nepal (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; Locke, 2010, McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). For instance, most girls in rural areas do not have an opportunity to go to school as they are expected to work on household chores and it is women who are uneducated and illiterate who are disproportionately trafficked for sexual exploitation (Lama & Bory, 2002; McNeil, 2008). As a result, the oppressive society has increased Nepalese women’s vulnerabilities to be trafficked for the sex trade in India and other countries, and to be viewed as “other’ when they return to Nepal, as mentioned in Chapter Two. With respect to reintegration of trafficking survivors, critical, feminist and anti-oppressive theories suggest that oppressed women first need to think, talk, and understand the intersectionality of their oppressions and analyze them critically both at individual and collective levels.

In summary, while critical, feminist and anti-oppressive theory recognize various forms of oppression, critical theory was founded in a class analysis, which connects greatly to the realities of survivors in that they are primarily from impoverished backgrounds. Feminist theory strongly articulates gender oppression, which is the foundation for sex trafficking as reviewed in Chapter Two. Anti-oppressive theory focuses on the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, which speaks to the realities of many survivors and the complexities of what they are facing systemically as efforts are made to support them to re integrate into society.
Understanding of false consciousness. Recognizing and addressing false consciousness is a key aspect of critical, feminist and anti-oppressive theories (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005). Dominelli (2002) claimed that lack of awareness on the socio-political environment and oppressive culture promotes “false consciousness”. False consciousness maintains structural domination and oppressive culture (Freire, 1970). Reynolds (2010) claimed that, “There is pressure on us to influence people into acceptable social norms and structures that don’t fit with a just society” (p, 12). Understanding this concept will help survivors to see how oppression makes them vulnerable to trafficking and hinders them for their reintegration. For example, the oppressive social structures and arrangements that have divided survivors into a separate social grouping are historically created and can be changed, but not all survivors have had the chance to know this. Furthermore, the group may not understand their oppression that is implicated in the social, cultural, economic, and political structures, maintaining hegemony (Dominelli, 2002; Freire, 2006; Fook, 2002; MacKinnon, 2009; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005). Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories recognize that due to the lack of awareness about the realities of their oppression and the real causes of trafficking, sex-trafficked survivors as an oppressed group are mostly silent, which gives more power to the dominant groups to reinforce domination, exploitation, and oppression (Dominelli, 2002; Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2010).

Particular to the realities of survivors in Nepal, studies confirm that they accept their oppression as “natural” and the “norm”. In a study by Chaulagai (2009), survivors reported that since they were born in poor families, they had to accept what their families and society asked them to do. As highlighted in this study, women from the Badi community, one of the poorest ethnic communities, were sold to clients by their own parents (Chaulagai, 2009). Survivors
reported that it was their fault that they were born as women and were trafficked (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009). Although some survivors were rescued by local organizations in Nepal, some decided to return to brothels in India because they felt shame and guilt as they had previously worked in brothels (Chaulagai, 2009; Hennink & Simkhada, 2004; McNeill, 2008; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007). Dispelling false consciousness in this context would mean assisting survivors to redirect their sense of self-blame to the oppressive and unjust system that has created their victimization.

In summary, while critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories all recognize the concept of false consciousness, critical theory is grounded in the notion of conscientization, which directly connects with the fact that survivors need to critically understand their oppressions and recognize that it is not their fault for being trafficked. Feminist theory focuses on the necessity of standing against a patriarchal society and encourages survivors to recognize the importance of valuing themselves as women. Anti-oppressive theory suggests that the lack of awareness of dominations and exploitations maintains the oppressive system, which speaks to the realities of many survivors, as they are not aware of their own oppression which is associated with a larger social and political environment. It is therefore important for survivors to become aware that inequalities and intersectional oppressions, based on their social locations, are not natural in society, and therefore the ideals of dominant paradigms are unacceptable. This assists them to see the ‘possible’ beyond their current realities.

**Empowerment/raising awareness.** Empowerment is an integral part of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories (Agger, 2006; Dalrymple, & Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Garner, 1999; Hoffman, 1987; Mullaly, 2010). Empowerment aims to enable people to overcome barriers and free themselves from domination and exploitation and improve their lives. Cox and
Parsons (1996) defined empowerment as an “oriented practice developed based on the principles of egalitarian client-worker relationships, strengths-based assessment, the promotion of empowerment through education and skills development, consciousness raising, self-help, and the use of collective and social action” (p. 142).

Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories share common goals: raising awareness about inequalities and oppression and domination, supporting oppressed people’s active participation in decision-making, and taking social actions through empowerment (Agger, 2006; Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2010). For the reintegration of survivors, once they are aware of the intersectionality of oppression and how oppression is embedded in society, they may become empowered and able to challenge those who view them differently just because they were in the sex trade. Through empowerment, survivors, as an oppressed group, are encouraged to push their reintegration agenda items in a public discourse (Cox & Parson, 1996; Dominelli, 2002; Payne, 2005).

In summary, while critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories recognize empowerment as an approach for people in oppression to take actions for change, critical theory focuses on raising awareness around the links between oppressed people’s personal position and structural inequalities, which directly connects with the situations of survivors and the oppressive society that has created social blocks, hindering their reintegration. By recognizing this, women become empowered to challenge the systems that make them marginalized and vulnerable. Feminist theory seeks to give women opportunities to voice their needs and aspirations, which allows survivors to discuss collectively what needs to be done for their reintegration. Anti-oppressive theory promotes strengths-based practice and values people for their intelligence, skills, talents, and abilities, which links to the knowledge of survivors who have the lived
experiences of trafficking. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and utilize the skills and knowledge of survivors to address the issues of reintegration. Overall, all these theories recognize that empowering women to work together is the most important step towards their reintegration process.

**Focusing on solidarity/collective actions.** Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories emphasize the importance of collective work to fight against the oppressive structures and bring forward a just society (Agger, 2006; Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Garner, 1999; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005; Reynolds (2010). These theories understand the importance of involving practitioners, professionals, and academics to work with oppressed people in possible activities for social change (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Garner, 1999; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005; Reynolds, 2010; Thompson, 2006). Reynolds (2010) argued that, “Solidarity speaks to the interconnections of our collective movements towards social justice, and in resisting oppression” (p. 15). Based on these theories, stakeholders and local agencies, survivors and academics need to come together and work in solidarity to address the issue of reintegration of survivors. Unfortunately, studies suggested that international organizations and local agencies working with survivors have not given them sufficient opportunities to become involved in developing anti-trafficking policies and practices (Adhikari, 2011; The Asia Development, 2008). While critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories recognize the importance of collaborative, community-based anti-oppressive research and practice, community-based anti-oppressive research provides survivors with opportunities to share their lived experiences, support each other, and identify possible actions to act towards social change (Agger, 2002; Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Garden, 1991; Strier, 2007). Through group work and collaboration, a variety of possible strategies for reintegration can be developed based on the needs and aspirations of survivors.
In summary, while critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theory recognize that collective action is important, critical theory emphasizes the solidarity of people who want to change the oppressive system to promote human rights and social justice. This includes the necessary step of building solidarity to address the issue of reintegration. Feminist theory focuses on the need for collaboration in a way that knowledge and skills of people can be utilized, which in the case of reintegration would include the development of reintegration policies and practices through involvement of survivors. Anti-oppressive practice theory seeks to promote the participation of survivors in self-help and mutual help activities that advance their competency in coping with issues related to reintegration and finding possible ways to reintegrate into the society.

**Advancing personal transformation.** Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories focus on promoting personal transformation through empowerment and collective actions (Boal, 1979; Dalrymple & Burke, 2006; Garner, 1999; Payne, 2005). Boal (1979) asserted that when oppressed people who are mostly silent and passive get opportunities to raise their voices, they become active actors for a positive change. Dalrymple and Burke (2006) suggested it is important to remember that “those who are oppressed are not passive, they resist the imposition of power in many different and significant ways” (p. 40).

Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive practice theories seek to change individuals at a personal level. For survivors of sex trafficking, personal transformation can be gained by understanding various forms of oppressions and being involved in advocacy practices for their rights through collective work. Dominelli (2002) argued that through this personal transformation, survivors become resilient. Previous studies indicate that there was no opportunity for survivors to become engaged and involved in collective actions in terms of the development of anti-trafficking services, especially reintegration policies and practices.
(Adhikari, 2011; Cameron & Newman, 2008; Crawford & Kaufman, 2010; Locke, 2010, McNeill, 2008; Sharma, 2014). It is therefore important for survivors to become involved in their own emancipation and liberation process so they can become more aware, assertive, and critical. This certainly echoes what is stated above about the importance of survivors playing a central role in policy making and program design. The nuance here is that policy/program work can be an important aspect of survivors’ own personal transformation.

**Promoting social transformation/social change.** Critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories seek to pursue social justice (Agger, 2006; Baines, 2011; Dalrymple & Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Fook, 2003; Hoffman, 1987; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005). Social transformation is defined as “shifting social relationships based on classes and divisions among social groups based on ideologies of inequality and individualism towards a society based on equality and grounded in an ideology of collectivism, planning, participation, and solidarity” (Payne, 2005, p. 238). Baines (2011) suggested that a practice becomes a charade if this does not advance social justice or equality. Therefore, only understanding oppression is not good enough for social change; rather people in oppression need to be involved in social justice movement (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010; Payne, 2005, Reynolds, 2010).

In summary, while critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories are committed to pursuing social change, critical theory is grounded with the vision of structural change. In the case of reintegration, there is a vision to change oppressive systems such as class and patriarchy that make poor women vulnerable to trafficking. Therefore, poverty alleviation and educational programming are indispensable to address trafficking issues. Feminist theory focuses on the recognition of women’s diverse experiences without judgment or blame. This reflects the need to accept survivors and reduce the stigma which excludes them from society. Anti-oppressive
practice theory focuses on involving oppressed people in the development of practices and policies to improve their lives, and in the case of reintegration, the participation of survivors in the development of reintegration policies and practices. This assists to develop a variety of reintegration approaches based on the needs and aspirations of survivors, which helps survivors to reintegrate into their society socially and economically.

In conclusion, with the vision of transformative change, the theoretical foundations of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories are inclusive, empowering, and action-oriented. These theories focus on the need to understand the various forms of oppression and social inequality, and the necessity of supporting survivors to become critically conscious and empowered. More importantly, survivors need to understand their rights to participate in the decisions that impact their lives and the lives of their community.

Based on critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories, it is important to focus on the strengths of survivors and their participation in collective actions at social and political levels to fight against the oppressive structures and systems that marginalize them. Overall, with the vision of personal and social change, these theories emphasize the need for a paradigm shift from “oppressed people are clients” to “oppressed people are agents of change”. Through the applications of critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories in research and practice, survivors can reintegrate into their society and become agents of change. More importantly, critical, feminist, and anti-oppressive theories are committed to changing the world through the process of emancipation of marginalized people such as sex-trafficking survivors, and also focus on egalitarian group process by which empowerment and personal transformation can be achieved. Overall, while there are salient differences between and among critical, feminist, and anti-
oppressive theories, as documented in this section, all three theories provide key areas of understanding of how the issues of reintegration of trafficking survivors should be addressed.

The underlying assumptions of each theory and the identified common major areas discussed earlier provided me with the comprehensive framework to guide my understanding of trafficking and reintegration issues and also helped me to identify and recognize my epistemological orientation. I selected Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an emancipatory methodology as the best fit for this study since its assumptions and theoretical base are aligned with my epistemological framework. The following section discusses how my qualitative orientation led me to choose PAR as an emancipatory methodology for this research.

**Section II: My Journey to a Social Justice Inquiry Path**

This section begins with the introduction of qualitative research and the discussion of my own journey in qualitative study as a student of Anthropology in Nepal and India. As I shifted my academic focus from Anthropology to Social Work, I realized how a social justice inquiry, especially PAR, contributed to my passion for working with vulnerable populations with the aim of transformative change. To support my arguments for the importance of engaging disenfranchised populations in a transformative study I share my personal experience moving from an ethnographic study to a collaborative study, especially a social justice inquiry. The subsequent section presents how my research paradigm shifted from ethnographic study to participatory action research which shaped my own epistemic position.

**My Epistemic Position in a Qualitative Study/Ethnographic Study and Moving Beyond Social Justice Inquiry**

My ongoing aspirations for qualitative research can be traced back to my Master’s Degree in Anthropology. I have always loved talking to people and learning about their culture
and traditions. During that degree, I took a research foundation course which covered both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. I particularly looked forward to the qualitative sessions and enjoyed listening to the field experiences of my professor and reading the qualitative research books she recommended. Conversely, I found it difficult to remain awake while listening to her talking about statistics, multivariate analysis and so forth, and I certainly did not enjoy reading all the assigned books for the quantitative sessions.

Using ethnography, a particular type of qualitative methodology, in my Master’s dissertation, I had a number of very powerful learning experiences in the field. I chose ethnography in order to get a complex, detailed, and deep understanding of the phenomena of my study examining “Impact of tourism in Tharu community (Indigenous Group).” Essentially, ethnography involves observations, made mostly through participant observation in which researchers build rapport with participants leading them to further information (Angrosino, 2008; Creswell, 2007). The purpose of that study was to uncover the major factors affecting their culture from ontological and epistemological perspectives, and to understand how they perceive their changing culture and traditions. I believe I chose the appropriate methodology because this approach provided me with an opportunity to live with them at their place and observe their day-to-day lifestyles including their participation in major festivals and ceremonies. I also had the opportunity to discuss their issues and look at how we as a team could work together to develop solutions to their collective social problems.

My biggest insights from the study concerned the power of conversation to elicit rich data and the importance of rapport-building in qualitative inquiry, particularly in an ethnographic study as the studies suggested (Angrosino, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). For example, some participants had invited me to come and stay with them at their
homes. This created a dilemma for me; if I had refused the invitation, the participants might have thought that I did not trust or respect them. If I had accepted the invitation, I would not have been able to do any writing during evenings and nights as there was no electricity in their houses. In response to their request I eventually ended up going to stay with one of the participants who was getting married a few days later. By participating in the event and wearing their traditional attire, the wedding ceremony allowed me to learn the process of the wedding, their cultural traditions, and also to build greater trust among participants. As noted in the literature: “The longer researchers stay in the ‘field’ or get to know the participants, the more they ‘know what they know’ from first-hand information” (Creswell, 2007, p. 33). I learned how dynamic and fluid qualitative study is, and also how participant observation of the study reflects a certain epistemology. This qualitative study launched my journey as a qualitative researcher. I then began to consider myself as an “ethnographer”.

Overall, the qualitative study suits my personality. I enjoy talking to people, exploring their experiences, and listening to their stories. More importantly, my epistemic position leads me to minimize the distance between myself and participants, which then helps to establish rapport with participants in the field, and to win their trust and confidence. Recognizing my own strengths and dispositions, together with my own philosophical assumptions led me to choose the qualitative study, especially ethnographic. I would argue that the ethnographic study can minimize the distance between participants and researchers, creating a positive learning environment for both research and participants. This process certainly helps both parties to understand the issues in depth and develop strategies collectively to address the identified issues. Additionally, perhaps as an aside, the methodology also fits well with the core social work values of relationship and client system self-determination.
In 2004, as an anthropologist, I had an opportunity to conduct an ethnographic study examining “the experiences of trafficked women being in brothels in India”. The goal of the study was to explore the issues and problems of the women in Delhi and hear their frequently silenced voices. The study allowed me to engage in authentic human interactions in the natural settings and also to collect pertinent information through direct observation, as suggested by the literature (Angrosino, 2008; Creswell, 2007). However, the study did not provide me with an opportunity to engage with participants in collective dialogues and create a space to allow their voices to be heard. Overall, I wanted to amplify their voices through the study in a way that participants could become more fully engaged, empowering them so that they could share their stories and possibly result in a process of conscientization as suggested by Freire (1970). For example, there was still an uncomfortable distance between “researcher” and “subject”. I wanted to conduct the study in a way that participants could become more fully engaged in the inquiry process and help each other to understand the common issue they experienced.

During the course of ethnographic research, I visited more than 40 brothels in Delhi. Visiting those places and talking to the women, particularly those from Nepal, provided me with opportunities to become connected to the women and explore their experiences of being in brothels. Using participant observation as a method for the study, I gained knowledge of how they viewed themselves as Nepalese women being in brothels and how they presented themselves as a host with their clients. In the beginning, I entered the study in a bit of a contradictory position as both an “outsider” and simultaneously a Nepalese woman. I realized the complexities of my multiple positionalities and attempted to place myself as an “insider” by speaking them in Nepali languages and letting them know that I was also from Nepal. This changed the dynamic of our conversations as they were very friendly and open to talk to more;
the women who had told me five minutes ago that they were happy in brothels as they were making money and also sending money to their families in Nepal, asked me with eyes full of tears to take them with me. While we were talking in our own language, the madam of the brothel got suspicious and asked me what language we were speaking. Once she found that I was also from Nepal, she became very upset and immediately asked me to leave the brothel and in a few minutes, I found myself surrounded by two big giant men (I was assuming that they were security guards), which made me feel afraid. Sadly, by recognizing that I did not have any choices other than to leave the place, I left the building with my eyes full of tears. While I was leaving, the women said, “Didi (sister), when do you come to take us from here?” I indeed felt very helpless, hopeless and of course vulnerable as I was not even in that position to raise my voice to the madam. Simply put, I subsequently documented all the data in a journal and finally went back to Nepal, provided recommendations to the team lead of the study. I am not sure if the recommendations provided were taken seriously and if anyone intervened. However, while their voices are still vibrating in my ears, I have never gone back to the brothels to help them out.

At this point in my journey, I recognized that in my role as a realist ethnographer I had studied the women as an “object” and narrated the study in a third–person dispassionate voice as stated by Creswell (2007). This made me question what benefits the women got from providing me the information. I had benefitted from the social relations of research production, but had they? What benefits had they received for their time and help? I truly wanted to improve their lives – but was this the case? The study produced a report but I doubt if the study contributed to any change in the women’s lives. I am not sure if the recommendations provided were well taken. Subsequently, I began to think I wish I had done the study differently. If I had conducted the study through the lens of critical ethnography instead of the more objective process I used, I
could have advocated for the emancipation of the vulnerable women and could have empowered the women, a process suggested by Park (1993). This powerful experience made me angry at the unjust society and oppressive culture but this elevated my social justice aspirations towards the ending of structural violence. The result was a promise to myself to get involved in social justice inquiries in the future. I can claim that this study was evidence of my social justice orientation and that it gave me a hope for transformative change.

My experience does not suggest that traditional ethnographic study is never an appropriate methodology in a qualitative inquiry. I believe that ethnographic study is one of the best qualitative methodologies in qualitative inquiry when the goal is to investigate behaviours, culture, and attitudes of a culture sharing group as suggested by other scholars (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell, 2007). But change and action require something more – and change and action are my goals.

Although I was able to achieve the goal of the research for the ethnography study, I began to question myself. How could I discover the women’s silenced voices? How can the women be empowered to bring social transformation at both the individual and institutional levels? Are there any other alternatives that provide me with the opportunity to work with the women in a collaborative way so we can make their lives better?

By shifting from the discipline of anthropology to social work since coming to Canada, in which social change is a fundamental ethical and practical aim of the profession, I had an opportunity to learn about PAR. As I learned that collective investigation and collective action are the major goals of PAR (Maguire, 1987), I realized that working with participants in a solidarity team producing collective knowledge, in PAR, is essential. I am attracted to and fascinated by its ideas, values, and potential however I fear that its ideas are impossible to reach.
Does it provide the researcher with comfort, but problems still remain for participants? I then came to determine that in my future work, I would be doing action-oriented research, allowing me to join arms with participants in response to resist oppressions and social injustice.

**Walking "Arm in Arm": My Commitment for Collective Knowledge-Building**

I am convinced by scholarship that suggested that PAR is the only methodology that allows researchers and participants to join in solidarity to take actions for transformation (Park, 1993; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997). Doing “research strictly for research’s sake” makes me feel vulnerable and a failure, as I fear I am exploiting indigenous knowledge for my own benefit. There are also structural relations which limit the voice of research for research’s sake. I have come to realize that to transfer our ownership to participants is critical in research. Transferring ownership in PAR involves participants as co-researchers, rather than simply participants and subjects, and as the people who own their experiences and own the study. In PAR, researchers and participants wear hats of a similar hue but no one necessarily changes their identity to do so. PAR does not demand false humility from the researcher, just authentic engagement and a willingness to journey together. PAR may even lead to a change in perceptions and actions (Haworth & Haddock, 2010). Being perceived as co-researchers makes participants feel highly valued and honoured. The degree of vulnerability that participants often feel in a qualitative study is minimized (Schneider, 2010).

PAR assumes, at all stages of research, that full collaboration and participation is integral between researchers and participants. Collaboration is seen as critical to building knowledge and co-creating meanings through the democratic and authentic engagement of researchers and participants in mutual dialogue. In PAR, participants and researchers working together produce critical knowledge aimed at social transformation. This dialectical process allows researchers to
understand the social processes and structures within a historical context, and co-researchers to collectively understand their experiences and provide glimpses of the potential for action and change. Fundamentally political questions are usefully brought into the light for consideration. Who creates knowledge in the research? How is the knowledge created? Who uses it and for what purposes? When using PAR, I believe knowledge is constructed by “communities” and “local people” for their benefit and not for degrees, salary increments, or funding purposes. Finally, though the process of engagement, action-reflection-action, people realize that their experiences are shared by others and are not simply their own individual problem but are larger social issues.

PAR’s underlying value is that people are not “objects” to be studied but “subjects” to be allied with. Conventional research often treats people as objectified research units, recognizing at best mere tokens of subjectivity. PAR’s unique stance is to research “with” and “by” rather than “for”. The PAR approach means to break down the power structure (subtle or overt) between researchers and participants. The subject-object relationship is transformed into a subject-subject relationship through the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Researchers do not consider themselves as “experts” in the process of the study. Researchers bring their instrumental knowledge and skills to the study and so do participants. Further, the “subject-subject” relationships in a PAR process allow participants to hold meaningful control in making decisions, using resources, and generating and distributing information. Therefore, the process in PAR has implications for the distribution of power in society as Maguire (1987) stated. It challenges the norms of research production and can offer a glimmer of a better world.

For me, research is not just about advancing knowledge and adding to the academic literature but also about pursuing a personal agenda. Most of the phenomena/issues I wanted to
explore are connected to my interest. I want to engage with people and explore their issues/challenges in a collaborative way aiming to produce knowledge and facilitate social change. The collaborative processes produce knowledge based on experiences and the wisdom of people; people who are best qualified to comment on their own lives and paint their own picture of their potential. I have a passion for creating change and I believe change occurs when researchers and participants become co-researchers and work together “arm and arm.”

However, there are often various other political agenda items working against PAR moving more into the mainstream of academic life. Researchers may fear losing their power and actively avoid working collaboratively with participants. Their fear has grounds since PAR challenges prevailing nodes of power and the way grants, academic credibility, and professional standing tend to be assessed. Participants may also resist a PAR approach, fearful of the responsibility PAR gives them and the resulting opportunities for community criticism and judgment. There are systemic barriers to the authentic application of PAR but these barriers can be overcome by building alliances and mutual respect. Rapport and establishing trust are the basic pillars of PAR.

If we truly want to join co-researchers “arm in arm” in social work research there are still some major changes to be made. Social workers apply our profession’s philosophy, ethics, and values in practice but have not been as rigorous and consistent in applying them to research and knowledge generation. This needs to change. More importantly, social work research should be grounded in an epistemology that respects all our professional commitments and ethical imperatives. Social justice inquiry, especially PAR, offers one such opportunity to align social work practice and research.
Section III: Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an Emancipatory Methodology

This section describes participatory action research and its core philosophies in an inquiry process. This section is structured into three parts, including: (1) an overview of participatory action research; (2) key considerations for knowledge building process; and (3) knowledge building methods in PAR.

An Overview of Participatory Action Research

This section highlights the emergence of PAR with a focus on the historical development and its context. The key theoretical foundations of PAR and its goals are also briefly examined. The section will conclude by discussing some key considerations for the knowledge co-generation process.

The emergence of PAR. PAR originates from “action research” of Kurt Lewin, an American social psychologist at the Center for Group Dynamics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, USA, in 1946 (Kemmis 1993; McTaggart, 1997). Kurt Lewin suggests that by working with those who practice in a field to generate information and knowledge through actions, transformative impacts will be achieved. McTaggart (1997) argued that action research is a learning process encouraging an entire team to share and learn from their experiences and make this experience accessible to others. Kemmis (1993) identified three main types of action research—technical, practical, and emancipatory or critical action—and further states that emancipatory action research’s insistence on minimizing the distance between researchers and research participants by promoting a high level of participant involvement in the research process led to the prominence of the term “participation” in PAR.

PAR was developed as an emancipatory inquiry informed by popular education (Maguire, 1987). Tandon (1981) suggested that the involvement of adult education researchers in
community-based research in Tanzania in the 1970s led to the first basic conceptualization of PAR and provided the rationale for PAR’s emergence. These early expressions of what would become formalized as PAR suggested that the traditional research worldview is insufficient and oppressive since knowledge is controlled by a dominant paradigm and by powerful people and ultimately increases and perpetuates exploitation, oppression, and marginalization of less powerful people.

PAR is profoundly rooted in the adult education movements of Latin America and the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Fals Borda, 1987; Levine & Yeich, 1992). Freire fundamentally believed that critical reflection was important for personal and social transformation (Maguire, 1987; McIntyre, 2002; Selener, 1997). According to Maguire (1987), the ideas of Freire on popular education are grounded in the key principles including people in oppression are leaders in social activism, empowerment contributes to liberating people and knowledge is constructed through interactions and dialogues.

**Theoretical framework.** PAR is a value-based research approach/methodology that rejects positivism and claims of neutrality (Fin, 2008; Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005; Reid, 2004). Orlando Fals-Borda (2001), a founding PAR theorist, claimed that PAR was developed to invite community members to participate in research which was aimed toward their benefits. Orlando Fals-Borda (1988) defined the PAR methodology as “a complex process which adult education, situational analysis, critical analysis, and practice as sources of knowledge for understanding new problems, necessities and dimension of reality” (p. 85). Knowledge is the most powerful source of power and control and dominant power is derived from control of the processes and products of knowledge construction (Maguire, 1987). The author further stated that PAR is not simply a research production methodology but is an experiential and dialectical
methodology that takes seriously personal and collective behaviour. Similarly, PAR is a methodology for participatory and democratic inquiry which uses reflection and action to develop practical solutions to issues of oppression and community wellbeing (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2006).

Freire’s concepts of conscientization and critical reflection are the major focus of PAR (Selener, 1997). PAR offers the chance for people to critically analyze existing social, political, and economic situations as a group, especially the oppressed populations, to come together and act collectively to address immediate problems and advocate for social justice. Boal (1979) argued that the process of education for concretization encourages passive audiences to become active actors and make decisions for themselves with their transformative capacities instead of watching perpetrators who not only make decisions for them but also act for them. Freire (1972) championed investigations that allow people to identify and analyze their own situations/issues in response to oppressions.

PAR is done in collaboration with those who experience the issues and problems under investigation (Herr & Anderson, 2005). PAR involves collaboration between participants and a social researcher in which the roles of participants are important in every stage, from problem formulation to identification of possible strategies to involvement in actions and disseminations of findings (Park, 1993). Through a critical dialogue, a subject-object relationship in PAR is transformed into a more democratic subject-subject relationship (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Herr and Anderson (2005) posited the aim of PAR is to “introduce the possibilities for change on multiple levels” (p. 72). The authors further (2005) claimed that PAR changes the traditional role of the researcher from “objective” external researcher to “committed” co-investigator or “facilitator” and changes community
members/participants to “peer researchers” or “co-researchers” or “co-investigators in PAR.” These terms are used interchangeably in this paper.

Praxis is the most crucial tenet in PAR. For Fals-Borda (1979), praxis as a means of transformative impacts is considered a liberation process in critical social science committed to actions. This paradigm stands in direct opposition to the positivistic paradigm view of praxis as a technological manipulation and rational control of social process. Fals-Borda emphasizes the need to combine academic knowledge with indigenous and popular knowledge in a revolutionary way to abolish an unjust system. Selener (1997) argued that the existence of indigenous, popular, and common knowledge is not recognized in the scientific knowledge world. By recognizing the need for people to develop their own consciousness-raising and knowledge generation, PAR provides people with an opportunity to generate social power to challenge dominant consciousness (Rahman, 1991).

McTaggart (1981) affirmed that “PAR begins small and is developed through the self-reflective spiral: a spiral of cycles of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting and re-planning, further implementation, observing and reflecting” (p. 175). This action-reflection-action process is also known as praxis or a dialogical process (Park, 1993). The dialogical process promotes critical consciousness of participants, empowering them and promoting personal and social transformation (Fals-Borda, 1987; Maguire, 1987; McTaggart, 1991; Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). In this way, PAR focuses on participatory inquiry, minimizing the distance between participants and researchers and establishing power relations in a democratic way (Bargal, 2008; Fals-Borda, 1988, 2001; Fin, 1992; Koning & Martin, 1996; Maguire, 1987; McTaggart, 1991; Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). PAR supports the “voices from the margins in speaking, analyzing, building
alliances, and taking actions” (Finn, 1994, p. 22). PAR is not simply a research methodology but an experiential, dialectical, and collective process. The process values personal and collective behaviors and produces social change in a context of unequal power relations. Therefore, PAR is different from other forms of traditional inquiry (Fals-Borda, 1988; Finn, 1994; Park, 1993).

PAR combines three major activities: investigation, education, and action (Maguire, 1987). PAR is a method of investigation of issues that amplify the participation of oppressed people in identifying causes of the problems, analyzing the problems and finding ways to address the issues collectively through praxis. PAR is an educational process that helps both researchers and co-researchers engage in critical dialogues and analytically understand the social processes and structures of identified issues. PAR is an action that provides opportunities for co-researchers and researchers to engage in developing short-and long-term strategies and actions for addressing the identified issues. Upon acknowledging PAR philosophies, especially in academia, it is fundamental for researcher to be cautious about the legacy of research proposed by Smith (1991):

research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary...It strips up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful… The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful membered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples. It is a history that sill offends the deepest sense of our humanity. (p. 1)

In addition, while discussing theoretical frameworks, it is equally important to talk about and collective inquiry and solidarity approaches as fundamental research methods of PAR, employed in this study. The following section presents briefly on both approaches and their
alignment with PAR as an emancipatory research which was acknowledged while doing this study.

**Collective inquiry approach.** Collective inquiry involves collaboration between participants as co-researchers and a researcher in which the participants must be involved in every stage, ranging from problem formulation to the application and assessment of findings (Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). McTaggart (1998) highlighted a distinction between the two terms ‘involvement’ and ‘participation’ in collective inquiry. Participants are consulted for their opinions as part of their ‘involvement’ in the research process and sometimes they are also considered as informants, whereas ‘participation’ involves participants taking ownership of the research process, knowledge creation, and the development of practices to improve their lives.

Cornwall (1996) offered a comprehensive framework that provides a continuum of participation in collective inquiry from co-optation, compliance, consultation, cooperation, co-learning, and collective action. This model can be used to illustrate the level of participation in collective inquiry. In the co-optation approach, the involvement of local representatives is tokenized; participants have no tasks to do and thereby no power in the process of research production. In the compliance approach, the researcher develops the agenda for the study and assigns certain tasks to local people; with no real shift in power, research is conducted on the people, and hierarchy is developed, implemented and, quite possibly, entrenched. The consultation approach gives more weight to the role of participants—it consults research ‘objects’ for their opinions—but does not involve them in decision-making. The final points along the continuum distinguish themselves with the aspiration to carry out research for and with the people. In the cooperation approach, the researcher works with local communities; local communities get opportunities to help determine priorities but the researcher maintains
responsibility for guiding the research process. In the co-learning approach, the researcher and local people share their knowledge to create new understandings and they work collaboratively to form action plans; this is an amalgamation of research *with/by* the people. Finally, in the collective action approach, local people set their agenda for action plans and mobilize to carry it out in the absence of the researcher; there is no researcher in this model as has been described so far in this paper. In collective action, research is conducted *by* the people, collectively, they produce meaningful and practical knowledge from their own experiences and apply this knowledge to collective actions and transformative ends. The collective action approach is further along the continuum than PAR as PAR primarily focuses on *with/by* and even go beyond *to* *by* which advances sustainability of collective actions as suggested by Boyake (2007). In addition to the collective approach, the subsequent section explores how the solidarity approach proposed by Reynolds (2010) is aligned with the principles of PAR, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

**Solidarity approach.** The solidarity approach proposed by Vikki Reynolds in 2010 highlighted the importance of solidarity group and their roles with transformative impacts in response to the structural violence and oppressions. This approach is aligned with the PAR values and goals. The solidarity approach encompasses “an ethical stance for justice-doing which a response to the suffering, indignity, and violations of social justice” (Reynolds, 2014, p. 128). The author further suggested that it is fundamental to do practice and inquiry through social justice in this unjust society that does not respect human rights and perpetuates oppressions. Reynolds (2010) posited that solidarity shows the rays of hopes and practices which motivate people to move collectively towards fostering sustainability with transformative ends. Reynolds (2014) argued that “the solidarity approach led to an engagement with inquiry rather than
research”, allowing the generating meaningful dialogues through an organic process (p. 134). Overall, the solidarity approach focuses on both practices of “resisting oppression and promoting social justice” with liberatory intentions (Reynolds, 2010, p. 18). The following section presents the major goals of PAR which are aligned with the purpose of solidarity and collective approaches-to pursue social justice with transformative capacities through collective acts.

**The Goals of PAR**

The PAR process begins with a problem and in response to the problem the collective process actually starts. The major aims for PAR are twofold: (1) to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people through research and socio-political action and (2) to empower people at a deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own conscientization (Fals-Borda, 1988; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Selener, 1997; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997). PAR aims to solve practical problems at the community level; create shifts in the balance of power in favour of marginalized, disenfranchised and traditionally less-powerful groups in society; and raise consciousness among the oppressed.

Further, the collective and solidarity approaches are aligned with the three major aims of PAR, as defined by Maguire (1987). They are:

- To develop liberatory consciousness for both researchers and participants;
- To improve the lives of the oppressed people who are involved in the research process;
- To transform social structures and relationships;

In order to achieve the integrated goals, it is very important to recognize these seven crucial elements of PAR as highlighted by Kondrat and Julia (1997):
• The beginning of PAR may be difficult to pinpoint;
• The PAR group collectively reflects on the issues;
• Popular wisdom, experiential knowledge and cultural know-how must be acknowledged in the process of gathering data through a qualitative and quantitative study;
• The PAR group is involved in actions for social change;
• The PAR group reflect on the intended and unintended consequences of actions taken;
• New actions are planned based on critical reflections on action taken;
• People who form the PAR group have differing status; the reflective process requires that the researchers acknowledge a certain privilege and status and continually examine his or her role, individually and together with others.

While recognizing the seven elements of PAR, it is also equally important to take into consideration the key aspects of the knowledge-building process, especially while choosing methods and actions in PAR, which are discussed in the subsequent section.

**Key Considerations for Knowledge-building Process in PAR**

Based in the principles of PAR, I will present four major key aspects of knowledge-building process that I took into consideration in this study, especially research methods chosen and performative actions. These aspects include: (1) knowledge is co-constructed; (2) PAR is a dynamic, evolving and fluid process; (3) methods are chosen by co-researchers; and (4) levels of participation of co-researchers are heightened.

**Knowledge is co-constructed.** Researcher and co-researchers both became involved in a meaningful way in knowledge-building processes, which is inextricably linked to actions, rather
than traditional approaches where the researcher alone collects data and analyzes it. Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) suggested the terms “data-creation” or “data-generation” to replace the traditional use of the term “data collection” for a PAR study. I believe that “knowledge-generation”, “knowledge-building”, “knowledge co-creation”, and “knowledge-making” are well suited terms for PAR and therefore, these words will be used interchangeably in this dissertation.

**PAR is a dynamic, evolving and fluid process.** Knowledge-making methods are grounded in a dialogical process and in the place where the research will take place. PAR focuses on “knowledge creation in a way that empowers participants who are involved in the study, rather than maintaining the status quo” (Fin, 1994, p. 21). A PAR researcher must choose knowledge-making methods which are rooted in the context of the community where the research will take place (Smith, Willms, & Johnson, 1997). PAR as a dynamic, fluid, and evolving process is developed from the unique needs, challenges, and learning experiences of those involved. Kidd and Kral (2005) argued that “PAR is neither anti-method nor anti-positivism. It is a continuing conversation” (p. 190). Therefore, methods and techniques of knowledge-building and actions are developed over time through action-reflection-action. However, PAR is not a panacea; whenever new actions are recognized and needed other approaches and techniques are always welcomed (Smith, Willms, & Johnson, 1997). Hall (1992) argued that for PAR “there are no methodological orthodoxies, no cookbook approaches to follow” (p. 20).

**Methods are chosen by co-researchers.** Knowledge-building methods are primarily chosen by co-researchers. PAR draws on phenomenology, ethnography, and case study methodologies, especially in the case of early engagement with participants in order to understand their experiences (McTaggart, 1991). Through the avoidance of academic
imperialism, especially in its epistemological base, PAR allows co-researchers to choose the approaches most comfortable to them in the research process and in social actions (Boakye, 2009; Brydon-Miller, 1997; Fin, 1994; Hall, 1992; McTaggart, 1991).

**Levels of participation of co-researchers are heightened.** PAR demands authentic participation of co-researchers in the process of study. Tandon (1988) suggested that authentic participation involves the three components in PAR: (1) people’s role in setting the agenda of the inquiry; (2) people’s participation in data collection and analysis; and (3) people’s control over the use of outcomes and the whole process (p. 13). Compared with other research designs in which research questions are built around methods, in PAR the methods are developed around the problems (Kidd & Kral, 2005). In PAR the participation of co-researchers in meaningful dialogues and actions is more important than methods. PAR allows and requires access to the expert knowledge of participants and values participants’ involvement in choosing methods, techniques, and ultimately actions, based on their comfort, knowledge, skills, creativity, learning, and critical attitude. Kidd and Kral (2005) suggested that “local methods for knowledge gathering must be recognized as valid, as should local process for coming to consensus and taking action” (p. 189).

**Section IV: Knowledge-building Methods in PAR**

In recent years, there has been a growth of participatory research approaches that use a variety of creative methods (Bargal, 2008; Boakye, 2009; Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007; Ngo, 2010; Schneider, 2010; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Theimklin 2007; Valade, 2004). Reviews of dissertations and peer-reviewed research that employ a PAR methodology surfaced the following knowledge generation methods: participants’ group discussions, solidarity team meetings, photovoice, oral history, popular theatre, community seminars, educational

Before I present what methods I used in this study, it is important to review what methods were used in the previous PAR research. Therefore, the next section discusses the rationale for the five methods selected for use in this dissertation for primary sources of knowledge-building: (1) participant group discussions; (2) interviews; (3) arts-based visual methods; (4) writing journal/diaries; and (5) surveys/questionnaires.

Each method will be assessed for alignment with PAR based on Maguire’s three theoretical bases of PAR - research, education, and actions (1987). However, it is important to remember that the role of participants in choosing methods is critical and therefore most methods should be chosen according to participants’ comfort with them.

**Participant Group Discussions**

Participant group discussions are widely used in PAR studies as a key liberatory method (Boakye, 2009; Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007; Koning & Martin, 1996; Ngo, 2010; Park, 1993; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Schneider, 2010; Themklin, 2004; Valade, 2004; Van der Meulen, 2011). Reynolds (2010, 2014) used solidarity team meetings for the participants group discussions. Indeed, participant group discussions/solidarity team meetings are used as a vehicle for praxis, action-reflection-action, and are intended to build/document local knowledge, raise consciousness of participants and researchers, and create conditions for personal and social

Participant group discussions method draws on participatory approaches that allow the voices of those who have subjectively constructed experiences as a result of oppressive structures to inform actions (Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Participant group discussions provides co-researchers and researchers with an opportunity to experience and reflect on the four cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which may occur simultaneously, and evolve through the stages (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Through these cycles, co-researchers are enabled to “take over” and “own” the research (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

A variety of techniques or tools have been introduced in participant group discussions including ice breakers, storytelling, participatory diagramming (Boakye, 2009), motivational games (Arratia & De La Maza, 1997), brain storming, reading news from the newspaper, storytelling, and concept mapping (Themklin, 2004).

The participation of co-researchers in previous PAR studies was authentic and democratic and aligned well with PAR. Through participant group discussion, co-researchers were collectively involved in analyzing their realities to determine what social issues were in need of investigation, determining possible strategies for actions, and moving towards social actions (Boakye, 2009; Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007; Koning & Martin, 1996; Ngo, 2010; Park, 1993; Schneider, 2010; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Themklin, 2004; Valade, 2004; Van der Meulen, 2011).

Through the participation in praxis, co-researchers become more aware, more critical, and more assertive. Co-researchers built their skills and knowledge in areas such as research
techniques, interviewing skills, political advocacy strategies, and technical knowledge (Boakye, 2009; Ngo, 2010; Schneider, 2010, Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Themklin, 2004; Valade, 2004). McTaggart (1997) highlighted that the aim of PAR is the empowerment of oppressed individuals to partner in social change, which must include capacity building of those who participate. In Themklin’s (2004) study, one participant’s report succinctly expressed all these possible outcomes: “I learned self-confidence. I am more thoughtful and active. I can think and answer questions. I am not too shy to participate in group discussions. I am more independent. I know when I should listen and when I should talk. I am confident that I can make the right decision” (p. 308).

Actions begin with the notion that changes and improvements are desirable. Once knowledge is generated through research and education, co-researchers are involved in identified actions. Studies report that co-researchers moved forward towards meaningful actions to address the identified issues and make their lives better based on the identified approaches and they achieved positive outcomes (Boakye, 2009; Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007; Ngo, 2010; Schneider, 2010; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Themklin, 2004; Valade, 2004. In conclusion, participant group discussion method is consistent with PAR values and is therefore a very effective emancipatory approach in PAR. Keep in mind that the term “participant group discussion” was reformed to the term “solidarity group meeting” as the later term speaks to the transformational and experiential learning opportunities for those who are involved in an inquiry process with transformative capacities for collective liberation in this paper.

Interviews

Interviews as data generation methods are also used in PAR (Park, 1993). According to Reinharz (1992): “Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and
memories in their own words, rather than the words of the researcher” (p. 19). Individual interviews may include one-on-one interviews, peer interviews, and interviews conducted by co-researchers, depending on the participants’ preference.

**One-on-one interviews.** In PAR, one-on-one interviews are employed to understand in-depth the situations of participants and their issues (Patton, 2002). Some PAR studies indicate that individual interviews are administered on the basis of the themes that emerged from participant group discussions (Boakye, 2009; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997; Themklin, 2004; Van der Meulen, 2011) and also simultaneously (Ngo, 2010). However, Valade (2004) administered individual interviews with participants before group discussion starts. Boakye (2009) reported that one-on-one interviews “allowed me to pose questions with respect to themes/topics in the interview guide in an open, unrestricted manner which suited the culturally accepted conversational and community styles of the participants” (p. 113).

**Peer interviews.** Peer interviews allow for peer researchers’ life stories to be shared and analyzed critically with a partner from the PAR research group. Peer interviews were employed by Themklin in 2004 and Schneider in 2010. Those studies reported that the interviews provided co-researchers with opportunities to share their own stories with each other and provide constructive comments on their partner’s interviewing strategies. Peer interviewing was found to be very helpful in minimizing nervousness, fearfulness, anxiety or embarrassment on the part of co-researchers while talking about their private lives (Themklin, 2004). For example, Themklin (2004) argued that “this approach was employed as in case of reducing stress and tension by allowing each individual to recognize the common dilemma of being a victim of sexual exploitation” (p. 78).
Interviews conducted by co-researchers. The involvement of co-researchers in developing questions for interviews and conducting interviews outside of their group seem to be a new practice in a PAR study. For example, co-researchers were involved in administering interviews with people outside of the group with schizophrenia who had experienced homelessness in the study of Schneider in 2010. In the interview, one co-researcher interviewed a person outside of the group in front of other co-researchers and then each took a turn at interviewing a different person. This provided them with an opportunity to critique each other’s interview skills and gain from each other’s feedback. In this way, “several group members became extremely skilled interviewers over the course of the project” (Schneider, 2010, p. 43). Schneider (2010) reported that she invited a guest speaker to one of their meetings to talk about how to conduct group meeting and interviews so that co-researchers could enhance their knowledge in interviewing and facilitation skills.

Arts-Based Visual Methods

Arts-based visual methods have been used increasingly in community-based research, especially in PAR studies. They may include a variety of techniques including photovoice, drawing, quilting, painting, and participatory video. The contribution of visual methods to the knowledge-building processes in PAR is significant and therefore these methods are gaining popularity. Although I have mentioned a variety of arts-based visual methods above, for the purpose of this paper, I will not discuss all these methods as most are self-explanatory such as quilting and drawing. Therefore, I will discuss two methods of photovoice and participatory video which could use more explication.

Photovoice. Photovoice as a concept and method for participatory action research was developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, and used first in the Ford Foundation-
supported Women’s Reproductive Health and Development Program in Yunnan, China in the 1990s. Rooted in the theoretical base of democratic and egalitarian ideals, this method involves providing people with cameras so that they can take pictures of their everyday realities, reflect on the images, and interpret them in their own understandings and thoughts (Wang, Yuan, & Feng, 1996). By acknowledging people’s expertise in understanding their experiences and realities, photovoice empowers participants (Molloy, 2006; Wang, Yuan, & Feng, 1996). Molloy (2006) describes it this way: “The power of the visual image is used as a form of communication, while the process of taking photographs and discussing them with others experiencing similar challenges serves to empower participants” (p. 41).

Based on the critical and feminist paradigms, the photovoice method has been used to portray the realities of the people in oppression and the contribution of systems in reinforcing the oppression that is experienced every day (Wang, Yuan, & Feng, 1996). Photovoice aims to “use photographic images… to enhance community needs assessments, empower participants, and induce change by informing policy makers of community assets and deficits” (Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004, p. 49). Molloy (2006) asserted that photovoice engages people in a process to reflect on their subjectively constructed experiences and move towards social actions. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) argued that photovoice has three goals: “(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns; (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs and (3) to reach policy-makers” (p. 560).

Studies using photovoice methods claimed that photovoice is an empowering tool to promote personal and social transformation (Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007; Molloy, 2007; Schneider, 2010; Sutherland & Chang, 2009; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001; Wang,
Yuan, & Feng, 1996). According to Schneider (2010), co-researchers describe the significance of photography as the “photographs convey and decide on the key social and community ideas represented in them” (p. 82). Similarly, in another study, participants report “photovoice is a good method of data collection since it gives what is on the ground and not just in someone’s imagination. We recognized our differences, and maximum cooperation was the outcome” (Fournier, Mill, Kipp & Walusimbi, 2007, p. 16).

**Participatory video/video diaries.** Participatory video, known also as “digital storytelling” or “video diaries,” is a methodology rooted in visual ethnography, sociology, and anthropology (Collier & Collier, 1986). It has been used increasingly in community-based research, particularly in sociological, anthropological and educational research, but not exclusively to community development practices. Participatory video involves a method that “captures the narratives of experiences and lived cultural practices, and visual nature of construction and displays of identities through the use of cultural products” (Holiday, 2000, p. 509). For Burgess (2006), digital storytelling is a “workshop-based process by which ‘ordinary people’ create their own short autobiographical films” (p. 6). Burgess further claimed digital storytelling as “movement is explicitly designed to amplify the ordinary voice” (p. 7). Ball-Rokeach, Kim and Matei (2001) argued that storytelling is “an essential part of people’s path to belonging” (p. 400).

Participatory video method as a process and a product is as significant as still photography because it provides co-researchers with opportunities to develop video, reflect on those videos through the construction of narratives, strengthen their capacities in a reflexivity process, and enhance their knowledge and skills in technology (Holiday, 2002; Pink, 2001).
The participatory video method is considered to be a very effective transformative approach in reaching powerless and disenfranchised people, and working with them in collaboration, aiming for equitable outcomes and emancipation (Fin, 2008; Holiday, 2000; Kindon, 2003; Pink, 2001). For example, Kindon (2003) used this method in his study with Aboriginal people in New Zealand (or Aotearoa as referred to by the Aboriginal people) in 1998 with a vision of transformative capacities, and found it as a very effective participatory tool, allowing co-researchers to critically analyze their own realities and explore the construction of meaning through videos. A different example of using a video diary as an innovative way is demonstrated in Holiday’s queer methodology study in 2000. By using a video camera, participants were asked to “demonstrate visually and talk about the ways in which they managed or presented their identities in different settings such as work, rest and play, in their everyday lives” (p. 509). Pink (2001) argued that using videos in a collaborative project facilitates empowerment of community members and construction of the meaning of realities that informs researchers’ understanding on their subjectivity.

In addition to photovoice and participatory videos, Finn (2008) suggested that social researchers may use different approaches especially in the case of promoting consciousness-raising around the systems perpetuating their oppression, including performing dramas, drawings, paintings, quilting, etc. As I discussed earlier, drawing/art as a data collecting technique was also used within the participatory diagramming method in the study of Boakye in 2009.

**Writing Journals/Diaries**

Writing a personal journal or diary is another knowledge-building method in PAR. Keeping a journal or diary allows participants to reflect on their process in the study in order to
record the progress and improvement (Boakye, 2009; McTaggart, 1991; Themklin, 2004). Through keeping a journal, co-researchers demonstrate their collective progress in practices and their learning, and especially their involvement in actions (Themklin, 2004). Maguire (1991) suggested the following aspects need to be considered in a journal in a PAR study:

(a) Records of their changing activities and practices;
(b) Records of the changes in the language and discourse in which they describe and justify their practices;
(c) Records of the changes in the societal relationships and forms of organization which characterize and constrain their practices;
(d) Records of the development of their expertise in the conduct of action research.

Writing journals or diaries provides co-researchers with an opportunity to record their reflections around their involvement in praxis. This also allows co-researchers to express their feelings such as frustrations, anger, guilt, fear, and hope. It is important to document these aspects on an individual basis in PAR, especially for those who do not feel confident to share their experiences and ideas in a group (Boakye, 2007).

**Surveys/Questionnaire**

The data collection methods of quantitative studies such as surveys and questionnaires are also used as an additional source of data in PAR. Kidd and Kral (2005) stated that “although there is a close fit between qualitative research and PAR, quantitative methods are not ruled out” (p. 190). Studies illustrate that co-researchers can become involved in conducting quantitative studies in the process of their study in PAR (Bargal, 2008; Kidd & Kral, 2005; Law, 1997; Schneider, 2010). This allows participants to actively engage in developing questions for surveys and administering them in order to more broadly understand the identified issues. For example,
Kidd and Kral (2005) reported that co-researchers decided to use questionnaires as an additional source of data in their studies with Aboriginal people in New Zealand, resulting in a large number of questionnaires received in two months.

Given the imperatives of PAR values and its evolving nature, these methods discussed above, especially participants’ group discussions and visual methods, adopt the model of the four ways of knowing or knowledge - experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical (Pyrcz, 2012). In PAR, these methods provide people with an opportunity to use all four ways of knowing and put them in practice as suggested by Pyrcz (2012). To elaborate this, upon using these methods, especially participants’ group discussion, co-researchers have an opportunity to share their own unique life experiences with each other in a group and reflect on them and understand them critically. Through the use of different approaches such as journals, poetry, photography, videos, drawing, and paintings, co-researchers make their presentations to other people such as policy makers and communities as a whole so they can be aware of co-researchers’ subjectively constructed experiences. As a result, a theoretical knowledge is generated based on the co-researcher’s interpretation of the experiences presented. Finally, the combination of the four ways of knowing becomes a meaningful action, known as practical knowledge. Overall, the use of these methods in praxis increases the opportunities for co-researchers to integrate all forms of knowledge for personal and social transformation. In sum, through the use of a variety of knowledge making methods, PAR allows co-researchers to utilize all the four ways of knowledge in a research process.

In conclusion, these methods have been used as a process of empowering, liberating, and consciousness-raising for peer researchers. These methods are consistent with the philosophical assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of PAR. These methods focus on the goals of PAR: to
solve practical problems at a community level, empower oppressed people, and bring about a just society. However, it is important to remember that these methods are not panacea and therefore employing predetermined knowledge-making methods in PAR does not work. I believe that knowledge creation methods in critical research, especially in PAR, need to be chosen by co-researchers based on their interest, skills, creativity, and knowledge. More importantly, in the case of my study, while choosing knowledge-making methods, a natural research setting of a community, where the study took place, needed to be taken into consideration to ensure the methods chosen were culturally appropriate. Therefore, Chapter Four will present how methods were chosen and what methods were found more appropriate for this study in the context of Nepal.

**Section V: Ethical Considerations**

I received ethics certification from the University of Calgary’s Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and conducted the study according to my approved ethics protocol. Subsequently, recognizing that working with vulnerable populations requires some important precautions, I first flew to Nepal where I stayed for a year to conduct this study. I then contacted Charimaya Tamang, the former president of Shakti Samuha, and then met the women in an orientation session organized by the Shakti Samuha, allowing me to introduce myself and develop relationships with them (details will be presented in Chapter Four).

I advised the women that participation for the study was completely voluntary and no honorarium would be distributed to them for their participation. I told them that if anyone chose not to participate in the study, it would not affect any relationships built through the services provided by the shelter staff. In this way, potential participants did not feel coerced or obligated to participate in this research. In addition, participants were advised that they had the right to
withdraw from the study at any time without penalty; however, guidelines were developed in regards to the withdrawal process and use of data from the women who were no longer participating in the study. Ethical dilemmas and my positionality as an insider and an outsider will be discussed in the next chapter.

Summary

The three major social work theories of anti-oppressive practice, feminist, and critical theory were identified as theoretical frameworks for the methodology chosen in this study. Each theory was discussed individually with some major highlights of philosophical underpinnings, and then the chapter presented how all these theories collectively helped me to understand the reintegration issues of trafficking survivors and how reintegration should occur. In addition, my journey to a qualitative approach and involvement in some qualitative studies in the past clearly projected how I got motivated to choose PAR as a community-based research method for this study. This chapter also highlighted the methods used widely in PAR studies with rationales of using the methods. Overall, this chapter presented how I recognized my epistemological and ontological orientations around the collective knowledge-building process.
CHAPTER 4: STUDY PROCESS AND PROCESS OUTCOMES

This chapter presents study processes and process outcomes in detail. As I noted earlier in Chapter One, there is no standard format for the chapters of a liberatory study and therefore, this chapter is designed to capture key conversations, discussions, and collective actions for social change. More importantly, the co-researchers strongly encouraged me to include all the solidarity group meetings, the transformative dialogues and the collective actions that the research team was involved through praxis in this dissertation. This is one of the ways that I can honor the co-researchers for their wisdom and knowledge and the time they invested in this study.

The chapter begins with the discussion of my entry into the community prior to beginning my collaborative journey with survivors in Nepal. I subsequently present how I grounded myself in the context and how the women got involved in meaningful dialogues through praxis. Overall, this chapter is structured into four sections and they are: (1) PAR praxiological framework, proposed by Smith (1997), and the three integrated phases proposed by Kondrat and Julia (1997), Maguire (1987), and Selener (1997); (2) risk assessment and mitigation strategies; (3) challenges experienced and self-care mechanism; and (4) quality and credibility of the study.

Section I: A Collaborative Journey for Knowledge Generation

The PAR praxiological framework proposed by Smith (1997) was employed for this inquiry process. The framework guided me to begin my own journey to this study together with engagement with co-researchers for the knowledge construction process and performative actions. According to the framework, the PAR process consists of spiraling moments of action-reflection-action (praxis) indicating each cycle incorporates past, present and future (Smith, 1997). As outlined in Figure 1 below, the framework offers cumulative moments of the cycle: (1)
knowing the self/quest for being; (2) seeking connections; (3) grouping in context; (4) beginning praxis; (5) engaging in investigation, education and action; (6) experiencing conscientization; and (7) awakening and transforming.

Source: Framework for participatory Action Research, adapted from Smith (1997, p.198)

Figure 1. Praxiology framework for Participatory Action Research

While employing the praxiological framework, I also adopted the integrated phases as proposed Kondrat and Julia (1997), Maguire (1987) and Selener (1997) in this knowledge building process. The phases include: (Phase I) - gathering knowledge of the working area and organizing the research study; (Phase II) - collective knowledge construction process including action-reflection-action, data analysis and interpretation; and (Phase III) – interviews with stakeholders.
It is worth noting here that although I embraced the three phases for this study, they were not linear, as praxis appeared to become an emancipatory tool throughout the study process. For the purpose of this dissertation and based on the nature our study, I added Phase IV—collective actions- in the integrative phases. Figure 2 below depicts all the four phases of this study. The subsequent section demonstrates how I employed a combination of the PAR praxiological framework and the four integrated phases of knowledge construction process in this emancipatory research.

![Figure 2. Integrated phases of this emancipatory study](image)

**Phase I: Gathering Knowledge of Working Area and Organizing the Research Study**

The first phase presents how I got involved in the preparation of this study. This includes:

1. knowing self: quest and tension;
2. grounding context (prior to entering to the community);
3. gaining entry into the community informally: seeking support and collaboration.

**Knowing self: quest and tension.** As I noted earlier in the Chapter Three, while working as an ethnographer in 2004, I had an opportunity to visit Indian brothels and talk to some Nepali women working in the brothels. I recognized the fact that there was a profound learning opportunity for me related to the areas of trafficking and safe migration. But the methodology I employed for the study did not offer the women any opportunities to share their lived
experiences in depth or opportunities for them to get involved in critical dialogue and actions. I then began to feel vulnerable and experienced an enormous amount of tension. As a result, I continued to seek opportunities that allowed me to work in the areas of trafficking.

The study began as my response to an inner tension resulting from personal experiences of the impact of violations of the justice system on women’s lives. The tension helped me in my selection of the research area for the study and was driven by the quest for social justice.

**Grounding context (prior to entering to the community).** Before I begin to present my process for grounding context, it is important to define the term “community” that has been used in this chapter, mainly in this section. The term “community” refers to the group of women who returned to Nepal after being trafficked to brothels in India and who are currently in the reintegration process.

I was aware that living in Canada and conducting a study with trafficking survivors in Nepal could be a challenge for me. For instance, although we had shared the same socio-cultural environment I was afraid if I would be viewed as an outsider. By acknowledging this fact, prior to entering to the community, I began inquiring about what had been done jointly by international and local agencies to address the issues of sex trafficking and reintegration in Nepal. I began this inquiry after I enrolled in the doctoral program with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary in 2010.

During my visit to Nepal in 2012, I recognized that very few NGOs such as Maiti Nepal, Shakti Samuha, and Asha Nepal were working significantly in the areas of anti-trafficking interventions. I contacted the chairperson of Maiti Nepal, Anuradha Koirala, Cable News Network (CNN) Hero of 2010, through one of my co-workers from Tribhuwan University with whom I worked until I immigrated to Canada in 2005, and shared my research plan with her. I
then asked Ms. Koirala if there were any possibilities for me to work as a volunteer in her shelter so that I could make connections with trafficking survivors as well as establish rapport with them through volunteerism. Since I did not get any response from her of emails, I changed my mind and thought of contacting some other agencies who might be interested in the work I was going to do.

Due to limited time, as my holiday in Nepal was about to finish, I became nervous about the likelihood I would secure the partnerships I needed for my research project. In the meantime, my brother-in-law, late Shanti Ram Sharma, who was working as a Joint Secretary with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, shared with me the work his Ministry was doing with some trafficking agencies. He recommended I contact Shakti Samuha, an agency that was formed by former trafficked women. I contacted them and shared my research plan briefly with them over the phone and found that they were excited about the study and were willing to meet me in person so that they could learn more about the study. Unfortunately, I was unable to meet them due to time constraints. Leaving Nepal without meeting them made me feel sad and guilty, but at the same time I had hopes that the agency would certainly support me for this study, especially with the recruitment of co-researchers.

After returning to Canada, I completed my candidacy exam and continued connecting with agencies working in anti-trafficking practices in Nepal. Long distance communications through emails became a challenge primarily due to power outages and poor internet services in Nepal. I then decided to meet them in person when I went to Nepal for the study. With exhilaration and excitement, I began my journey for this study on July 18, 2013.

**Gaining entry into the community informally: seeking support and collaboration.**

The second day after my arrival in Nepal, I called Charimaya Tamang, Program Coordinator and
former chairperson of Shakti Samuha. I briefly shared information about the study and also expressed my interest in sharing the research plan in person. I went to meet her the next day in their office located in Dhumbarahi, Kathmandu. When I could not locate their office, she personally came to get me at the main street in Dhumbarahi. I was impressed by her simplicity and honesty; she is one of the renowned people in Nepal who formed Shakti Samuha after she returned from brothels in India. During our meeting, she invited the research coordinator to join the meeting, with whom I shared all the details of the study with a focus on PAR. After hearing the research plan, she clearly indicated her interest to be a part of the study but she was not in a position to make the decision and therefore told me that she would set up my meeting in a few days with Sunita Danuwar, chairperson of Shakti Samuha. As per our conversations, I forwarded my curriculum vitae and a very brief research proposal to her the next day.

I was waiting for her email but I did not hear from her for a week and then I heard on the television that Shakti Samuha received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay award in 2013. I immediately called the research coordinator and congratulated her and the team for this big achievement. I then learned that the chairperson was busy with interviews and meetings with the media. However, she assured me that she would inform me of the meeting time once everything settled down.

I was waiting for their phone call but in the meantime, I broke my left ankle on August 8, 2013 and was directed to wear a cast for four weeks. I was upset and frustrated because going out with a casted foot was not feasible for me due to lack of accessible roads and transportation for people with physical disabilities. However, I called them after a week and was told to come to meet the chairperson immediately and I asked my brother-in-law if he could give me a ride to get there. I reached their office but was told that she was in a meeting; however, she sent another
research coordinator to attend our meeting. In our meeting, I provided her with background of
the study, especially the roles and responsibilities of participants and the agency in the study.
Although they had already participated in a study on reintegration of trafficking survivors, they
determined this was new research since it focused on PAR as a methodology which had never
before been conducted in the areas of human trafficking and reintegration of trafficking survivors
in Nepal.

I came back with some rays of hope that I could certainly start my study in a few weeks;
however, it did not go in the same manner as I anticipated. It took much longer to meet the
chairperson for her final decisions and approval. At last, I met the chairperson along with the
supervisor of hostels and shared the research design of the study in detail, which made her very
excited about the study and the collective works. She recommended I contact the research
coordinator and plan to move forward on this study. At the same time, I expressed my interest to
volunteer at the hostel and asked if there was a possibility for me to work as a volunteer so that I
could build relationships with the women living and working in the hostel. She saw the value of
volunteerism at the hostel, but she was hesitant to provide me with this opportunity because,
especially at the hostel, volunteering was not a common practice and no outsiders were allowed
to enter the hostel in accordance with the policy of their agency. It was apparent that there was
no point for me to have further dialogues on this matter.

I was anxious to begin this study as soon as possible, recognizing the time this type of
study requires and the limitations on my time in Nepal. I was waiting for their formal email on
their support of this collaboration. I was desperate and could not figure out why it was taking so
long for them to make that decision. However, I was confident that the agency had no intentions
to push back the study start date. In my quest to get support for this study, I visited the Social
Welfare Council and met the Director of the Council (MoWCSW), who seemed to be ready to help me out to make the study happen. As a result, they wrote reference letters to agencies, including Shakti Samuha and Terres des Homes, and requested them to provide me the necessary assistance in conducting the study (see Appendix A). This letter certainly helped the research team with Shakti Samuha to make their decisions quickly; the team then provided me verbal and written permission for this study towards the end of September (see Appendix B).

Although I was almost ready to put my feet on the ground, I was still waiting for ethics approval; I had several emails back and forth answering questions proposed by the Ethics Committee. Their concerns were about the safety of research participants and me as the researchers delayed approval. I then contacted Nepali Police and asked them if they could provide me with any support while doing the research, sharing the concerns raised by the Ethics Committee. The Police team assured me verbally that they would certainly provide security, if needed, and I shared this with the Ethics Committee.

In the meantime, Shakti Samuha asked me if I was able to meet some of the women and share my research proposal so the women could start to decide if they wanted to participate in the study or not. Although I did not want to start my study until I received ethics approval, I decided to meet them informally as I saw it was a great opportunity to get to know each other and have more informal conversations. I scheduled a meeting for October 3, 2013 at 4:00pm.

As that first informal meeting approached, I was truly excited to meet the women. I was still on crutches from my ankle injury and therefore asked one of my good friends for a ride on his motorbike. Since it was very difficult to ride a motorbike with crutches, especially in gravel roads, I asked him to take me through good roads. This took a tremendous amount of time, and I was late for the meeting. Before I reached my destination, the fact that seven women were
already in the room and were anxiously waiting for me made me embarrassed. I still remember
the moment I was entering the room; I was very nervous and panicking for a number of reasons:
firstly, I was hesitant to introduce myself to them as a researcher as I had my intention to meet
them first as a volunteer at their work place; secondly, I was worried if they were not interested
in the study; and lastly, I was not certain about who was attending this meeting. As soon as they
saw me in crutches, they seemed to be very uncomfortable. Later they expressed their sympathy
on my situation and also apologized for losing their patience while they were waiting for me. I
learned that they were about to leave when I got there. One of the women who seemed to be
confident said, “Poor you! You came all the way here to meet us and we were thinking you
should have come on time if you were truly interested in meeting us”. I smiled and expressed my
appreciation for their honesty.

I was impressed by the room setting. The two low tables were in the middle of the room
surrounded by the women, who were sitting on the floor. I truly believe that this type of setting
promotes more equitable power dynamics between a researcher and participants and supports
people to build their confidence in a group. I made eye contact with everyone, smiled, and took
an empty place on the floor, with notable difficulty because of my injury. I then expressed my
greetings by saying “Namaste”, a traditional greeting in Nepal for both hello and good bye,
which can be translated to “I salute the God that you have in your soul”. Everyone responded to
my greetings by saying the same “Namaste, Madam.” I felt uncomfortable by the term “Madam”
as it clearly indicated the power differences between me and the other women. However, I did
not want to tell them this in the very first meeting as I did not want to appear critical of their
choices. I know the word Madam is very common in the Nepali context these days and may not
have had the meaning I was assuming.
The room became very quiet for a while. The women seemed to have lots of curiosity about me and the study. I sensed some trepidation as well, since the women were not sure what I would be asking them in the meeting. Without saying any words, I put on the table the snacks I brought for the meeting and asked people to take one; this helped engage them in conversation. I introduced myself and shared how my experiences in visiting brothels in India motivated me to conduct this study. My story seemed to put the women at ease and encouraged them to ask me some questions related to my visit in brothels and the women I met there.

I then invited them to introduce themselves by sharing their names, their birth place, and their hobbies or strengths. This process seemed to help them become slightly more comfortable as they asked questions about each other’s strengths and also expressed surprise at the things they were learning about each other. More interestingly, the rapport we were building gave me the chance to hear that they were not initially willing to meet me when they were told about me and my study on the area of reintegration of trafficking survivors. On behalf of the group, one of the women said, “There are so many researchers who come from different countries to conduct research on trafficking issues. We were often asked to share our experiences in trafficking with a focus on brothels, and this makes us feel angry. We absolutely do not want to be interviewed for and support this type of research.” Another woman added, “Prior to meeting you, we were wondering who the hell the researcher was who came from Canada to research on us.”

My intention for the meeting was to meet the women and build relationships with them; I had no intention to speak about the study. But one of the women asked me to share about the study as everyone was interested in learning about this. I briefly highlighted the study and its methodology. The same woman then asked me to differentiate the studies that they had been interviewed for and the study that I was proposing. I was extremely happy to see how eager they
were in knowing more about the study but I was hesitant to talk about PAR and its tenets and time commitments on the first day as I was worried this would make them overwhelmed. I wanted to establish trust among them before I discussed the study in detail, including the process of the study, anticipated length of research, and its implications for a long-term commitment. But I felt I had to change my plans and respond to their questions since that too is a way of building trust and rapport.

It became clear to me that the women saw value in the proposed study when I introduced it as a collaborative project that would consider them as co-researchers who would be significantly involved in this research process, especially their roles for praxis (action-reflections-actions). Further, they seemed to appreciate the fact that they would not be interviewed and asked to share on their trafficking experiences in brothels in India, since such interviews tend to make them emotional and inconsolable. The women were very interested in this study after I made my commitments to sharing power with the group and explained what the process looked like.

The only discomfort arose when the women found out that we would not immediately move forward with the study due to the delay in obtaining ethics approval. They were disappointed and confused as there is no such system of ethics approval for research in Nepal. I finished the meeting telling them that I would contact them again after I received approval to see if they were still interested in joining me on this collaborative journey. As per their request, I also provided them with my contact number.

Interestingly, one of the women called me a week later and asked if we were meeting soon. Since I was still waiting for ethics approval, I could not meet with them to talk about the study formally and therefore said that once I received the approval I would definitely call out for
a meeting. I was surprised to see how they were excited about the study when she said, “You know we talked about you and the study after our last meeting and decided to meet you again and learn more about the study. We all are very excited about this new concept.” After hearing this, I felt I should meet them, based on their availability. The women provided me with a date and time for our next meeting which we scheduled for November 14, 2013. I wanted to ensure that this meeting would not be going against the rules of the Ethics Board so I contacted my supervisor, Professor Daniel Wulff, who suggested that it was not appropriate to meet them as participants of the study in a formal way, but it was completely acceptable to meet them informally and build relationships.

On November 14, 2013, I arrived 30 minutes ahead of our meeting scheduled for 1:00pm. Some women came early, which provided me with an opportunity to socialize and mingle with them before everyone gathered. There were six people attending the meeting including two new participants who came along with Charimaya Tamang, project coordinator, who just came to say hello to me and explore how things were going with us. We started our group conversations by sharing our experiences in the last meeting. Not everyone was involved in the process; however, a few women reflected that they felt honoured by the way I talked to them in the last meeting. I became very happy as I was not sure how the women thought about me and the study in our last meeting. One of the women said:

If we choose to participate [in] this study, I think this is the first time we are getting an opportunity to do research on our own way and none of us are going to be interviewed. Wow! This also gives us a chance to explore some actions for anti-trafficking interventions. I am so excited.
I then responded to her very respectfully by thanking her and saying that I still needed to wait for ethics approval for the study. Surprisingly, some of the women asked if they could write a letter to the Ethics Board and request to provide approval for this study as they were truly excited about this opportunity and did not want to lose this learning opportunity. I was extremely pleased to see their energy and spirit to make this project happen. Then one of the women who had good handwriting began to draft a letter in Nepali language. I was subsequently asked to see if any changes were required and I edited some grammar errors. I then expressed my appreciation to the women for their enthusiasm, time, and the commitments they exhibited towards the study. The letter had to be translated in English and I summarized in a paragraph and later submitted to my supervisor on November 15, 2013.

I was notified that the Ethics Board approved the study on November 19, 2013 and I called a meeting for the next day to share this news with the women (see Appendix C). This allowed me to formally begin the “collective knowledge construction process” that will be discussed in the following section.

**Phase II: Collective Knowledge Construction Process: Beginning Praxis**

Phase Two includes gaining entry to the community and beginning the praxis process that the solidarity team used throughout the study. According to PAR values, our collaborative journey started on November 21, 2013 when the women were formally recognized as “co-researchers” or “peer researchers”. I will use these terms interchangeably in the remainder of this dissertation. In this section, I will first present the profiles of co-researchers and then will discuss the integrated cycle process of the study.

**Profiles of the co-researchers.** A total of eight female survivors were voluntarily involved in this transformative inquiry process. As illustrated in the Table 1, all the co-
researchers were born outside of Kathmandu, mainly at high risk communities for trafficking, who represented both caste and ethnic background. For instance, five co-researchers who identified themselves as ethnic groups whereas three belonged to cast group. The co-researchers ranged from 24 to 40 years of age. Out of eight, four co-researchers were married and two of them had two children and two had one child. With respect to their faith, five were Hindus and three were Buddhist. Different agencies were involved in bringing the co-researchers back to Nepal whereas some reported that Nepal Police helped them to return to Nepal. One co-researcher reported that she was able to escape on her way to the brothel and, therefore, she did not have the same trafficking experience as others. Some co-researchers had similar hobbies such as singing and dancing, while others enjoyed eating, learning, going to temple, etc.
Table 1. This table provides an overview of the profiles of the co-researchers (with pseudonyms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Origin of place</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Caste/ Ethnic</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Age of Trafficking</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Hobby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghaynu Limbu</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rautahad District</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Shakti Samuha</td>
<td>Going to temple, Singing Hymns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shardha K.C</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nuwakot District</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Shakti Samuha</td>
<td>Music, song, poems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalgiri Tamang</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kavre District</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>OREG</td>
<td>Eating, learning things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendo Sherapa</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Makwanpur</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>First home and Shakti Samuha</td>
<td>Reading/making friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratima Limbu</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nuwakot District</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Family/ Nepal Police</td>
<td>Dancing/ Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuska Khadka</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bardiya District</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nepal Police</td>
<td>Dramas/ Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monika Rai</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kavre District</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nepal Police</td>
<td>Traveling/ Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweata Shrestha</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kavre District</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Escaped</td>
<td>Reading books/writing poems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*U- unmarried, M-married, S-separated*
Grounding context: gaining formal entry to the community. In PAR, study methods and techniques should be chosen by co-researchers. I chose a group meeting which is known as a ‘solidarity group meeting’ as a PAR method to conduct the first meeting with hopes that it would help encourage the women in engaging in dialogues and build relationships among us. Therefore, my formal entry to the community started with a solidarity group meeting scheduled for November 21, 2013 which will be presented in the subsequent section.

Solidarity Group Meetings

Thirty solidarity group meetings were organized between November 21, 2013 and June 24, 2014. Eight peer researchers and the researcher participated in this transformative research process. The meeting time was varied based on everyone’s availability. Shakti Samuha graciously agreed to provide their space for our meetings and we mostly met at their headquarters, located in Dhumbarahi, Kathmandu, except in some cases when no rooms were available. I provided lunch and snacks at each meeting and Shakti Samuha provided tea in most meetings. I also covered the expenses for local and national trips including food, accommodation, and travel.

First Day: November 21, 2013 (2:00 pm- 5:00 pm). On this long-awaited day, I was very excited and also fearful, wondering if the women might not come to the meeting after all or if not enough women would be interested in the project. I left home early and reached the meeting venue before 2:00pm. No one was there and it took a further half an hour before the women showed up. They arrived as a group and apologized for being late. Six women attended the meeting in total.

Since we were already late for this meeting, we decided to carry our conversations over lunch. While I had been waiting for the women to arrive, I had developed an agenda for the
meeting. I felt awkward bringing forth the agenda, since as a PAR researcher I did not wish to take that power, but later decided it was fine as we had not started our actual research.

Based on the agenda, I explained the consent form thoroughly and clearly told them that this was completely voluntary and if they chose to withdraw from the study, they could do so (see Appendix D). I also shared that information collected from the individuals would be used for data analysis, and outlined the tentative time frame and their commitments. I encouraged the women to be honest and ask me any questions. Everyone expressed that they were willing to be a part of the project and seemed to be anxious due to their literacy skills to complete the consent form even though some of the women were not able to read. I felt truly embarrassed when I accidentally put the consent form on the table and one of the women said she could not understand as it was in English but she could certainly complete the form as she believed in me. I appreciated her comments but I apologized and said that it was not my intention to show the group the English consent form. I just carried it in case someone wanted to see it. I asked the women to complete the consent forms that had been translated into Nepali. The women expressed their concerns that some of them could not read Nepali fluently as well and thus did not want to read on their own. Then I proposed if I could read the form for them and could explain details if needed. Everyone appreciated the proposal and agreed to provide a verbal consent if they chose to. I thoroughly read the translated consent form and also responded to their questions in regards to their time commitment, goals of the project, and their roles and responsibilities in the project. Since everyone expressed their interests to be part of this study, I invited them to provide their consent for their participation in this study by raising their hands. Once I got the verbal consent from every woman attended the meeting, we decided to do a small break followed by 'chaya' (tea) provided by Shakti Samuha.
After the break, I expressed how much I felt uncomfortable when everyone addressed me as a “Madam” since the word made me feel that there is a distance between us. I further added that I wanted to minimize the distance as we are equal. One of the women said, “I was thinking to call you “didi” (elder sister) but I was not sure how you would react to it as you are very educated person and came from Canada.” While answering her curiosity, I told the group that I was totally fine with whatever the words the women prefer to call me. Then the group decided to say “didi” to me which made me feel we all were equal and also changed the group dynamics. For example, they came to sit close to me in the meeting and socialized with me during the break. I subsequently asked them how they wanted to be called and everyone preferred the term “bahini” (younger sister) with their actual name.

I then welcomed all the women as co-researchers to this study and simply talked about this project including its goals and the philosophical assumptions of PAR. After a while, the co-researchers appeared to be confused and overwhelmed by all the information. Therefore, I wanted to do something different that would make them enjoy themselves and would bring their energy back. I asked the women for their thoughts about developing some ground rules for the group that would be used during the entire study. Some of the women did not understand what that meant, but when we used the Nepali word for this term the idea was appreciated. I facilitated this exercise and encouraged the women to openly share their thoughts that they wanted us to follow throughout the project. I could see that only a few women were actively engaged in the process and the rest were very silent and seemed to be very nervous and confused. I was not quite sure if they chose to be silent or there was something that made them quiet.

Recognizing the importance of equal participation in PAR, I wanted everyone to get equally involved in this study from the very beginning. By using a different approach, I asked
them to break into small groups of three and share their opinions/thoughts on ground rules in their groups. This worked perfectly and I found that everyone was speaking and providing inputs in their groups. I then asked them to share their discussion in a larger group and asked if anyone was interested in writing down the discussions. Since no one wanted to take this role, I started recording the outputs of each group discussion. Not surprisingly, the team came up some ground rules for the study:

1. Respect each other’s time;
2. Respect other’s opinions and values;
3. Not to take anything personally;
4. Listen to others;
5. Only one person can talk at a time;
6. Cell phone switched off throughout the meeting;
7. Maintain privacy and confidentiality;
8. Create a learning environment for each other;
9. Be non-judgmental;
10. Not to share anything that would make people uncomfortable.

It was undoubtedly a very heavy day for the group; however, they appeared to be extremely energized and excited as they expressed surprise that they had spent almost one hour for this exercise to complete. While developing the ground rules, the group came to recognize that some supplies were required for group meetings in the future. I then asked the group to prepare a list of supplies to purchase, and after five minutes the list was developed. I was surprised when one of the women who barely talked in the last meeting asked if we could also
buy some colourful pens just in case they were needed. A few women graciously agreed to buy
the supplies as they knew the stores carried the listed supplies. I was truly impressed by the fact
that the group already started taking ownership of the project in such a short period of time.

Due to the unpredictable nature of their work schedule, the group decided not to pick a
date in advance for future meetings. Yet when one of the women suggested a date (1 pm on
December 2) for the next meeting, everyone agreed. Before we concluded, I provided a clear
message that lunch would be served in each meeting as a few women were not aware of this and
had their lunch just before they came to this meeting. I also asked if they had any preference for
food and I received a list of the food for the next meeting. Before I left, I asked the group what
they wanted to do in the next meeting, and one of the women said, “I still want to know more
about this project and to spend some time to understand how this study looks like”. They further
asked me if there were any studies conducted in general using PAR, and if so, they wanted to
know what methods had been used previously. I wanted to ensure that everyone was fine with
this agenda for the next meeting and everyone echoed agreement.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The major highlights of the day are
as follows:

1. I explained the consent form thoroughly and the women provided me a verbal consent for
   their participation in this study.
2. As a group, ground rules were developed for the entire research study.
3. Co-researchers exhibited that they were belonging to this study by taking an initiative of
developing the list of supplies required for our group meetings.
4. The women called me “Madam” in the last two informal meetings which now shifted to
   “Didi” (elder sister) which showed we were in the process of building relationships.
**Personal reflections.** Though it was just the first day of our meeting, I felt I was comfortable with the group and vice versa. Subsequently, the co-researchers took the initiative to develop a list of supplies to purchase for meetings and they appeared to be very excited. For example, one of the women seemed to be excited and she said:

*Sathi (friends), where is a white paper? I can certainly write the names of supplies that I think we need for our meetings. Ladies, if you think I missed something that should be on the list please tell me; I am so excited about this project. I can’t wait.*

**Day Two: December 2, 2013 (1:00 pm-4:00 pm).** The meeting started with sharing a meal together and then enjoying an ice breaker exercise. Seven women attended the meeting. I recognized that some women were very silent and were not engaging themselves much in conversations and thus I began the meeting with the exercise called “Truth and Lie.” We all enjoyed the game. In fact, we laughed and had lots of fun for almost ten minutes. After the exercise, I asked the women to share their reflections about the game. Everyone expressed that they enjoyed the game and felt energized for the meeting. One of the women said, “I don’t remember the time when laughed and cheered like this at work. While playing the game today, I totally forgot who I am and what I do.” She further asked if each meeting could be started with some exercises and games like today and everyone echoed her.

I then shared the agenda for our meeting of that day based on the group discussions in the last meeting and also asked if the group wanted to add anything to the list. One of the co-researchers asked me if we could review the ground rules developed in the last meeting as she wanted to add one rule to the list. She wanted everyone to confirm their attendance by the morning of the day scheduled for a meeting for food purposes. She further added that “Rita didi brought lots of food last time and some people did not show up, so it would be nice if everyone
became very thoughtful and respectful to her. Please let Rita Didi know if you folks cannot come to a meeting”. Although everyone appreciated her, a few people seemed to be unhappy as they thought she was referring to them as they were absent last time.

Moving into our agenda for the second meeting, I talked about PAR, highlighting the methods chosen in previous studies, the concept of praxis, and shared responsibilities of researchers and co-researchers. I recognized that there was lots of curiosity and confusion around the information provided, which made them exhausted and therefore the group decided to take a small break.

After the break, I invited the women to share their learning in pairs and come up with some methods they wanted to use in this research, including any new methods if they had any other ideas. Once the group discussed these in their small groups, they were invited to share in the larger group, which I documented on the flip chart. Then I invited each co-researcher to prioritize the methods documented in the list. After a long discussion, the group unanimously agreed to continue to use solidarity group meetings. They picked some other tools and techniques for this study, and also expressed their openness to welcome any other new tools if anyone identified them as effective later. The tools chosen for the study are as follows:

1. Solidarity Group Meetings;
2. Newspaper reading (at the beginning of the solidarity meetings);
3. Ice breaker exercises (at the beginning of the solidarity meetings);
4. Peer interviews;
5. Stakeholders interviews;
6. Reflective diaries;
7. Arts-based method: Drawings and poems;

8. Photovoice.

Not everyone was involved in the methods selection process as some people were very shy and not outspoken, but everyone was engaged with their peers while discussing methods. This clearly showed that they were in the process of taking ownership of this study. While choosing methods, especially the photovoice method, we also had an opportunity to talk about the pictures I had placed on the table to help us understand how photovoice methods worked. I also asked the women if they could get started taking picture and/or pick some picture if they already had picture they could use. They were informed that these did not need to be limited to reintegration. Although some women agreed to take picture, I was not certain if everyone understood the photovoice process.

It was time to end the meeting and I asked if anyone wanted to facilitate the next meeting or bring an ice breaker exercise for the beginning of our meeting. Through this process I hoped to build their facilitation and leadership skills. Everyone looked at each other, but none said they would take a lead role for the meeting. One co-researcher said, “I would like to do [it] in the future but not the next one as I still need to build my confidence and learn from you.” With everyone nodding their head in agreement, I found that they had the same feelings. I asked the group if they wanted to bring their pictures to share with us in the next meeting, to which everyone agreed. Finally, we picked the date for our next meeting, December 13, 2013. Based on the discussion, one of the co-researchers graciously agreed to call and remind other co-researchers about this meeting.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The major achievements of the day are as follows:
1. The solidarity group expressed that they as a group had lots of laughs and fun.

2. Both the co-researchers and I recognized that the type of conversations and exercises helped us to build relationships and trust.

3. The co-researchers indicated that the meeting helped them to broaden their knowledge on PAR and its methods.

4. The group identified some research methods/techniques to employ for the study.

**Personal reflections.** I was very impressed by the way they were exhibiting how keen they were in this learning process and wanted to utilize each and every second. While discussing methods to choose for this study, we noticed that the process was unexpectedly lengthy and required a tea break; on the one hand, some of the women wanted to go for a break and on the other hand, one of the women said:

> Oh! Friends! Please focus on the task and let’s get done this work first. I think if we are able to finish the task early, we can learn more today. Therefore, friends, do not spend time on other things. Let’s work together to complete this first.

**Day Three: December 13, 2013 (1:00 pm -3:30 pm).** The meeting started at 1:00 pm with six people present. The rest of the people sent regrets as some urgent errands came at their work. Since the women did not want to develop an agenda for the meeting in advance, we did not have the agenda for that day except an ice breaker exercise. Therefore, once we met, I asked them to share the agenda items that they wanted to discuss today. Everyone was silent. By breaking the silence, I started sharing some items and asked for their approval and then we moved to an ice breaker exercise.

The ice breaker exercise was called “passing two things.” I asked the group to make a circle and passed a pen from my right-hand side by saying this is a pen that I bought yesterday
for our meeting. Similarly, from a left-hand side I passed a pencil by saying this is a pencil and my sister gave me this pencil for me to draw pictures. Within five minutes, the game became more intensive when we were confused about the pens and their respective stories. We played the game for almost seven minutes and everyone enjoyed the game. After the game, I asked everyone to share their reflections about the game, but not everyone seemed to be willing to share this as there were still some people who chose not to speak in the room. The co-researchers identified that it was a truly fun game and enjoyable and made their brains very active; however, it was a bit stressful in terms of things coming from two different sides and the description that needed to be remembered. One of the women shared that she had learned that it is important to pay attention when doing multiple tasks.

The second activity of the day was sharing pictures with the group. Only one co-researcher remembered to bring her picture, but she asked me if I could share my pictures first as she was not sure about the process. I first showed the pictures to everyone and then described the importance of the pictures to me. Then she began to tell her story based on the picture which was taken in her village with her family after she came back from the brothels. We all became a bit emotional. I asked the group to take a short break so that we could each rest a bit from this experience.

In the process of moving into the next agenda item, the group reviewed the methods we chose last time and made some adjustments on the list of methods. For example, some of the women indicated that writing a diary was not a good idea for a couple of reasons: firstly, they did not have enough time and secondly, not everyone could clearly express their feelings and articulate what they wanted to say in Nepali. By recognizing different strengths of the women, I proposed if they could write a poem and/or draw some pictures depending on their abilities and
skills instead of writing the diary. Everyone agreed to it and one of the co-researchers shared a poem she wrote last week. The poem was amazing; it was all about her pain and anger towards the people who sold women. In the meantime, one of the co-researches shared:

Although we chose “reading newspaper” as a method to discuss gender discrimination and violence against women, I was just thinking of not using this as we do have our own powerful stories. I would prefer to share own stories instead. We have good enough stories to talk about and learn from each other.

Everyone appreciated her for the great idea and, therefore, I removed two methods from the list including “daily diary” and “newspapers reading.” In the meantime, some women indicated that they wanted to learn more about the photovoice process. We then talked about it and I encouraged them to take some pictures that reflected their lifestyle including their reintegration experiences and also to bring pictures with some narrations.

By acknowledging the fact that a few women were still not feeling comfortable speaking in the group meeting I came up with a different strategy. Based on my community development work experience with the City of Calgary, I thought doing a “Tree of Life” exercise would be beneficial for us to build relationships among us, especially my relationship with the co-researchers. Therefore, I talked about the exercise briefly and explained it to the group. This exercise speaks to our life; the roots and trunks represent our past and present respectively and the blossomed flowers represent our goals and aspirations in our life. I asked them to come to the next meeting psychologically and mentally prepared to share their stories. I further added that the story could be anything and not necessarily to be related to trafficking and/or reintegration experience. Some of the women were already exposed to the exercise and they shared that they were not comfortable while doing this exercise in the past. Therefore, they said that they were
not certain as they wanted to be a part of the game as it was very hard to separate their trafficking experience and their present situation. I then said I was totally fine with any decision they wanted to make, and some of the women said they wanted to try the exercise as they were never exposed to this. Also, the group indicated that our ground rules might make them feel more comfortable to do this exercise than they had felt in other forums. Eventually, I decided to use voting as a way for the group to decide how to proceed, and surprisingly, everyone supported the game as a part of the ice breaker exercise.

Before we concluded the meeting, the woman who had taken responsibility for purchasing supplies for our meetings, started distributing supplies. It was very pleasant to observe them while they were choosing colors of a diary and a pen. The next meeting was scheduled for December 26.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The followings are the major highlights of the day:

1. We all recognized that the ice breaker exercise helped us to build relationships among the co-researchers and also in between researchers and co-researchers.
2. By sharing stories about the pictures, the group learned about the photovoice method and got excited about using this method for this study.
3. The group revisited the methods chosen and made some adjustments.
4. The tool “Tree of Life” was unanimously approved to use for the next meeting.

**Personal reflections.** I was truly impressed by the fact that the women chose the methods that would be more beneficial to them for their learning and proposed to revisit the list of methods chosen. People were very honest, especially when they were saying that writing a diary was not their strength and thus they did not want to use that method. Sharing their own abilities,
especially in the group, required an enormous amount of courage and audacity, and this clearly indicated that the individuals gradually started feeling more comfortable with the group.

**Day Four: December 26, 2013 (1:00 pm - 5:30 pm).** On December 26, I reached the meeting venue almost one hour early as I wanted to be ensured that we had all supplies including colored markers, chart papers, and flip charts for the “Tree of Life” exercise. The co-researchers came together at 1:20 pm except one woman who could not attend this meeting due to her health issues.

As per the group agreement, I started the meeting with an ice breaker exercise using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach. I asked the group to reflect on a time and moment that made them very cheerful. Everyone looked at each other but none said anything as they were not sure why they were doing this exercise. I then asked the group if someone wanted to be a volunteer by sharing their reflections, but I assured them that there was no pressure if people chose not to say anything. This made the room silent and I was not sure if they liked the idea and inquired about it. I then found that it was the first time they were provided with this opportunity to share their enjoyable time and moment and thus they were not sure what they could share. One of the women commented:

*I am used to sharing my pain and tragedy of my life with families, friends and researchers who came from abroad and some from here in Nepal. No one had expressed their interests in learning my happiness and joy yet. Hence, I am not sure what you want us to tell you.*

In responding to her curiosity, I told them that they were welcome to share anything they wanted to share. I further said if they needed a bit extra time to reflect and write before they shared their stories, they could certainly do that. Then one of the co-researchers shared, “I don’t
have lots of happiest moments to share and thus whatever I have it is still embedded in my brain”. She then started sharing her stories about the time and period when she was very happy which inspired others to share their stories as well. Everyone became involved in the sharing process and seemed to be very happy while going through exercises. This part of the meeting brought lots of energy in the room that certainly made them energetic and enthusiastic to learn from each other. One of the co-researchers then expressed her interest to do some energetic games in our future meetings as she saw this as a terrific game. I then inquired if anyone wanted to bring some games for our next meeting and also encouraged them to facilitate our meetings in the future.

Moving into the rest of our agenda, I asked the women to pick any colors they wanted and make a tree reflecting their life in terms of who they are and what they wanted to accomplish in their life. I also explained the roots represented our past/heritage and trunks and branches our present and leaves represented our future. I particularly emphasized that “You do not need to talk about your trafficking experience while talking about the roots of the tree.” The women appeared to be very excited about this exercise and then picked the colors and began to make a tree resonating their life. I wondered if ten minutes was enough time, so I checked in with them and they wanted to have a minimum of twenty minutes for this exercise. Interestingly, everyone was very quiet and engaged in making a tree. More interestingly, while working, the women exchanged appreciation to each other’s creativity as they drew their trees very beautifully. After everyone completed their drawings we took a tea break as everyone looked exhausted.

After the break, I asked if someone wanted to share their tree with us and one of the co-researchers stood up, went to the front, posted her chart on the wall and began to share her story. While sharing, she briefly touched on how she was trafficked but she did not tell us the entire
process. I learned that she was able to escape in the middle of her trafficking process and return to Nepal. I was glad to hear that she did not have any sexual exploitation experiences in brothels as others but this made me slightly concerned as she did not meet the required criteria for this study. Nevertheless, I did not want to say anything to her at that time as she already signed the consent form and was involved significantly in the research process from the beginning. Surprisingly, she did not say anything about this when I was explaining the study plan and participant’s criteria for this study. I then understood the reasons why she wanted to go first to share her tree.

Then one by one everyone shared their stories. I must admit it was a very exhausting day for everyone. Interestingly, most co-researchers shared their stories in detail including the process of trafficking and supports received for returning to Nepal. Everyone had heart-breaking stories and one woman shared her experience of staying in brothels as well. She became very emotional and everyone began to cry. One of the co-researchers assured her that she could stop anytime if she needed to and no one was expected to share their stories in that depth. She took that opportunity to stop talking and took a seat at the corner of the room. As a group member, I also shared my tree that highlighted my stories as being a third daughter in my family, how I was treated, and also my experience as an immigrant to Canada.

The day was very intense and exhausting for everyone in the room. The group never had that experience in the past. Although my goal was to reflect on the exercise before we concluded the meeting, I recognized that everyone was ready to leave the room and, therefore, without any delay, I announced adjourning the meeting. Before I left the room, I wanted to check with the woman who was very emotional while sharing her tree, to see if she was fine and needed any psychological assistance but unfortunately, she had already left the room while I was organizing
my belongings and cleaning up. Although most women left the room, I asked the rest of the women if we could pick out the date for our next meeting as I already experienced a challenge while trying to schedule our meeting over the phone. The uncertainty of their work schedules led us to choose the date at another time.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The following are the major highlights of the day:

1. Appreciative Inquiry Approach was used as an ice breaker exercise. The approach helped the co-researchers understand that a coin has two sides. According to the women, they never had an opportunity to reflect on their good memories. One of the co-researchers, for instance, pointed out that she thought that there was always darkness in her life and never got the opportunity to explore the bright side that was also present in her life. She further reported that “because of the study I was able to identify that I also could smile, laugh, and also have lots of fun as others. See, I am not different than others.”

2. It was undoubtedly a very emotional and heavy day for all of us, however, by sharing their own personal stories, the women explicitly exhibited that they had trust in me and the other co-researchers.

3. The solidarity group recognized different contributing factors pushed the women into trafficking.

**Personal reflections.** I used to share my stories using the tool “Tree of Life” in my social work practice in Canada and I always felt that my stories were very powerful and helped people understand immigrants’ issues and experiences. This was the first time I felt I did not have an important story to share with the group. While the women were sharing their stories, I felt for the first time as an “outsider” since I did not have the same experiences as they had. I tried to find
out some commonalities among us but it was simply not easy; their stories were very powerful, projected a miserable situation of their life that made me think about my positionalities. The exercise helped me understand critically how structural violence and intersectional oppressions are deeply rooted in the Nepalese culture and society which made women and children vulnerable to trafficking. I subsequently became very emotional, sensitive, and very furious at an oppressive society and culture which placed them in that situation. I left our session, full of emotions.

Day Five: December 31st, 2013 (2:00 pm - 4:00 pm). On that day, I was very anxious to meet the group because of the intense meeting that we had last time and the way we ran out of time and did not debrief as a group after the exercise. Seven co-researchers were already present before I got to the meeting and one sent me her regrets later due to her daughter’s illness. Some of the women had to go to another meeting at 5 pm and therefore, without any delays, we started our meeting.

Due to the absence of one co-researcher in our last meeting, everyone seemed to be interested in asking her to share her stories this meeting. I asked the group if they wanted to facilitate the meeting and one of the women wondered if she could be a co-facilitator today as she wanted to learn more about facilitation skills. By acknowledging her courage, everyone allowed her to co-lead the meeting and she started the meeting by greeting Namaste.

She asked us to share agenda items to discuss which she recorded on the flip chart. While developing the agenda as a group, I first asked the women what areas they wanted to cover in the meeting today as it was the first day we were going to enter into the research topic. In response to my question, they asked me about my thoughts on the agenda. I then highlighted the first informal meeting where I had told the group that the focus of the study was not about
trafficking issues and thus I said we could certainly start our conversations with the focus on reintegration. There was a pause for a minute and one of the women stated:

_I respect you didi, as you demonstrated how much you do care about us, but I personally think it would be nice to start with trafficking issues before we talk reintegration as they are interlinked to each other. Also, no one can easily understand reintegration issues without knowing trafficking. Everyone! Let’s start with the trafficking topic. What do you think?_

Upon everyone’s approval, the agenda was developed for the day. As a part of the first agenda, the group was asked to reflect on the last meeting, especially on the exercise “Tree of Life.” Each woman shared her reflection one by one and most women said that the day was very intense and made them truly exhausted and drained. One of the women who shared her stories in depth said that she could not sleep for five days as she had a terrible migraine and started reflecting on all the bad memories she had experienced previously in her life. She further added that she thought to call me and talk to me several times, but she did not call me. The same woman further narrated:

_Once I heard one of our group member’s story I started thinking my pain is nothing in front of her. Although we all are survivors, our stories are different and I thought I am not the only one who went through the difficulties. We all have the same pain regardless of our stories. However, I learned today that we had lots of commonalities and lots of differences._

Another woman echoed this point and said that although they were working together for a long time and knew they were all survivors, this was the first time they learned each other’s story and it was very powerful, which made them feel more connected to each other. While this
woman was sharing her trafficking process and situations after the last meeting, I felt guilty and
ashamed that I did not even check-in with the women between meetings to see if they were doing
fine. I apologized to the group as I did not call them after the meeting. I wanted to ensure if
everyone was fine with me calling them at home/cell phone after work as I had never called them
after working hours. Everyone permitted me to call them on their cell phones, however, I was
also cautioned that they might not be able to talk about their personal lives over the phone in
front of their family members. With great respect, I assured them that I would not call them to
talk about anything that would put them in uncomfortable situations. Then another co-researcher
made a very good point. She commented:

*It would have been nice if we had talked right after the meeting last time but everyone
was tired and also left the meeting immediately. After the exercise, I felt very connected
to everyone and also felt trusting you all. Everyone knew I was trafficked but none knew
that the trafficker was my own relative and now I fear for what happens if this would go
outside of this room. I know we have our ground rules and also we trust to each other so
I don’t have to worry about this. This was the first time I shared everything with you and
I am happy that I had this opportunity.*

She also appreciated everyone for being strong while sharing their stories and listening to
others. She was thankful to me and others who created a safe environment for allowing everyone
to share their stories without any hesitation. Another co-researcher added:

*I always see things positively. If we were not trafficked, we would not be here together
now. Therefore, being a trafficked survivor and having all trafficking experiences has
now become my strengths. If I was not trafficked, I doubt if I would be working in anti-
trafficking practices. I am proud of myself. At least, I am helping those children and women who are not different than me.

Similarly, another co-researcher shared her reflections by highlighting the need to understand each other’s pain and experiences and work together to address the issue. She further added:

_I know there are lots of renowned people working in anti-trafficking interventions and it is great, but they do not understand the issue in the same way as we do. I feel bad when they talk about trafficking and reintegration in front of us as if they were the ones who were trafficked._

Another co-researcher echoed this point and commented:

_They are the ones who make rules for us that we need to do this and that and I wonder if they know our problems. You know what! I don’t think anyone understands our pain except us. I thus usually say “Namari Sworgo dekhidekhidaina” (one has to die to see heaven) and also “khukuri ko pir achano le matra jandachha” (only the anvil knows the pain of an axe)._ 

Another woman shared that to hear everyone’s stories built on her self-confidence and self-esteem. She further added:

_I shared my secret of my child abuse experience, probably for the first time in a larger group before I had been trafficked. Then later I started feeling, Oh My God! What must others have thought about me as they did not know about my history at all. I was actually worried about this._

She then made this request of the group: _“We all are in the same organization and we need to work together and recognize each other’s pain and maintain each other’s privacy”. _
Another woman expressed her surprised that she told all her stories in the group since she had never done so before. She further added:

*After I went back from the meeting I thought we all are in the same boat. Earlier, I used to think that I am the only one who had a terrible experience but now I know everyone has the same experience in different ways. I also felt connected to each other and now I can trust you all and hope you maintain the trust.*

Then the meeting co-facilitator invited the woman who was absent in our last meeting to talk about her life based on the “Tree of Life.” Based on the last experience, everyone asked her not to go in depth, and she shared only the story that she felt comfortable with. The co-facilitator then moved on to other agenda for the day and I began discussions on trafficking issues.

I invited people to divide into three groups and discuss trafficking issues, including the causes of trafficking and mechanisms that need to be developed to address the identified issues, and be prepared to share later in the larger group. I also asked them to use supplies such as the flip chart and colored pens and pencils as much as needed. Everyone engaged meaningfully in the small group dialogues. More importantly, the women who were not very outspoken and shy were also sharing their thoughts and recording the discussions on a flip chart. Within twenty minutes, all three groups seemed to be ready to share their group learnings. I asked if any group wanted to volunteer. One of the groups shared their learnings, followed by the other groups, which were recorded by our co-facilitator on the flip chart (the outcomes of the meeting will be presented later in Chapter Five). Although some people had to leave early as they had informed everyone in the beginning of this meeting, they ended up staying till the end because they did not want to miss any of the discussion. They found the discussion very interesting and also important to them as it offered them opportunities to provide more input based on their own experiences.
Conversely, I realized that there were tensions among the group as everyone had a different trafficking experience. For example, some women thought poverty was a major source of trafficking, whereas, other women thought illiteracy and unemployment were the major factors causing trafficking. Before we concluded this meeting, I reminded everyone to take pictures and bring them to the next meeting, scheduled for January 6, 2014.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The key achievements of the day are as follows:

1. The women expressed that they felt more connected to each other after the exercise “Tree of Life.”
2. The women were educated by the story shared; they found that they were not alone in the world and also explored some commonalities among them. This became a source of inspiration for the group to work together in anti-trafficking efforts.
3. By listening to the women who felt unwell after the exercise, I came to realize that I should have contacted them to ensure if everyone was fine. This was a very awakening moment for me and I apologized for my mistake.
4. The researcher and co-researchers discussed critically the identifying multi-layered factors for trafficking of women. The co-researchers then recognized the structural barriers that made them vulnerable to trafficking.
5. The co-researchers identified some anti-trafficking mechanisms and strategies that need to be considered for anti-trafficking practices.

**Personal reflections.** Everyone was very honest. While reflecting on the “Life of Tree” exercise at the last meeting, people shared what they felt after learning each other’s story. I was
not aware of the fact that the women did not know each other’s stories, especially when they were working together for many years. As one woman said:

*I don’t know how I went through all my stories as it was not my intention. I have known all of you for a long time except didi. You know because of her I feel like I am sharing everything. I truly mean that. Actually, I felt good after sharing my stories.*

**January 6, 2013 (meeting cancelled).** According to the schedule developed at the last meeting, I bought some food on my way and reached the meeting venue at 1:00pm but I was surprised to see no one there. I waited for almost 15 minutes and then contacted some women who informed me that they would not be coming to this meeting as they were busy working at the hostel and a couple of them took some kids from the hostel to the hospital for their check-up. In the meantime, I saw two women coming to the meeting who came directly from their meeting outside of their office. I was disappointed for not being informed about their absenteeism. One of the women asked me if I had provided an update on the research process to the research coordinators. Although I sent my update twice to one of the research coordinators through email, I had not met them in person since the research started. I got suspicious if everything was fine and found that they wanted to meet me and talk more about the meeting time. We decided to cancel the meeting as we did not have many people present and I asked them if they could take the food and share it with their family. Before I left, I called the research coordinators and set up the time for our meeting, scheduled for January 8, 2015 at 3:00pm.

**Day Six: January 8, 2013 (3:00 pm – 4:30 pm).** On January 8, I had a meeting with the research coordinators at noon in Shakti Samuha’s main office (details of the meeting are provided below). After the meeting, I proceed towards our group meeting venue scheduled for 3:00pm. Seven women were present at the meeting. Without any delay, I asked if anyone wanted
to facilitate the meeting by developing the agenda for the day. The woman who was the co-facilitator at the last meeting agreed to be the facilitator that day and asked the group to provide agenda items for our discussion. She recorded agenda items on the flip chart paper posted on the walls and asked me if we could talk about how to run the meeting today before she facilitated this meeting. We briefly discussed this over snacks. As part of the agenda, the group wanted to know the outcomes of my meeting with the research coordinators.

In addressing their curiosity, I advised them that the research coordinators wanted to have our group meetings not more than twice in a month, especially when it was during the day time. By recognizing the fact that this meeting conflicted with their working hours, I proposed the group with three alternatives: (1) we could meet after 3 pm after their work; (2) we could only have two meetings in a month; and (3) we could meet only on the weekends. In fact, the research coordinator had recommended me to meet around 3pm so they could go home directly from the meeting as it did not take their whole afternoon. The solidarity team was a bit disappointed in the beginning but they realized that their involvement in this study during their work time had certainly disturbed their work. Thus, by recognizing the need to balance their work and the project, they decided to meet at 3:00pm and stay longer and during the weekends, if needed.

In addition, I also shared with the group that the research coordinators said it was not possible for the two co-researchers working in the same shelter, to come to every meeting due to the lack of human resources in the shelter. While sharing this information with the team and as both women were present at the meeting, it was easy for them to make their decision quickly. The women were forced to make decisions in regards to their involvement in this study and they decided to come to the meeting alternatively. Not everyone looked happy with this decision, but it was also important to continue to operate daily work at the shelter.
Once everyone was satisfied with the decision made, the facilitator (one of the co-researchers) asked the group to share their pictures if they had any. There were a few women who brought their pictures and they began to put them on a table and waited for guidance to share. The facilitator provided the group with some instructions based on her experiences at our last meetings and she started talking about the pictures. The photo-sharing process ran until everyone got a chance to talk about their pictures. Not everyone had pictures and those who did not have pictures got inspired by the way the women were talking about their pictures.

By linking to the photovoice exercise, the facilitator invited each individual to reflect on her reintegration process and write and/or draw about her reintegration experiences. All co-researchers including the facilitator worked on the given task individually and after 20 minutes the facilitator asked everyone to share their reflections with the group. Everyone shared their reintegration experiences. Their focus was on the challenges they experienced during their reintegration. While sharing this, a few individuals seemed to be very nervous and their faces turned red. The women then expressed their preference to work in a small group as they did in the last meeting. I was not sure how to respond to this but in the meantime, one of the women posited:

I also felt the same as you ladies were when I was sharing my reflections. In fact, both my hands and legs were shaking. I think this is the perfect tool for us that offered us to talk and ask questions. I think, through the use of this technique, we can certainly build our confidence in public speaking. Actually, the topic we talked made us very emotional but I enjoyed when I took pictures and shared with you all. I like this process.

While everyone was sharing their reintegration experiences, I was recording each of their reflections on the flip chart and then the facilitator invited the individuals to discuss as a group.
on the reintegration issues and/or ask questions/clarifications based on the earlier sharing. The group then discussed reintegration in depth and through this process they were trying to find some commonalities that they have. The group was asked to categorize the challenges they discussed earlier and as a group they did a wonderful job (details will be discussed in Chapter Five). I recognized that everyone was exhausted and wanted to go home because of the very intense work they were involved in and thus I interrupted the meeting and asked the facilitator if we could conclude our meeting today even though there were some agenda items that we did not go through. Everyone appreciated me as a very caring person and then the facilitator announced the session’s closing.

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The major happenings of the day are as follows:

1. The co-researchers shared their pictures related to their lived experiences such as trafficking and reintegration.
2. Knowledge was constructed related to multi-layered oppressions through critical discussions and reflections upon their own reintegration issues.
3. As a researcher, the critical discussion helped me understand critically in depth the women’s issues in their reintegration as a result of oppressive culture and structural violence.
4. By recognizing the importance of balancing research life and work life, they became flexible and agreed to meet even after working hours and weekends.
5. The decision was made that each co-researcher working at the same shelter would attend the meeting alternately.
6. By recognizing the importance of having facilitation skills, everyone agreed to take turns facilitating or co-facilitating meetings in the future.

7. The co-researchers exhibited their skills and abilities in using two different methods simultaneously: Photovoice and the Group meeting.

**Personal reflections.** I am highly impressed by the way they narrated their stories based on the pictures; the narrations not only told their experiences during reintegration and trafficking but also projected the level of their resentment, frustration, and anger towards society. Although it was the first time for most women to use pictures to share their stories, they did a phenomenal job. By doing this, the women demonstrated that they could do many things together if they got opportunities and support. For instance, one of the co-researchers shared:

*I hardly talked about my reintegration. No one is interested about my experiences on reintegration. Most importantly, I was very comfortable while sharing my own reintegration issues in the group as this was the safest environment for me I guess for everyone to talk about all our experiences. I never thought I would take a picture and share my own stories upon the picture. While sharing the story, I was feeling so proud of myself.*

**Day Seven: January 22, 2013 (3:00 pm - 5:00 pm).** On that day, I arranged snacks instead of lunch as we were meeting at 3:00 pm. There were only six people who attended the meeting. The woman who signed up for facilitating this meeting did not arrive yet and therefore, I asked the team if anyone wanted to facilitate instead. One woman said she would certainly take this role if someone supported her. The woman who facilitated the meeting last time assured her that she would certainly provide support whenever needed, and then the facilitator developed the agenda with the help of the other women. While facilitating, she experienced some challenges in
writing and asked the team for their help in writing. More interestingly, the group wanted to support her on the one hand, but on the other hand preferred not to help her as this was a great opportunity for her to practice in a non-judgmental environment. For instance, one of the co-researchers commented:

*You have to do this on your own not because we don’t want to help you. Of course, we want to help you out with this, but we also want you to be a successful woman. We know you never try for new things and always give up by saying you cannot do it. Therefore you are still in the same position. I am sure if you push yourself to write more, you can certainly enhance your writing abilities. We can help you out with grammar and spellings after you write. This is a great opportunity for you to practice, just do it. I know you can do it.*

The facilitator’s attempts in documenting agenda items on the flip chart were highly appreciated. However, the solidarity team recognized that facilitating the meeting and recording everything was not that easy for her. Therefore, one of the co-researchers who already facilitated the meeting previously stood up and asked her if she wanted help with either writing or facilitating the meeting. The woman expressed her interest to learn more about facilitating skills and then another woman started documenting our conversations on the flip chart. After developing the agenda for the meeting, the facilitator and I quickly discussed the process of meeting. Then the woman started the meeting with an ice breaker by asking people to share new things that they bought in the last two weeks. I recognized lots of happiness, laughter, and making fun of each other while sharing.

After the ice breaker exercise, the facilitator invited the team to move into groups of two and discuss and document possible strategies to address the identified issues of reintegration of
trafficking survivors. The facilitator and the peer researcher who was assigned to document key points also participated in the exercises. After 40 minutes, each group was asked to report their discussions to the larger group. Once the process was completed, the facilitator asked the group which areas needed more attention. Recognizing that the group was not certain about what they had been asked, I stepped in to help them understand the process. I introduced them to a multi-voting technique that has been for quick prioritization of ideas. According to this technique, I invited people to pick up five colorful pens and vote for the identified strategies/activities such as awareness campaigns, interviews with stakeholders and street dances etc. that they thought were important to implement both at the community and the structural levels. The co-researchers then went to the front where flips chart was posted and started voting on the activities that they wanted to put their energy towards. The group had an opportunity to vote five times. They could use their votes for the same activity or different ones. Interestingly, some co-researchers voted four times for one activity (street dances) in different locations. Since this process took longer than we expected, the team decided to postpone other agenda items for the next meeting and picked the date for the next meeting before wrapping up this meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for January 29 at 3pm.

*Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).* The highlights of the day include:

1. The women reported being empowered through the process of praxis. For instance, the woman who was mostly silent in previous meetings stepped in and facilitated the meeting.

2. The team was very supportive, for example, by recognizing the facilitator needed some support for documenting discussions and one of the co-researchers graciously agreed to work with her.
3. The co-researchers recognized multi-layered oppressions in their reintegration and identified the effective strategies to address the identified issue of their reintegration.

4. The team learned a different exercise and a different technique to prioritize multiple ideas and thoughts.

**Personal reflections.** The way the group supported and encouraged each other was incredible. For instance, when the facilitator expressed her frustration as writing was not her strength and was about to even give up the facilitating role, everyone exhibited their willingness to support her by saying this was the great opportunity for everyone to learn and identify the areas that needed to be improved. It was noteworthy when one of the women said:

*I think this is a very safe and non-judgmental environment where we can assess ourselves and identify the areas that we need to improve. We all are here to support and learn from each other and thus there is no room for commenting on others skills and knowledge. Let us work together and prove to others that what they think about us is not true.*

Another co-researcher echoed and added, “*We just need support to each other and there is nothing impossible for us…. we are strong when we are in a group. Let us always be in a team.*”

**Day Eight: January 29, 2014 (3:00 pm- 6:00 pm).** Seven people were present in this meeting. Based on our decisions made in our previous meeting, only one woman from the hostel attended this meeting. The meeting started with a discussion of who was going to be the facilitator. The woman who missed the last meeting when she was supposed to facilitate said she wished to take the facilitator role today and wondered if I could be a co-facilitator. While developing the agenda, the group decided not to do any ice breaker in the beginning as they realized that lots of agenda items including the ones that were tabled needed to be discussed.
Instead of a group exercise, we decided to share pictures we had tabled from the last meeting. Moving into the next agenda, the team was asked to form two groups and discuss the actions/activities that they wanted to get involved in through this study in addressing the identified challenges in their reintegration. The group reported their discussions to the larger group and then I introduced them to the step of categorizing the identified actions and listing the practices/strategies developed in the last meeting (this will be discussed more in Chapter Five). I realized they were finding the process too complicated. I demonstrated how the process worked and the groups took up the task. Even though I saw there was a lot of confusion, debates, and arguments among themselves, they completed the tasks successfully. I then asked the group to share their reflections on the exercise. Everyone appreciated the process and also explicitly expressed that the process helped them understand the link between the two different activities they did previously.

The group then got involved in choosing some key activities that the group could act upon immediately. We also talked about the possibilities for completion of the actions chosen and finally the co-researchers chose some of the actions including peer interviews, interviews with stakeholders, educational campaigns and workshops for dissemination of findings. Again, there were arguments, tensions, and frustrations among the group and surprisingly, one of the co-researchers shared:

*If we just spend time on agreeing/disagreeing, we would never get to a consensus and also we would not be able to go through other agenda items. I prefer to stay with the actions that we as a group chose and start acting on these activities. We can always discuss if we find that some of the actions are not feasible. Friends, luckily, we got this opportunity and thus we need to be mindful in utilizing our time productively.*
After the break, I was asked to facilitate the rest of the session as the facilitator was truly exhausted because of the heavy exercise. As the group demonstrated their low energy for continued discussions on the same topic, I moved to another agenda item. I invited the women to develop interview guides for peer interviews. Everyone seemed confused and looked around at each other, not me. This clearly indicated to me that either they were not comfortable doing this or they did not understand what I was asking them to do. I further explained about the interview guides, but did not show them the ones that I had developed a few days ago as I knew that they could certainly participate in this activity. This made them very afraid and uncomfortable as they thought they did not have that many skills to develop interview guides. One of the co-researchers commented:

Didi, this is not our thing and believe us we can’t develop an interview guide. Oh, my God, if we knew how to do all these things we would probably not be here. You probably overestimated our capabilities. Why do not you make questions and ask us to use them for our interviews?

Recognizing their resentment and unwillingness to participate in this process, I thought to use a different mechanism to encourage them to realize that they could certainly do this work. I asked them to write some questions that they wanted to be asked in an individual interview. There was pin drop silence for a few minutes and then the group started writing questions. Not everyone was participating in this process because of their writing abilities; however, I encouraged them to write even some words that reflect their questions and then we would put all the words together. Some women became inspired to write from watching others.

After almost ten minutes, although I found everyone was ready to share their questions, I wanted to check with them to see if some needed more time. Upon their permission, I asked
them to read their questions in the group and interestingly, everyone was eager and wanted to be first. After hearing from everyone, I asked the group to prioritize the questions and develop a set of questions for the interviews. Surprisingly, the process did not take as long as I expected because everyone seemed to be pretty clear as they were already exposed to the technique in the last meeting. Once the process was completed, I told them that this was the guide that they were going to use for their peer interviews. There was a big silence and everyone was confused and looked at each other. It was explicitly visible that they did not believe that they had the capacity and abilities to develop an interview guide. Undoubtedly, this process and exercise helped the women understand and recognize their own knowledge and skills which made them feel proud of themselves. In this way, the co-researchers created the interview guide for peer interviews (see Appendix E).

I inquired of the group how we could match the women’s names for peer interviews. Then we decided to do a lottery for which I wrote everyone’s name in small pieces of paper and invited each individual to pick one piece of paper. In this way, everyone got a partner for peer interviews. Later, the group commented that this was a very fair process that would allow them to interview with someone who they did not know very well. One of the women graciously offered her time to type the questions and send them to us for our review. Although the group wanted to pick the date for our next meeting, we were not able to do that due to their prior commitments for the next couple of weeks. Then the group decided that they would discuss the date among themselves based on their schedule and would advise me later. Before concluding, I encouraged them to practice peer interviews based on the interviewing skills while we talked during our tea break.
**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The following are the major accomplishments of the day:

1. The co-researchers identified some key activities that they wanted to act upon to address identified reintegration issues.
2. The women recognized the importance of the solidarity team as this offered them the opportunity to cultivate their relationships and co-construct knowledge.
3. Interview guides for peer interviews were developed.
4. The women recognized their strengths and knowledge through praxis.
5. The group demonstrated their collective work with transformative capacities.

**Personal reflections.** As mentioned earlier, when I asked the women to develop interview guides for peer interviews they appeared to be very reluctant and resentful, and expressed explicitly their unwillingness to work on this task. But when I asked them to write the questions that they would like to be asked in an interview, each individual came up with five questions and when they were reading their questions, I felt goosebumps on my body and became very emotional. I knew they could certainly develop questions for interviews, but I did not know that they would come up with truly powerful questions that reflected their pain and passion in areas of trafficking and reintegration that they wanted to work on. More importantly, it was very nice to see how the women were appreciating each other’s knowledge and wisdom while engaging in choosing questions from each individual’s list and compiling them into one.

Once the set of questions was developed, I told them that they could practice based on the interview guide developed. They were surprised to see the work they did as a group and did not believe that they had this capacity to develop the interview guide. This was a very powerful learning experience for me, especially when one of the co-researchers commented:
I never thought I could do this in my life. Didi, it would not have been possible without your encouragement and the group efforts. I on behalf of my other friends truly appreciate your providing us with this opportunity and trusting us and our skills. This allowed us to recognize our strengths including our knowledge and skills. This also built my self-confidence.

Another woman added with a smile:

Now we can tell our research coordinators at work to keep us [on] the research committee and use our knowledge. We have to show them our work. We are now expert in developing questions...ha ha ha ha ha.... Let’s see how much we will learn through this collective journey. Thank you didi.

Day Nine: February 12, 2014 (1:00 pm - 5:00 pm). The day was very strange for me as no one showed up until 2:15 pm. I continued waiting for them and they still did not come. I eventually called one of the co-researchers and asked if they were coming to the meeting and found that they were on their way. We started our meeting upon their arrival at 2:15 pm. One woman could not attend the meeting as she was out of the country for a training purpose.

One of the co-researchers who had never facilitated our meetings in the past indicated that she wanted to lead this meeting. Everyone was surprised and cheerful as she had hardly spoken in previous meetings. The woman asked me to help in developing the agenda for the meeting and once the agenda was generated, she started the meeting by asking the group if anybody wanted to share their pictures. Since no one had any pictures to share that day, the team suggested that she move into the second agenda, which was a peer interview experience sharing.
Two women who had completed their interviews seemed to be very keen to share their interviewing experiences. One co-researcher shared that she felt very connected to the woman whom she interviewed and that the interview was a tremendous learning opportunity. She added:

*While doing the interview, I felt as if I was interviewing myself because we had lots of commonalities between us. As we went through question number eight I got very emotional and then we cried together. We then laughed and we cried but later we both felt proud for the work we did. We never never talked about our personal experiences like this before in my life. Uhm...a very different experience.*

She was appreciative and shared that through this research she came to recognize that she was not the only one that was having enormous challenges in her reintegration. Similarly, another woman who completed her interview a few days ago echoed these thoughts and added:

*I felt very incompetent in the beginning as I was not reading the questions properly and was totally confused. But once I went through more questions, I felt more comfortable and also asked probing questions as well.*

The woman further stated with a big smile:

*Because of the research I found a big change in me. Before I joined this research, I was not even able to engage in any conversations due to the lack of confidence but now see I can interview people and write at the same time. I am very happy with my progress.*

In addition to the interviewer, interviewees also shared their experiences how they felt while answering to their questions. One of the interviewees commented that had the interview been done a month ago, she probably would not have been honest with herself in answering some of the questions. She further added with a smile that through the study process she felt more connected to the group and therefore she trusted the interviewer.
After sharing the interviews experiences, the discussion centered on the activities and actions identified in the last meeting. We talked about how to do educational campaigns. The co-researchers proposed street dramas and interactive sessions to raise awareness of their issues in their reintegration and we then talked about suitable places for conducting it. Some women chose their own communities for the drama they finally decided on four places: Makwanpur, Sindhupalchowk, Bardiya and Sindhuli, all outside of Kathmandu and communities with a high-risk for trafficking. The group also discussed techniques for interactive discussions and ways to include the audience.

After this discussion, I wanted to ensure that the group could continue the meeting and upon their consensus, the facilitator asked the women as a group to develop a list of stakeholders working in anti-trafficking practices for interview purposes. I captured the discussions to flip chart papers, and surprisingly the list was created within five minutes since everyone was aware of the agencies working in the area. The women were then invited to choose the agencies that they wanted to interview. Without delays, everyone became involved in the process and each woman was asked to take minimum two agencies for the interviews.

I did not want the women to get overwhelmed by doing another exercise; however, I asked if they could develop an interview guide for interviews with stakeholders. The women were not certain what I was referring to and one of the women said, “Since we already have questions, I don’t think we need any more question”. I then explained that the guide developed was for peer interviews and we could not use this for interviews with stakeholders. I also asked them to reflect on the questions that we had in the interview guides. The group then understood the need for the development of another interview guide and asked me to come up with some questions as they felt that it was beyond their capacities. One co-researcher said:
I do not think this is the work we can do it– it is scary. This is not something like what we developed for peer interviews. We are going to interview the people from agencies who are highly educated and smart, so I don’t even know what they need to be asked.

Other women echoed these sentiments. I then asked them to reflect on the same comments they made when they were developing the interview guides for peer interviews and also reminded them of the moment when they were so happy being successful after they had generated the guides. I further encouraged them by highlighting their work in the past. For example, I said “I had no doubts in your abilities and I was certain that you will do a wonderful job in this work as well”. I asked them to think about what they wanted to achieve through the interviews. Then one of the women said, “I think I wanted to know how they think about reintegration and what they are doing in addressing reintegration issues”.

One woman then proposed:

I think now I understood. Ok friends let’s work together .... we can certainly do something today before we leave the meeting. Didi is here to help us in our learning process so don’t forget that we are here to learn and act upon our own issues. Who would allow you to develop interview questions like this? This is the opportunity that we have to grab otherwise...

I subsequently asked the women to make two groups and work together instead of individuals. Each group developed minimum eight questions excluding the demographic section and shared with each other. Next, I asked the group to develop a set of questions from the list of each group as we did in the past. I was asked to participate in this process as they were still not certain about the questions that had to be incorporated in the guide, and we as a group eventually came up with six questions. Interestingly, without any arguments, we were able to select the
questions that were more relevant to the issue of their reintegration. In this way, the interview
guide for stakeholders was generated (see Appendix F). Before the facilitator adjourned the
meeting the group picked the date for the next meeting which was February 25.

*Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).* The followings are the key achievements of the day:

1. A couple of co-researchers who already conducted peer interviews shared their experiences with the group. They found it as a great co-learning experience.
2. The places for street dramas were chosen.
3. The group developed the list of the key agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions for interview purposes.
4. An interview guide for interviews with stakeholders were developed.

*Personal reflections.* While sharing their interviewing experiences, the women seemed to be very confident and were amazingly thrilled while sharing their own experiences and challenges. In fact, the women recognized their knowledge and skills. For example, one of the interviewers reported:

*I can’t believe that I did take an interview with the person who had the same experiences as I have. I always became an interviewee but I feel now I can do research if opportunities are given to me. I am very proud of myself to be involved in developing interview guides and also interviewing people through the use of guides I made. The definitely means I have capacities to do more and now it is time for me to demonstrate my abilities. We need to let people know that we can do much- we are not different from others.*
Day Ten: February 25, 2014 (1:00 pm - 5:30 pm). On that day, the co-researcher, who was assigned for facilitating this meeting, asked the team to provide an agenda for our discussions today. Our meeting started with a poem recited by one of our co-researchers. Her poem was very powerful and reflected women’s lives, especially trafficking survivor’s situations in their reintegration. Everyone was present in the meeting except one of the co-researchers who had to look after the hostel. As mentioned earlier, as per the agreement between the team and Shakti Samuha, only one person from the hostel could attend our meetings and thus they took turns coming to our meeting.

The facilitator asked the group to choose the agency that they wanted to interview. Acknowledging their uncertainty lack of confidence about doing this type of interview, I suggested the group to work in pairs of two for the interview so that they could also learn from each other. Everyone appreciated the idea and started making a group for their interviews with agencies that were listed in the previous meeting. While doing this exercise, one woman said that they need to interview journalists, lawyers, and police officials for the purpose of receiving diverse opinions. I was very impressed by the way that she explained this. The group asked me if I could set up connections between these people and the women for interviews. Due to the lack of networking with the people from diverse professional background, they did not know who to contact for the interviews. In the meantime, another co-researcher shared that she knew a journalist. I then promised to introduce them with some police officials and lawyers for their interviews. After 15 minutes, the list of the co-researchers and the agencies that they were going to interview was developed.

Before the facilitator adjourned the meeting, some of the women shared the difficulties they were faced while taking pictures for photovoice. For example, they were not sure how to
transfer all the pictures from their own phones to a computer and thus they indicated their interests to learn more about computer skills. At the same time, another woman indicated her interest to learn about the existing law and policies related to reintegration of trafficking survivors. One of the women volunteered to contact a legal advisor from her workplace and request him to present on the topic in near future. I then asked if they knew someone who could help them to enhance their computer skills and found that they did want someone from outside who did not know them very well. I then proposed that I could invite someone that I knew for the training in our next meeting, scheduled for March 12. Everyone approved of my proposal.

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The major achievements of the day are as follows:

1. The process allowed them to reflect on the activities we were doing; the group recognized the areas that needed to be improved and explored the possibilities for the enhancement of their knowledge.

2. The group acknowledged the importance of solidarity work for liberatory intentions.

3. The interviewing list, including the names of individuals and the agencies that the women were going to interview, was developed.

Personal reflections. It was unexpected to hear from one of the co-researchers who was not very outspoken on the areas that needed to be improved. It was a big surprise for me when she pointed out:

*I think I still need to learn more about the existing laws and policies for reintegration of trafficking survivors before I go out for interview with agencies so I could also talk about legal barriers for our reintegration just in case someone wanted to hear from us. I know nothing.*
Another co-researcher added:

*It is a good idea and I think it would be nice also to learn some interviewing skills though I already interviewed our peers but I think I am not fully confident on my interviewing skills. What do other people think about this?*

In fact, I became very happy to learn that the women were not only recognizing each other’s knowledge and values, but also advocating to organize some learning sessions for those who recognized that it was important to them. For instance, when one of the co-researchers highlighted the need for computer training, everyone including those who were already good with computers were asking me to arrange a training for the group. One co-researcher stressed:

*Although I do have a basic knowledge of computers, I think we have to organize computer training for those who recognize the need of enhancement of their technical skills. If they learn something on this, they may feel more comfortable being involved in photo voice. Let’s do this then.*

**Day Eleven: March 6, 2014 (3:00 pm- 5:00 pm).** Only four people attended today’s meeting. There was a woman who missed last two meetings as she was away for a training and therefore I explained what had taken place during the two meetings and also showed her the interview guides for interviews with stakeholders. As the group had a team meeting at their work, no one expressed their willingness to facilitate the meeting that day. I then took the facilitator role and started the day with a poem and a story recited by one of the co-researchers. In fact, those poems highlighted the situation of the women and hopes that they have for their life. Everyone appreciated her for sharing the story and the poem (see Appendix G).

Furthermore, one of the co-researchers who just conducted an interview with a service provider working in anti-trafficking interventions shared her experience with the interview.
According to her, she was very nervous and was not sure if the people would treat her well. When she went to the agency and introduced herself as a co-researcher, she found that she was treated very well which built her confidence. She further added:

*The questions I asked him, I think he did get them and answered each question very critically. In fact, he was very happy that we are doing this type of research and going out for interviews. You know, he told us to continue doing this type of work.*

She paused for a second and smiled. Then she looked at me and added:

*While he was talking about reintegration, I truly felt bad as I thought I had my daughter and a job so I am reintegrated based on his interview. But this research and the interview process allowed me to think critically and question myself: Who can say that I am reintegrated? I am not. Do they have the time to learn why I am not feeling the same way as they think?*

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The followings are the major achievements of the day:

1. Two poems recited by one of the co-researchers reflected the challenges trafficking survivors faced in their reintegration and a ray of hopes they had in their lives.
2. Experiences of interviews with stakeholders were shared by a woman, which motivated other women to conduct interviews and also reduced their fear about talking to strangers.
3. Women as a group decided to have further dialogues on their reintegration and issues they experienced in their daily lives as everyone agreed that they were not reintegrated yet.
**Personal reflections.** It was a very powerful learning experience for me when one of the co-researchers critically thought and shared her experiences while doing interviews with one of the agencies. She stated:

*I am very happy to learn that lots of agencies are working in anti-trafficking practices but the way they view the term reintegration is not the same as I see. Getting married and having children is not reintegration for us, especially for me. I can only speak for me. I am surprised that they are aware that stigma attached to us which is making us “doubly victimized”. But surprisingly, they are not doing anything to reduce the stigma. Sadly, some basic vocational trainings and food provided are not good enough in shelters. Why they don’t understand we need more than food and basic trainings?*

**Day Twelve: March 12, 2014 (4:00 pm-6:00 pm).** Six people were present in the meeting. Following the discussions around learning on some technical skills last week, I had invited Nissan Shrestha, a good friend of my nephew, to provide the group with basic computer training. Although not everyone had computers to practice with, Nishan started with basic theory classes and then practiced with the computers in smaller groups of three people. It was apparent that the group was confused in the beginning, but the way he was teaching helped people to understand how to save a picture in a computer. After practicing a few times, most women appeared to be confident in using the computer, especially to save the pictures that they had taken for this study. Once the training was over, we took a lunch break.

The group discussed the street dramas in detail including when and how the dramas should be performed. While discussing, one of the co-researchers who had performed lots of dramas in the past graciously agreed to lead this initiative. The group also decided to go to Bardiya district first and to decide later when to visit other districts. I suggested that we could
also carry out some of the interactive sessions chosen earlier in our meeting at the same time. Everyone liked the idea however they were not sure on how this could be done. The discussion became lengthy as we explored many ideas and then, one of the co-researchers who hardly spoke in meetings said, “Why not we just talk this before we go to Bardiya otherwise we would never conclude this conversation? I would like to make this meeting very fruitful and effective”. I was very impressed by her assertiveness, however, this made the woman upset as she thought her questions were not important and thereby were ignored explicitly. I attempted to deal with this issue by asking the group to reflect on the ground rules developed in the first meeting and by providing more explanations on the comments made. She seemed to be fine at the end but I was not certain about that and thought to call her later after reaching home.

In addition, two researchers who were anxiously waiting to share their experiences played the audio recording of their interviews. Considering the co-researchers’ personalities and interview skills, groups of two had been created for each interview with stakeholders in the last meeting. A woman, for instance, who was very shy and introverted, was accompanied by an extroverted and outspoken woman for this interview. This was appreciated by a shy woman and she further narrated:

I truly appreciate I have her with me, otherwise I don’t think I could take this interview. It is not easy; while my partner was doing interviews, my attention was more on how to ask questions and how to elaborate the questions if they didn’t understand. Therefore, after the interview when she asked me what I thought about the interview I had nothing to say as I did not even concentrate on their conversations.
The women who was interviewing added that the interview went very well and she was very happy that she had interviewed the person whom she regarded as her guardian. She further commented:

First, I did not believe that I was taking this role and it was very scary as I never did any interviews before in my life. I have both experiences now: giving an interview and taking an interview but they are very different. As an interviewee, you do not have any responsibility and accountability and so you just answer to questions but...you know when you go for interviews you feel like you have pressure on your shoulder.

After sharing the interview experiences, we proceeded towards a story telling process based on the photos taken and one of the women shared her pictures and said that she thought she was reintegrated in this society. This made other people surprised which led the group to get significantly involved in critical discussions which will be discussed in the subsequent personal reflection part.

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The followings are the key accomplishments of the day:

1. The co-researchers learned some basic skills of computer and reported the study helped them to develop some transferable skills.

2. Upon everyone’s consensus, the place was confirmed for the first performance of a street drama.

3. The process reported that the study process offered them with an opportunity for critical analyses of the violence against survivors.

4. The group unanimously passed the interactive sessions through the use of conversation cafe to conduct in the same trip of Bardiya.
5. The co-researchers reported that the process of this study enhanced their interviewing skills and while interviewing they explored some adjustments required in interview questions.

6. The co-researchers reported that they enjoyed when their roles were switched from interviewer to interviewees and vice versa.

**Personal reflections.** While sharing pictures, some of the co-researchers asked the woman, who had said clearly that she was reintegrated, to provide more examples as evidence of her reintegration. This pushed her to analyze her situation critically. Then the group was significantly engaged in critical discussions about reintegration of survivors, especially the challenges they faced. One of the women said, “You have a job that’s why you think it is reintegration? For me I also have the same job and I don’t think the same way as you think”. After a little pause, she further commented with some evident emotion:

*It is very clear that we are not treated the same way as we should be and we are viewed as “others”.* Until we get equal opportunities for everything and treated in a same manner as others are treated I would not consider myself reintegrated. *I need equal treatment and respect not sympathy.*

In responding to her, the woman who thought she was reintegrated told:

*You know…. I never thought in that way. I used to think of how I can adjust so that those in my community who treat me differently would accept me. I used to think that everything was my fault. I never analyzed from a critical lens that there are other factors involved such as interpersonal and structural. This is the lack of education and awareness…. *thanks everyone.*
It was very interesting to see the different opinions of their reintegration but I was happy to learn that the process allowed the group for critical analyses of their intersectional oppressions.

**Day Thirteen: March 17, 2014 (2:00 pm - 3:00 pm).** The meeting started with seven people at 2 pm by welcoming a lawyer, Shiva Sharma, as a guest speaker. Upon everyone’s request in the last meeting, one of the co-researchers approached the legal advisor with Shakti Samuha to talk about reintegration laws and policies. As the legal advisor was out of town for a few weeks, I was asked to find someone who could talk about this. I then invited a lawyer to present on reintegration policies to the solidarity team. I had cautioned him not to ask the women to share their experiences of reintegration while talking about reintegration laws and policies.

The session centered on reintegration laws and policies followed by questions and answers. The co-researchers were very meticulous, especially when they were sharing reintegration issues faced by survivors. For instance, one of the co-researchers expressed her anger and said,

*While working, I met a client who told me that she did not get any compensation in cash as a part of reintegration. There are laws and policies, but they are not in practice. I am really mad now and all laws are meaningless for me.*

Another woman became angry and argued:

*We are taking about other people but how about us? Do you think we have received any cash or any services from the government? It is only limited to the policy book. This is not designed for us. The government just needs to show what they have in place.*

The co-researchers were significantly engaged in this interactive session and expressing their frustrations and anger. Being considerate of the lawyer’s time, I asked the group if we could
wrap up the session. The session was concluded by one of the co-researchers thanking the lawyer and we continued our group meeting and reflected on the learning for another ten minutes. More interestingly, I found the women were not familiar with the reintegration laws and policies presented today, and therefore everyone appreciated the presentation, which encouraged them to advocate for their rights. We then picked the date for our next meeting scheduled for March 30.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The highlights of the day are as follows:

1. Co-researchers reported that their knowledge was broadened through the interactive discussions with the guest speaker and apparently, his presentation on reintegration laws and policies.
2. The co-researchers believed that the enhanced knowledge would certainly enable them to advocate for survivors’ rights.
3. Women built their skills in different areas. One of the co-researchers, for instance, graciously agreed to give ‘thank you’ remarks after the guest speaker’s presentation and she did a fabulous job.

**Personal reflections.** When I asked the co-researchers if they could provide “thank you” notes to the lawyer after his presentation, there was a pin drop silence. Breaking the silence, one of the women stood up and agreed to take that role which was appreciated by the team. She later stated that she could not believe that she had given the thank you remarks. She further added:

_I never thought I could do this and in fact, I never got this opportunity in the past as my skills and knowledge were always underestimated. It doesn’t matter whether I did good job or not but what matters more is that I accepted this challenge and thanked him. I felt so honored and revered. Who would give us this opportunity in our life?_
She acknowledged the researcher and further commented:

_Without this research, I would never have built the capacity to do this job. I developed my confidence and public speaking through this study process. Thank you for trusting me and my abilities._

**Day Fourteen: March 30, 2014 (12:00 pm- 3:00 pm).** The meeting started with four co-researchers at 12.30pm and one woman joined the meeting later. The co-researcher who was very outspoken and already facilitated two meetings and co-facilitated a meeting in the past asked the team if she could facilitate the meeting as she wanted to enhance her facilitating skills by practicing more in this safe and nonjudgmental environment. I agreed and clearly mentioned that I was completely fine with the arrangement unless someone wanted to take this role in this meeting. Upon receiving everyone’s permission, she started the meeting by asking people to share their pictures and read a poem as part of an icebreaker followed by reflections on interviews with stakeholders.

Not many people had completed their interviews. A couple of women shared their interviewing experiences. One of the co-researchers shared with us that it was a great learning experience for her when she went along with another co-researcher for an interview with a female police official. She expressed how she felt when she went to the interview:

_In the beginning, I had thought I would rather run away from the interview as I did not believe in me. Actually, I lost my belief in my own skills and knowledge. However, everything went smoothly. I knew I would not have been able to do this had Rita didi not provide me a special training. We were together for almost two hours and talked about how to do an effective interview._
Further, the co-facilitator who accompanied this woman for her interview with the police official shared her experience as a very remarkable interview as both the interviewers and the interviewee were significantly engaged in interactive discussions and talked about the structural issues that women face in general. She shared what the police official had commented:

You are both very brave that you came to me for an interview. I met many victims during my work but they did not even want to answer our questions clearly as if they had done something wrong. Mostly people get scared to talk to us and you both made efforts to participate in this interview by using the interview guide you developed. Amazing...I truly truly admire you both.

After a pause, the co-researcher eyes were full of tears and she became very emotional. She then shared with us what the police officer had told her after the completion of the interview:

After our conversations, I found that you are doing meaningful work to raise awareness on the issues you are facing in your reintegration. It was amazing that you are doing interviews to explore how we would perceive the term reintegration. For me, this is reintegration of trafficking survivors and this is the opportunity should be given to all survivors.

Another co-researcher said that she too found the interview was very powerful and it allowed her to learn more about existing reintegration practices. Then she played the audio recording for the group to understand how she had completed her interview. This provided other people who had not conducted interviews yet with a learning opportunity to enhance their interviewing skills. It also motivated them to conduct interviews.

Recognizing that the co-researchers were very keen to talk about the street dramas, I asked the facilitator if we could talk more about them. Since the facilitator herself was the lead
for the dramas she asked the team if they could confirm their participation in the drama. Everyone except for one of the co-researchers, who had just disclosed that she was pregnant and therefore was not allowed to travel anywhere, appeared to be very excited about this trip. I congratulated her and inquired if she would continue coming to the meetings. I found that she was not quite certain but expressed her willingness to be part of this journey until the completion of this study.

In our previous meetings, the women had picked Bardiya District for their first educational campaign and also the dates of April 6 and 7. The facilitator asked the women to develop a list of things that were required by the group for both an interactive session and a street drama. We talked about transportation, hotels, and villages to perform the dramas. More importantly, upon discussing the roles and responsibilities of each individual for interactive sessions, everyone seemed to be excited to play roles such as master of ceremony, welcome speaker, composer of thank you notes, and facilitator for the interactive sessions. In addition, the group also developed a draft of the request letter required to send to elected officials, agencies and key actors for their supports to make our events successful in Bardiya. By recognizing the number of agenda items still to be discussed, the group made suggestions to meet next day. One of our co-researchers asked me if I could inform Shakti Samuha about our trip to Bardiya as the co-researchers needed to get approval in order to get their time off from work.

I also learned that the research team with Shakti Samuha was upset with me because I did not consult with them before we made the decision to make the trip to Bardiya. I was surprised because, I had sent one of the committee members of Shakti Samuha updates on our activities, including our trip to Bardiya and interactive sessions, and what the women wanted to do in
response to the intersectional oppressions in their reintegration that we identified. One of the peer researchers purported:

What I want to say you, Rita didi, is to please meet them in person and share all the details either today or tomorrow. I don’t want to lose my job. I can’t even imagine what happens if they fired us. We need to eat and feed our family.

I then apologized to the group and promised them that I would inform the Research Committee of our trip by the end of day. In fact, when the women suggested that I should contact the research team with their agency, I became very happy as this showed me that the women were taking shared responsibility for this study.

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The major highlights of the day are as follows:

1. The date and venue for the first educational campaign such as a street drama and an interactive session as a part of actions were confirmed.
2. The co-researchers demonstrated their enhanced abilities by sharing their experiences with interviews of stakeholders.
3. The co-researchers reported that their skills and knowledge were acknowledged by stakeholders who they had interviewed with and they were able to educate people around their reintegration issues especially while doing interviews.
4. Everyone in attendance significantly engaged in meaningful dialogues and also provided their own opinions and insights without any hesitation.

Personal reflections. I was very impressed by the way that the facilitator facilitated the meeting. It was very inclusive and organized. The facilitator, for instance, checked with everyone about whether they agreed on the place that they chose for the first drama and also
encouraged the women to suggest other places that they had in mind. This allowed me to compare the meeting she had facilitated earlier and recognized the improvement in her facilitation skills. Everyone echoed me and one peer researcher praised her by saying:

*I found you were very confident in your facilitation, which showed you increased your facilitation skills dramatically. Comparatively, you were not different than Rita didi. We are very proud of you. You may want to chair our Board meeting in Shakti Samuha in the near future.*

**Day Fifteen: March 31, 2014 (1:00 pm-3:00 pm).** The meeting began with four co-researchers and two other new people who were invited for the rehearsal of the drama as we had recognized that we did not have sufficient people to perform the dramas. In fact, the decision was made to include some new people to perform the dramas with us and the women asked me if I knew some trustworthy people. As per the group’s consent, I invited Udvhasika Giri, my good friend’s daughter, and my music teacher, Umesha Raj Khadka, who was teaching me the traditional instruments called the harmonium. The meeting began with an introduction and then I invited the women to share their insights about the story of the dramas for the purpose of writing a script. However, the presence of the new people made the women very uncomfortable about participating in the story development process. Recognizing their hesitation, I shared a story that I had in my mind, with their permission, based on the group discussions and the exercise we had “Tree of Life”. Then the women added some important elements that they wanted to see in the dramas to make it more meaningful and effective.

Once the group decided on the roles for each individual, impressively, the women started rehearsing without any scripts and while practicing they developed dialogues themselves and also for the two new people. This process also helped to minimize the distance between the
women and the new people and also built relationships among them. Since the process of story
development and the practice for the drama took an enormous amount of time, we decided to
meet the next day. Before we departed, I gathered some contact information to make some
arrangements, in advance, for our trip to Bardiya.

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The achievements of the day are as
follows:

1. A concept of a story for a drama was developed.
2. The two new people were welcomed by the group for drama performances.
3. The women reported that the study process allowed them to recognize their own talents
   and skills, specifically their drama performance.

Personal reflections. I was amazed when I saw how the women improvised in their
drama practice and their enthusiasm and dedications towards this. When I admired the group for
their commitments, one of the women narrated:

This is the first time I am doing drama based on the dialogues I created myself. I even did
not know that I have this skill until today. I am very proud of myself. You know, I have
performed dramas several times in the past but I was never viewed as someone who
could contribute to more than just the performance. I can now feel I also can do many
things- thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Another woman concurred her and said:

I recognized my talents through this process which gave me lots of hope in my life. The
best thing is that no one is telling me what to say and what to do in this drama. I can just
say what comes to my mind. My anger comes automatically with my dialogues. I don’t
have to memorize any scripts. How amazing!
Day Sixteen: April 1, 2014 (5:00 pm - 7:00pm). The meeting started with my reporting about the progress of our trip as I had sent all the details of our trip to the solidarity team of their agency. A couple of co-researchers then shared their stories based on their pictures and one of the co-researchers recited a poem, which reflected the reality of an oppressive society and the violence of social justice. Then the group proceeded towards reflections on the interviews with stakeholders and their peers. When the two people joined us for rehearsal, we concluded our group meeting and took a short break.

To continue the rehearsal, some women made some suggestions on the story and started doing a practice without any scripts. It was very interesting to see that everyone was playing their roles using their own dialogues. Since we did not have sufficient players for each character the group asked me to play a role of a counselor and I agreed. During the rehearsal, I attempted to change a bit of the story along with the dialogues as I recognized that the woman, who was acting as a role of madam in a brothel, uttered several bad words. Not surprisingly, the women were reluctant to accept the changes that I had proposed; I became very happy when one of the co-researchers alleged:

*We know what we need to show the public and what they need to understand. The message we want to deliver is not possible without using all the bad words. The language and words we are using are absolutely appropriate in this context because people do not know how miserable we were in India. By using these types of words, I believe people will feel our pain.*

I then felt very guilty and thought about why I had not even realized that this was all about their stories with lived experience. I apologized for this mistake and assured them I would not tell them what to say in the drama.
Accomplishment of the day (outcomes of the day). The following are the highlights of the day:

1. Everyone seemed to be very confident in their abilities and passionate about providing education around their issues including trafficking and reintegration.

2. During practice, it was very noticeable that the women and the new people were very connected and seemed to be very comfortable with each other.

3. The peer researchers exhibited increased interests in photovoice by bringing pictures and telling stories that linked to the pictures.

4. Upon acting based on their own stories without any scripts and taking leadership roles for drama performances, the peer researchers exhibited their ownership on this study project.

Personal reflections. The inappropriateness of my actions was a very powerful reflective learning experience, especially when I attempted to change the co-researchers’ dialogues, and made some comments on their body language while they were practicing. This helped me to recognize my ignorance and made me again feel as an outsider even though I had felt like an insider several times during the process of this study. I atoned, “How could I forget the fact that they are the experts in their lives and I am here to provide them with opportunities to be creative and educator?” Yet, I apologized to the group about this again before we left, I felt very low and ashamed with no energy for a couple of weeks.

Most importantly, the room was amazingly full of laughter, exhilaration, and expectations about the changes in people’s perceptions and attitude towards trafficked survivors while co-researchers were practicing the drama. I was stunned by the energy and efforts that the women were putting into the drama. This made it more real and emotional as well. I could not even believe that through this drama, how well the women conceptualized and visualized their
miserable situations, especially of brothels, without being emotional. At one of the practices, I felt very emotional several times and I could not control my tears. I went to a washroom to cry and came back as if everything was normal. I knew if I became emotional in front of them, they could be emotional and weak and also would not be able to continue their practices.

**Day Seventeen: April 3, 2014 (5:30 pm - 7:00 pm).** It was the day that we gathered with the expectation of making further plans for our trip to Bardiya. Since everyone except one woman had already been in the meeting, I invited them to revisit our plans developed in the past. I was pleased to see how serious the women were in their roles as everyone had lots of clarifications and questions around their chosen tasks. Some of the women were nervous as they were not sure how to conduct an interactive session in Bardiya and they also expressed their willingness to enhance their knowledge of facilitation through practices prior to our trip.

By recognizing the importance of addressing their fear, I recommended to divide the interactive session into two different activities: presentation and conversation café. We then discussed each activity in depth. I also spent a bit of time to talk about the conversation café model that we were going to use for this interactive session, which had already been discussed in the past. I invited the group to develop a few questions that they would like to ask in the conversation café, and amazingly the questions were developed within 20 minutes. This explicitly demonstrated that the process of the study not only enhanced their knowledge in developing interview guides but also built their confidence in their abilities. We as a group then chose four questions for conversation café by using a voting method (see Appendix H). I then invited four co-researchers who had facilitation roles for the session to do a practice and they did wonderful job.
One of the co-researchers joined us later as she had some prior commitments, and as soon as she came to the meeting room she asked me if I had received any approval from the agency for this trip. I found there must have been something wrong and I said, “Yes, I sent them all the updates of our trip and also asked for their suggestions/insights if they had any, but I have not heard anything back from them”. She then told me that the research team wanted to talk to me in person prior to our trip and therefore they wanted us to cancel this trip. All of a sudden, I saw everyone was very disappointed. One of the co-researchers said with a very sad face:

This is my dream to go back to my community and educate them about the issues/challenges I experience in my reintegration. See, how unlucky I am as when my dream is about to come true something goes wrong. I am very excited and I do not want our trip to be cancelled so Rita didi you just go and talk to them.

I felt so hopeless and powerless for a while and also concerned about the women and their jobs. I also did not want to put them in a complicated situation and therefore I thought I rather needed to talk to someone to address this issue immediately. Then, I called the chairperson of the agency and found that she was very positive about the work, especially our trip to Bardiya, however, the agency was worried about their staff as the agency was not provided sufficient information about the trip to ensure that their staff would be safe in Bardiya. I was very pleased to hear the feedback received and in addition, I was also told that the agency in advance had to be prepared to continue their work in the absence of their staff and there was not enough time for them to make all arrangements. After receiving the legitimate reasons, I promised the chairperson that we would plan our trip to Bardiya once I met the research team.

When I shared with the research team, the content of my conversations with the chairperson, they became very happy and one of the co-researchers stated with a smile, “I knew
that you would make it happen because you are the most positive person I ever met in my life. I was very worried about what will happen if we are not allowed to go”. Another woman concurred and stressed, “I felt very low when I heard that we could not go to Bardiya but now I know why we can’t go and I am convinced. Thank you for doing this for us, Rita didi”. By recognizing that we had enough time for our trip, the group concluded the meeting.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The major achievements of the day are as follows:

1. The co-researchers reported that their facilitation skills were enhanced and their confidence in developing interview guides were advanced.
2. Conversation café model was introduced to the group and also employed through practicing.
3. Interview questions were developed for interactive sessions.
4. Lessons learned about the importance of effective communication in any matters.

**Personal reflections.** I became very emotional when I found out how much the co-researchers trusted me and believed in my professionalism. For example, one of the co-researchers said,

You know you are very friendly and a good team player, but I must say that everything became positive when you were speaking to the chairperson of Shakti Samuha and you know why... it was just because of your adaptability and your conflict resolution skills. Otherwise, I am not sure how ugly it could be.

More importantly, the entire conversations about the Bardiya trip inspired the solidarity team to critically discuss social justice topics such as “power”, “power differences” and “power relationships” and its implications to “increase vulnerability” of powerless people. The women
participated in discussions in a meaningful way and expressed their anger and frustration as being powerless people who were watching others make decisions for them and act upon them.

**Day Eighteen: April 6, 2014 (1:00 pm-3:00 pm).** In the presence of five co-researchers, one of the co-researchers who had never facilitated meetings in the past facilitated this meeting by collecting agenda items. Noticeably, everyone was looking at each other and not truly participating in this process as they were not certain what they would be discussing today. The women apparently did not want to do a rehearsal for the drama as the date for our trip was not confirmed yet. Recognizing this, I asked the group if we could reflect on what we learned through this praxis process so far and also discuss some other possible future actions in order to address the identified issues of their reintegration.

During the reflection session, I learned that women were very pleased to be part of this study as this study helped the women to empower themselves. One woman narrated:

*I am not exaggerating. This is the first study that asked me what I would like to do and what want to say. No one cares what I say and what I want. Through this study, I got the feeling that we all are the same and our voices matters. This inspired me to be active. I must say I am empowered now in different ways and feel like I can do anything.*

Everyone echoed her point and thanked me and the University of Calgary. I also shared my personal learning and thanked them for their openness and trusting me (personal transformation will be presented in the Chapter Five). Moving along to another agenda item, a few women who had been trained in a form of “art therapy” suggested they wanted to do a therapy session before we concluded the study and everyone agreed upon this (this will be discussed later in this chapter).
Then, the co-researchers were asked to choose the pictures they had shared with the team for public displays in the future educational campaigns. One of the co-researchers took the responsibility to collect all the pictures with their narrations from each individual and asked them to give them to her. However, the co-researchers were encouraged to continue taking more pictures of things that were relevant to them.

After a short break, the facilitator asked the group to list the names of the areas that they wanted to put their energy collectively into. The group finally came up with the following activities in addition to street dramas, and they include:

1. Health-expo for trafficking survivors;
2. Focus group discussions with trafficking survivors working with other agencies;
3. Workshop for people working in the area of anti-trafficking interventions;
4. Raising awareness about the issues of trafficking survivors through poem publications;
5. Conversations with media;
6. Disseminations of the major findings of the study through workshops.

Recognizing the time that we had left I asked the group to prioritize the activities but one of the co-researchers intervened and said, “How about if we just stay with all the activities now and let us see how much we can achieve within a month and we will then discuss later”. Since everyone concurred with her I did not want to disappoint them by saying it was not feasible to do all the activities by June, when our study would wrap up. Therefore, I remained silent. Before we concluded our meeting we also picked the tentative date of Thursday April 17 for our trip to Bardiya, however, I told the group that until we got approval from their employer we could not confirm the date.
Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The major achievements of the day are as follows:

1. Photos/pictures were selected for photovoice displays in public place.
2. Future possible actions to address the identified issues of survivors’ reintegration were developed.
3. The solidarity team shared how we achieved personal transformation and thanked each other.

Personal reflection. During our critical reflective session, one of the peer researchers who was usually silent in meetings shared:

I was very worried about my past, it made me feel afraid and constantly think about what could happen if other people came to know my reality, but now I am a different person - this study helped me understand it was not my fault - I don’t feel shame anymore! I don’t care if my family finds out about my past. If someone says something against me, I have an answer for them.

Everyone applauded for her powerful reflections and concurred with her. It was incredible for me to learn of how the women recognized their personal transformation through this dialogical process.

Day Nineteen: April 17, 2014 (5:00 pm - 6:00 pm). On that day, all the co-researchers except the woman who was pregnant were already in the meeting room before I arrived. The women seemed to be very excited and enthusiastic about the trip to Bardiya but unfortunately, I did not have any updates to share with them as I was still waiting for their employer’s approval. I started the meeting by saying the chances were very slim to go to Bardiya this week as I have not heard anything from your employer, but there was no need to be disappointed because this would
allow us more time to prepare. I added that some people indicated that they wanted to learn more about conversation cafés and interviewing skills such as probing questions and asked them for their insights about this.

Once we developed the questions, I talked about the conversation café model and its approaches with a focus on a round-table format. Everyone liked the format however the group expressed their discomfort to have different people at their tables as they were not confident in their abilities to facilitate the conversations café. Recognizing their hesitation, I made a suggestion to stay in the same group with all the four questions. The women appreciated the idea and suggested practicing now. Each had an opportunity to facilitate the group and while practicing we recognized that asking questions and writing notes simultaneously was not an easy task for everyone. I suggested to the women that they could ask participants if someone could write notes in their group. Once everyone felt comfortable with the process for the conversation café, I asked the women to provide their names if they wanted to facilitate one of the sessions in Bardiya and four women stepped forward to do this task. The research team also delegated different jobs to each individual such as master of ceremony, welcome speech and thank you notes. The meeting concluded with the sharing of a couple of pictures and a few experiences of interviewing with agencies.

*Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).* The research group achieved the followings from the meeting:

1. The opportunity was provided to co-researchers not only to learn about the conversation café approach but also to do practices within the group.

2. Roles and responsibilities for interactive sessions were designed to each individual from the solidarity team who were going to Bardiya.
Personal reflections. I was truly impressed when one of the peer researchers strongly suggested we change a bit in our story for the drama as she realized our story did not explicitly capture their perceptions of their reintegration. The drama, for example, was ended when a trafficking survivor got married to someone from her village in accordance to the script, but she wanted to take this scene out from the drama. She further argued, “Although I am married but I don’t believe that getting married to someone does not mean that we are reintegrated and I can claim that without being married we can reintegrate”. Everyone appreciated her for her critical insights and consented to change the story at the end of the drama and add something reflecting their collective experiences and reflections on reintegration. For me, it was amazing to learn how the women were becoming critical thinkers through this process.

Day Twenty: April 19, 2014 (1:00 pm -3:00 pm). Since I knew that the co-researchers were painfully disappointed when we had to cancel our trip scheduled for April 17, I began our meeting by sharing the updates from our meeting with the management team including the president and projects coordinators of Shakti Samuha. In fact, when I was asked to come and share the scripts with the management team on Thursday 17th of April I called everyone and asked if they could also go with me. Only three co-researchers were able to make it as others had their prior commitments.

I shared with the team that our script was approved with some minor changes and that the management team gave their approval for us to go to Bardiya. All of a sudden, everyone seemed to be very excited and this brought smiles to their faces. Since the group wanted to know the details about how our meeting with the management team went, one of our co-researchers shared her experiences:
I like the way Rita Didi approached the team before she read the script for them. She requested that the team to keep in mind the fact that the script was developed based on our own stories that we shared earlier before they made any suggestions. It was very clear to them that we did not want to have lots of changes in our scripts. However, I appreciate Sunita Didi (president of Shakti Samuha) for her suggestions to capture the current anti-trafficking approaches practiced by agencies in the drama and we all agreed upon this.

Another co-researcher added, “The suggestion had also been made to contact the branch office of Shakti Samuha to talk about their agency, located in Bardiya, for interactive sessions”. By highlighting the results of the meeting, I reported to the group that since both parties (the agency and us) were clear about each other roles and expectations we were good to proceed towards our mission. Then, with enthusiasm, the group picked up the date for our trip to Bardiya from May 1 to 4.

Before we moved to another agenda item, I asked the group to discuss how we were going to adjust the script based on the insights provided by both the management team and one of our co-researchers last time. The team asked me to play a role as a social worker working with an agency to provide counseling and help a survivor her reintegration. I agreed since we did not have any other people to play that character in our group.

In addition, the team developed a list of the interviews with stakeholders that were already conducted and encouraged the co-researchers who did not have an opportunity to do an interview to carry out their interviews within the month. For instance, one of the women who recently had an interview shared her experiences by saying:
I was very afraid and nervous before I did my interview but once I started interviewing I
felt better and I think the process of peer interview helped me a lot to do this interview.
You know we developed the interview questions and thus it was easy for us to ask the
questions and interpret them in our own way.

Another woman concurred with her point and narrated, “I felt the same for my first
interview but I was fine for the second one. I think the more we do this the more we are
confident”. Then one woman thanked everyone who shared their experiences and reported that
she found the interview with stakeholders to be very interesting and motivational.

Before the meeting concluded, I talked about data analyses and invited them to
participate in this process. Not surprisingly, all of the women expressed their hesitation to be a
part of this process and said collectively that it was beyond their capacity although they wanted
to learn how it would be done. I then reminded the group what they said when I first asked them
to develop interview guides for peer interviews and said that there would be training
opportunities for the data analyzing process for them. When I reiterated that I was fully confident
about their abilities the women seemed to be very excited about this opportunity. Since I
recognized that the majority were already exhausted I asked the group to pick the date for our
next meeting before we concluded this meeting and the group said that they wanted to meet the
next day.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The major outcomes of the day are
as follows:

1. The date for Bardiya trip was finally confirmed which made everyone in the group
   happy.

2. The co-researchers learned about conversation cafés and enhanced their facilitation skills.
3. The meeting also allowed the peer researchers to choose what methods/approaches would be the best for them, especially for interactive sessions.

4. Questions for interactive sessions were developed and four questions were picked for the sessions.

5. The script for a drama was adjusted based on the suggestions received.

Personal reflections. Upon confirming the date for our trip to Bardiya, the co-researchers wanted to pick the date for our next trip to Sindhupalchok, one of the high-risk communities for trafficking. It was pleasant to see how the women were invested not only in their own interests from this project but also wanted to give their energy and efforts to change people’s perceptions about trafficking survivors. For instance, one woman said with tears:

*I am really proud of myself as I am going to help women who are experiencing the same challenges as I am. I believe, we as a solidarity team, can certainly change the world through our collective actions. You know I am very optimistic about our roles in changing society.*

Day Twenty One: April 20, 2014 (12:30 pm- 3:30 pm). On that day, the meeting started with four co-researchers and two joined us half an hour later. Since I had already begun working through some of the agenda items for our meeting today, I asked the group to add any more items if they had any. In response to their curiosity about a rehearsal today, I informed them that the other two people had been invited to join us at 2:00 pm for the practice of the drama.

Since I wanted to learn about the women’s experiences in their reintegration, our meeting began by inviting people to share their reintegration experiences. The significant participation of a few women in critical discussions motivated other women to share their own experiences as
well which led the entire group to have further dialogues and find commonalities among them. More interestingly, the women moved towards discussions about their roles in their own reintegration and they recognized the importance of their unity and solidarity. For instance, one of the women highlighted:

*Ladies, as we all know that this is the first time in our life we all are talking about our own reintegration experiences in a group even though we have been working in the same place for a long time. I learned that we all have some common issues in our reintegration and we can certainly address these issues only if we are united. We need to support each other. We all have to be in one team.*

Everyone agreed with her and put their hands together saying that they were one and they should not be further discriminated against regardless of their age, education, and health issues. Most importantly, to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to participate in this process, I strongly encouraged them to share their reflections and insights on the issues of their reintegration.

After the lunch break, I invited the women to think and be very specific about the message that they wanted to deliver to the public in Bardiya. A few women started brainstorming and came back with their message in 10 minutes and shared this with the larger group. I was amazed when they said they wanted to make a flyer with this message and distribute the poster to people not only in Bardiya but also in their neighborhoods, especially the city of Kathmandu. Then the group realized that there must be some changes in the language as this was not clearly communicating their message and thus they asked for my help. Once we as a group developed a final message, one of the co-researchers agreed to type this and forward it to us for our final review (See Appendix I). In fact, the group agreed to use this message as a slogan for
our collective journey and I then asked if they wanted to have a name for this group as well. After discussing this in a group the women came up with the name called “Community-based Action Research Group”.

Acknowledging the fact that some women did not want to be recognized with their own names outside of the group, I asked the women if they wanted to use pseudonyms for our trip to Bardiya. The suggestions were appreciated and subsequently the co-researchers started picking names that they liked the most. The process took a bit more time than I thought because some women were not certain what names they would like. Then one of the women said:

*Friends, we should not take that much time to select our names as this is not going to be used in the long run. This is just because we do not want to use our names while speaking publicly. Do not waste your time.*

I then asked the group if I could use their actual names in a dissertation and permission was granted by everyone. The suggestions however were made to use their pseudonyms in photovoice exhibitions in the future. When Udvhasika and Umesh arrived for the rehearsal of the drama we concluded our meeting and proceeded to the drama practice. I found that the women were confused about the changes to the story and therefore I highlighted the major changes made in the story helping to bring everyone onto the same page. In the meantime, one of the women said with smile, “*I hope there will be no more changes in the future as I am afraid with changes.*” In response to her, another woman asserted, “*Once we perform our drama in Bardiya we will be able to identify the changes need to be made. Who knows?*” Everyone nodded their heads and the meeting was adjourned.

*Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).* The major highlights of the day are as follows:
1. The level of participation of co-researchers was increased not just because of their meaningful involvement in critical analyses of their reintegration issues but also their involvement in advocacy practice on their own reintegration issues together with sharing their experiences and reflections.

2. The co-researchers found commonalities and differences in terms of reintegration experiences and promised to be united to fight for oppression and social injustice.

3. The final draft of a request letter for their supports required to send other agencies and elected officials in Bardiya was developed.

4. The solidarity team created a name for this team.

5. The slogan for educational campaigns was developed.

6. Each individual picked a pseudonym for themselves to use in a public forum.

   **Personal reflections.** While the women were sharing their experiences of reintegration, one of the women expressed her anger and argued that the term:

   *Reintegration of trafficking survivors should not be associated with the terms society and family. Why do we care for the society that pushed us to live in this situation and also discriminated against us just because of our past history? I don’t necessarily need to be married to have a family and of course I don’t want to be part of this cruel society.*

Another woman expressed agreement and pointed out:

* A woman who goes back to her parent's home after being divorced in four or five years does not need to reintegrate in her society, those who were trafficked and returned to their home in four to five months need to reintegrate. It is ridiculous. Why is the society like that? We have to change this perception.

She further added with tears in her eyes:
People think that only those who are returned home and living with families are reintegrate but it is not true. I don’t want to reintegrate into the family and society that views and treats me differently. Why Do I?

When I learned about the issues the women had with the term reintegration, I thought it was not even fair to talk about their experiences on reintegration for this study and I invited them to provide their insights in changing the title of this study or come up with some inclusive words that the team were more comfortable with. There was silence for a second and then one co-researcher stressed that although they did not want to use this word, they knew this word was utilized everywhere, including in our national laws, policies, and planning. She advised me to continue using the word until they invented a new one. In concluding, the group agreed that the issue was not only the word but also how outsiders who did not have any experiences of trafficking interpreted this term for trafficking survivors. To be honest, it was the most powerful learning experience for me as I never thought the group had a problem with the word reintegration itself, along with the process of reintegration.

Day Twenty Two: April 29 (3:00 pm-5:00 pm). The purpose of this meeting was to practice for the conversation café that the group was going to use for their interactive sessions and the dramas that they were going to perform in Bardiya. Although the meeting was scheduled for 2 pm, no one showed up. At 2.30 pm, I then called one of our co-researchers and asked if they were coming to the meeting and found that there were busy in their work but would be coming in 20 minutes. Once everyone who was going to Bardiya came to the meeting, I asked the group to provide their updates in terms of shopping for supplies required for the trip in Bardiya. I was very impressed by the fact that all the tasks they chose had already been
completed. I thanked them and we then celebrated Mother’s Day and enjoyed some special snacks and tea.

Since the team was very excited to do more practice for the conversation café, we spent almost an hour practicing which allowed everyone to practice facilitating group meetings. Once the group felt they had developed their confidence and enhanced knowledge on conversation cafe through the practices, we moved towards the rehearsal of the dramas based on the final drama script developed (see Appendix J). After 15 minutes, one of the women said, “I am tired doing lots of practices today, and I can’t memorize any dialogues so each time I say something different dialogues. I think we need to wrap up”. A couple of women concurred with her but some women still wanted to practice as they thought some still needed to work through their lines and timing. I therefore suggested “we will do a practice before performing the drama in Bardiya”. Before we concluded our meeting, I reminded the group about our departure day and time (April 30, 2014 at 4 pm) for our trip to Bardiya.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** These are the major achievements of the day:

1. By doing practices over and over, everyone appeared to be confident in their facilitation skills for interactive discussions.
2. Script for the drama was finalized.
3. By recognizing that the group still needed to do more practice for their performances, everyone agreed to do a practice before they performed to the public.

**Personal reflections.** I became very emotional when one of the co-researchers from Bardiya said that going to Bardiya and performing dramas in her own community was her dream as she was treated very badly when she came back from India. She wiped off her tears and said:
Since our trip was canceled twice I became very disappointed and thought my dream will never come true. I am very proud of myself now as I am playing multiple roles in the drama and also going to facilitate a conversation café in Bardiya. I want to show my community that I am the same person that you behaved badly with in the past and see how strong I am now.

This certainly made me very emotional and I cried. In fact, I was very happy to learn that she felt she was a different person now and had changed a lot through the process of the study.

**The First Collective Action: Responses to Intersectional Oppressions and Violence Against Trafficking Survivors in a Public Forum**

The subsequent section offers how the first educational campaign was conducted in Bardiya. The educational campaign included the workshop such as presentations and interactive sessions, and the dramas.

**May 1st, 2014.** We reached Bardiya on May 1st after 24 hours driving from Kathmandu. Everyone was exhausted but the group recognized that they needed to do more practice for both the dramas and interactive sessions. After practicing for two hours, the group seemed to be very confident and pleased as everyone was being very sincere in their roles and did a great job.

**First Educational Campaign: May 2nd, 2014.** As per the plan, the campaign had two different sessions. They included: Two Interactive sessions and one street drama.

**First interactive session.** The first interactive session was held at 8 am in Shree Sukra Secondary High School in the Sano Sidi Village Development Committee in Bardiya. Thirty-five participants including the principal and teachers of the school, media, community residents, and business people such as owners of restaurants and hotels from the area, were in attendance. The session was divided in two different phases: the formal presentation and conversation café.
first phase was started by one of our co-researchers who was serving as our master of ceremony (emcee) when she invited everyone to take a seat. Another co-researcher then provided a welcome speech. I was then invited to introduce myself as a researcher and highlight the goals of the study.

After my presentation, the emcee invited two co-researchers from the research team to highlight the process of the study. It was the first time for one of the co-researchers to talk publicly and she got very nervous and after a few minutes she decided to conclude her presentation. Admirably, the emcee handled the situation very well and stated:

*I truly appreciate her for her braveness and passion to come and share her knowledge and experiences with us. And even though she could share what she wanted, her silence also told us many things and that is more important than words.*

Everyone gave her very big applause. The beauty of the first session included the highlights of the study process presented by the two co-researchers. The women shared how they became involved in the collective journey of this study and how the study transformed them. The first phase of the workshop was concluded with thank you remarks provided by another co-researcher.

Moving into the second phase, once each co-researcher had made their own station for facilitating a conversation café, the participants were invited to choose the place where they wanted to be a part of the discussion. Using the questions developed earlier, the facilitators facilitated the conversation cafe conversations very well and some of them were also writing notes. For those who were not confident in writing, they asked group members if they could write notes for their group. After 45 minutes, the groups were asked to report back their
discussions to the larger group. In this way, the interactive session was completed which made everyone feel proud of the work that they did.

**Second interactive session.** The second interactive session was held on the same day. It started at 11 am in the morning at the Laliguras High School in Pragati Bazzar, Bardiya. With approximately thirty-one participants, a majority of whom were school teachers, we started the session by following the same agenda as we had for the previous session in the morning. However, the co-researcher who thought she did not do good job in her speech in the morning session had told the group that she was not participating in the first phase of the session but still wanted to facilitate the conversation café in the second phase. With her insistence, the group took her name out from the first phase although they truly wanted her to participate. Since we already had another co-researcher to share her experiences on the study process the group decided not to replace her with anyone. The session was a bit short compared to the previous ones and the group invited participants to join the second phase after a short break.

Many people including police officials, teachers, and the members of the women’s group joined us in the second phase of the session. The same process was employed to run this conversation café and each group was invited to share their discussions with the larger group at the end. Before we wrapped up the second phase of this session, based on the learning from the first interactive session, the emcee invited the participants to share their learnings through the process as a whole. Everyone admired the co-researchers for their knowledge and their facilitation skills. Moreover, the participants were very thankful to the group as they were provided with this opportunity to learn about the issues of trafficking survivors in their reintegration that they had never learned either in schools or anywhere in the community. Finally, the emcee concluded the session by inviting everyone to participate in the street drama
that the group was going to perform in 30 minutes, held at the open space close by the school.

The outcomes of both interactive sessions will be presented in Chapter Five.

**First street drama.** One of the residents who organized a sound system for the performance of the drama announced loudly that the drama was going to be starting in 10 minutes and then people started gradually gathering in the place. We also posted a poster to promote the drama. Figure 3 below is the poster that was used as a social marketing tool. We had approximately 100 people including community residents, police officials, elected officials, school teachers, students, and community members, the drama was started with a background voice that provided a description of a lady (Mangali) who was experiencing difficulties in her home. Then the participants were invited to watch the drama for further understanding of the story of Mangali.

![Figure 3. The poster we used to promote the first street drama played in Bardiya](image)

The drama, especially the words that players used and their acting, made the participants laugh and provided them with lots of entertainment in the beginning although the story had some negative scenes too. As the drama progressed into very undesirable and dreadful scenes,
participants got tears on their eyes and became very serious and angry too. Once the drama finished with a very happy ending scene everyone gave a big hand to all participants with some happy tears. After the drama, some of the co-researchers interviewed an elected official, a police official, and teachers and some community residents for their reflections on the drama performed. In addition, we also distributed an evaluation form to participants and asked them to share with us their learning reflections from the drama (see Appendix K). How the communities perceived the drama and whether the drama was able to transform communities will be discussed in Chapter Five. We then proceeded towards the house of one of the co-researchers for lunch and after the lunch we came back to our hotel and had a debrief meeting.

I started the meeting by asking the women to provide their reflections on the interactive sessions and the drama. I was very happy to learn that everyone was very pleased with the numbers of participants that attended both interactive sessions, drama performances, and community responses related to the educational messages they received through dramas. The co-researcher who interviewed the audience after the drama also shared their positive comments and experiences in the meeting. However, we found that audiences experienced difficulties in hearing dialogues of the drama due to a technical problem with the sound system, which limited their attention to the drama.

In response to my question about their thoughts on if we achieved the goals that we had set, the co-researcher from Bardiya commented:

_I think we did achieve our goals more than 100 percent as I never thought we would have so many people in the audience for the drama and lots of participants for interactive sessions as well. After the drama, one of the residents living close to my house came to me and said “please forgive me for all that I did to you. I know I treated you very badly_
when you came back from India and now you are the one who was able to open my eyes.

If I had not come to watch this drama. I would not understand what you folks are going through and what can be done”.

Everyone agreed and became happy that both activities were very impactful in providing education around the issues of their reintegration and the supports that they needed from the communities and beyond.

Although everyone was very exhausted, they expressed their willingness to go to see a very popular long bridge located 50 kilometers from the hotel. I was very tired and was not in position to travel as I knew that the roads were in a very bad shape, however I arranged a vehicle to go as I did not want to make them disappointed and we all went. After three hours, we reached the place and although they were very tired of the travel on bad roads everyone enjoyed the bridge and the water and took lots of pictures.

Once we were back to the hotel we found that some of the residents that lived by the hotel were disappointed because they could not go to another village to watch the drama and they desperately wanted to see the drama in their village. We were all happy to learn that our group and our work were very popular in the area. The villagers wanted us to perform the drama in their village, however, we were not certain if we could as we had not booked the sound system and also were not sure about the right venue for this. By recognizing the reality that we were leaving for Kathmandu next day and it was already 9 pm we just thought it would not be possible to have a drama the next day. In the meantime, the owner of the hotel assured that he could certainly arrange everything for us to perform the drama the next day which made everyone excited about another opportunity to educate more people.
Second street drama: May 3rd, 2014. The next day, May 3rd, since we did not have a huge crowd, we did not want to start the drama on time as we waited for more people to appear. Therefore, Umesh, who was acting dual roles in the drama, as a trafficker in the beginning of the drama and an activist supporting the trafficking survivor, started singing and making jokes though the use of microphone. His talent made people come to watch the drama. Once we had approximately 60 people in attendance, we started the drama and more people joined us as we went through the performance. The drama concluded by thanking to the audience and doing surveys. In this way, our trip in Bardiya was completed with a huge success. The research team agreed that the trip was very enjoyable, memorable, and productive.

Accomplishments of the (outcomes of the trip). The major achievements of the trip include:

1. Two dramas and two interactive sessions were conducted successfully with more than 200 people in attendance.
2. During the interactive sessions, co-researchers not only exhibited their confidence in their abilities but also used the transferable skills of facilitation and presentation very proficiently.
3. The women improvised their dialogues in the drama and made small changes to the story in the middle of the drama. For instance, the girl who came from brothels and experienced many challenges in her reintegration, started suddenly screaming and advocating for her rights during the drama, rather than crying and requesting her mother to allow her to stay in the same house. For instance, she argued with her stepmother by saying, “I have the same rights as you have and therefore do not tell me that I can’t stay in this house otherwise I know what I need to do.” This certainly made the woman who
was acting as her stepmother confused and was not certain how to respond. But she improvised her dialogues too; this was much appreciated.

4. Participants of the interactive sessions and audiences of the dramas found both activities were very helpful not only in understanding the situations of trafficking, the experiences of their stay in brothels, and the issues they faced in their reintegration, but also recognizing their roles as allies to support them for their liberation.

5. The group reported that the transformational and experiential learning opportunities, especially in Bardiya, transformed them in multiple ways.

6. This trip made the research team feel that our relationships were becoming stronger and healthier.

**Personal reflections.** The first collective action in Bardiya helped me to understand more about the co-researchers and their thoughts about the project. They were very happy to be a part of this study process. As we went through the process, I came to know that the group was very excited about their trip in general and the dramas and interactive sessions in particular. Also, I came to recognize the sincerity of the group in their individual roles and group work as well. The day when we reached to Bardiya, for instance, even though the women were very tired they forced themselves to do a practice of the drama and it was very impressive to see how they supported each other by correcting each other’s acting and lines before they went to bed. More interestingly, when one of the women was found not truly be paying attention to her roles during a practice, another woman said to her:

*I know you always do well in your performance but I don’t understand why you are not playing your role well today. Our goal is not to entertain people. We want to provide some key messages about the issues we experience in our daily lives and help them to*
change their perceptions about us. We have to be serious and try out best to do a good job.

While watching the drama, I became very emotional when a woman playing a pimp was beating and abusing a trafficking girl when she was reluctant to sleep with a client. The way she was smoking and the awful words she was using to her made me feel as if I was in the brothel and was part of the promotion of her terrible behavior. Moreover, when the woman who was playing a victim role cried and wailed and requested the pimp to release her from the place, I felt very vulnerable and helpless. This made me feel like crying and I could not control my tears and thus I left the place for a while and came back to play my role as a social worker in the street drama. I noticed there was silence in the audience during that scene of the pimp abusing the girl; most of the audience seemed to be very emotional and sensitive as I was.

More interestingly, I was very impressed by the way the co-researchers improvised dialogues, based on their experiences, and made the drama genuine and powerful. One person in the audience came to me and said, “I was very angry in the beginning but I liked the scene when you came, took her to a shelter and encouraged her to fight for her rights”. Another woman commented:

When the victim asked her stepmother to keep her mouth shut and entered her home, I felt very happy to see her changed from the beginning to the end of the drama. Her challenges made her became very strong.

Continued Solidarity Group Meetings: After Completing the First Collective Action

Day Twenty Three: May 6, 2014 (3:00 pm - 6:30 pm). In response to my question if anyone wanted to chair this meeting, the co-researcher who had already facilitated meetings several times indicated that she would do this job and started gathering the agenda. Everyone
attended the meeting, including the woman who was unable to go to Bardiya and the two other people from outside our group who went to Bardiya with us, except the lady who was pregnant. The meeting started with the reflections on the trip to Bardiya and everyone shared their positive and negative experiences. Women said this was a spectacular trip for multiple reasons, and it helped them to learn profoundly and to be open with the public. The meeting concluded after I shared the results of the survey conducted in Bardiya which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

I had been asked to inquire into possibilities for the research team to perform dramas for the academy. I shared with the group that Kathmandu University wanted us to perform dramas on May 18 which made the research group very excited. One of the co-researchers, who played dual roles in dramas, encouraged the co-researcher who could not go to Bardiya to play in the next drama, and when the woman accepted her offer, she encouraged the rest of the group to perform the play for her. Although the solidarity team had no plans for their practices today they agreed with this arrangement. While doing practices, some women made suggestions to change the plot of the drama and everyone agreed.

*Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).* The key achievements are as follows:

1. The co-researchers identified their hidden talents and skills through their participation in the dramas and interactive sessions. They built their confidence in their abilities and felt they could do anything if opportunities were provided to them.

2. Suggestions were made to focus on group coordination for the drama as some women seemed to be confused about the time for their entry to the drama performed in Bardiya.

3. The date for another drama and interactive sessions was picked as May 18, at the Kathmandu University in Kathmandu.
4. The story for the drama was adjusted based on the research team’s experiences in Bardiya.

**Personal reflections.** I was very amazed when I learned that how this study process, especially the drama and interactive sessions, helped them in developing their confidence in their abilities and transforming their thinking and lives. For instance, one peer researcher said, “*I think having courage is critical but at the same time we need encouragement and support from other people. Now I feel like I can do anything after our trip to Bardiya*”. Another woman concurred and added, “*Yes, due to the lack of opportunities and people’s trust in us I never...never thought I would facilitate meetings and become an emcee one day*”.

She smiled and continued:

*Through the process of the study, especially the drama and emcee, my self-confidence has escalated and now I feel like I can do anything. This is not my ego; this is my confidence. I feel like I achieved my goal. My dream came true.*

Similarly, another co-researcher added, “*I think I got a second life as I am not the same person as I was before. I don’t even believe I gave a welcome speech in front of such a big crowd. Thanks for the encouragement and opportunities*”. More interestingly, another woman added:

*I always participated in group discussions when someone was facilitating but this was the first time I facilitated group discussions and felt very proud of that. I am still not believing that I went to Bardiya and did such splendid and prodigious work. I admired Rita didi as per my one request she graciously agreed to go to Bardiya.*

She cried and commented, “*We got a very good response in my village. Everyone treated me differently; even my school teachers called me madam and surprisingly, lots of friends sent me a friend request on Facebook after this trip*”. She wiped her tears and continued:
After they watched the drama in my village, one of my neighbors told me that I got a second life. What I learned now is that we all have the rights to dream and once you have dreams, they come true. This trip fulfilled my dream.

Although she wanted to share more of her experiences of the trip she could not control her tears and stopped talking and left the room for a while. The mindful reflections and insightful comments on transformative experiences explicitly demonstrated that personal transformation was advanced through the dialogical process.

**Day Twenty Four: May 16 (4:00 pm- 7:30 pm).** The goal of this meeting was to develop tangible plans, practice the interactive session and the drama for the workshop, to be held on May 18. The whole drama group except one woman was present in the meeting. The meeting started by showing a flyer developed for our dramas on May 18 (see Appendix L) and I found that the women were intimidated by the term workshop that was used in the poster, and therefore I had to step in and assure them that only the venue and audiences were going to be different, not the drama itself. I further told them that the university developed the poster for their internal uses and thus they probably wanted to put common words in their poster that were widely used in academia, aiming to attract more people.

One of the women then addressed the group and narrated:

*I am surprised and am not sure why my friends were worried about the word from the poster. This is our project and we are sharing our experiences with them to build their knowledge on our issues through drama and interactive session. It is their problem if they wanted to use the big words in their poster. Come on ...let’s do a rehearsal...We do not need the same education to go and share our work.*
Some of the peer researchers proposed to revisit the questionnaire we developed for interactive session as the group found that the term “reintegration” was very confusing to the public and was misinterpreted. Since everyone seemed to be very exhausted I proposed if we could discuss this in our next meeting but everyone wanted to sort out the issue immediately so the group could use the new version for the next workshop. The group developed a different question so people could think broadly and answer the questions especially how they think about the term reintegration. I was very happy to learn how the peer researchers enhanced their critical thinking, for example, one of the peer researchers said,

When we asked people about their perceptions around the term reintegration in the interactive session, I found mostly said the two things: marriage and acceptance by family, and some said employment. I think our question is not clear for them to see a bigger picture. I want to hear more from them about things such as self-sustainability, education, respect, dignity and of course our human rights.

Another co-researcher commented:

This is not their fault. Our question on reintegration= re + integration meaning reintegration to family and society. Therefore, family reunion comes first in most peoples’ minds. It would be nice if we to interpret the question to them when we were asking questions, otherwise... What we can do. We can also put some options in surveys for them to choose the best answer if we want to go to that route.

Another peer researcher added if we could use the word “establishment of trafficking survivors” instead of, however some women indicated that they were not comfortable with the word establishment as they thought it did not capture their post incident lives. The group agreed upon adjusting the questionnaire for the next workshop and interpreting the question to
understand the participants clearly in a workshop. The group revisited the questionnaire and adjusted them. The research team made a decision to stay with the word reintegration for the workshop purposes as the policies and programs for reintegration of trafficking survivors has used the word “reintegration” and they did not want to confuse people by using the different term for reintegration.

The woman who was playing in the drama for the first time seemed to be nervous and not confident in her acting in the beginning. However, not surprisingly, it did not take very much time for her to understand her roles and capture dialogues upon watching others to rehearsing. Once the group thought they were ready for their performance at the university, we moved towards the development of an agenda. Practicing for the interactive session for the workshop was our goal for the day; after we’d practiced, we adjourned the meeting.

**Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day).** The followings are the key achievements of the day:

1. The co-researchers identified that the question the research team developed for conversation café created lots of confusions to participants as they defined the term reintegration in a very narrow sense. For instance, the indicators that the participants used for survivors’ reintegration were: family reunion and employment. The group wanted to hear more than just the two aspects. Therefore, the group modified the questionnaire for the next workshops and interviews with stakeholders.

2. The women clearly exhibited the enhancement of their critical thinking, for instance, one woman said:

   *I am exhausted to hear only two words “employment” and “family acceptance” from the participants. I am not sure if they learned anything from our presentations which were*
conducted before the conversation café. If this was their impression about our reintegration what could we expect from them? This means we really need to push ourselves and raise awareness about what reintegration means to us. They have to change their perceptions. I want to see social change.

**Personal reflections.** The way the women demonstrated consciousness raising and critical thinking abilities around social issues was commendable. Further, the dialogues among the women around the term “reintegration” and the difference between the two terms “reintegration” and “establishment” made me amazed and happy to see the changes on their personal thinking. More importantly, when one woman became angry how the society perceived their reintegration, another woman commented:

*If society thought in the same manner as we did, we would not be here in this situation.*

*We are the ones who need to change society and fight for our rights and justice. That’s why we are here my friends. Do not get disappointed and this is the time for us to express our anger and use our knowledge to change society.*

**The Second Collective Action: Responses to Intersectional Oppressions and Violence Against Trafficking Survivors in a Public Forum**

**Second Educational Campaign: May 18 (4:30 pm- 6:30 pm).** The solidarity team went to the Kathmandu University with exhilaration almost 45 minutes early to set up the room. As soon as we reach at the University, the two cameras that had already been set up in the room drew our attention which made some co-researchers upset. Without any delay, a couple of women came to me and expressed their concerns about taking their pictures during the workshop. I assured them that I would talk to the Dean who organized this workshop and would ask them to remove the cameras from the room. Everyone then seemed to be okay, but it was
very noticeable that the women were not truthfully feeling comfortable in the setting. I wanted to ensure if the group was fine to run the workshop and one of the women stated:

*We trust you didi. But what worries me is that I am afraid and nervous now because of this setting. I meant all our audiences are educated today. I have never been to college and I am not sure how they will view and treat us.*

Another woman echoed her thoughts and said:

*I may not be facilitating the workshop and make my presentation today but no worries - I will perform the drama. I already messed up our presentation in Bardiya and I do not want to do this again here. I am very nervous and my heart is racing. All are very prominent and professional people - I never even talked to those people in my life.*

By validating their feelings, I said to them that if that would be the case we could begin this workshop with my presentation followed by a question and answer session. Then we could directly move towards the drama. It was appreciated but one of the women argued:

*We were looking forward to this opportunity and now we cannot step back. Let the people come first and we will see whether we will be comfortable with them or not. I am ok with it either way but I strongly wanted to go with the agenda we had developed. Ladies, Didi is here with us and I don’t think we need to worry about anything. I know it is a different setting but they are the people who need to be aware of our oppression.*

Everyone agreed her and expressed their appreciation to me. The most beautiful aspect of the workshop was the exhibition of photovoice outside of the presentation room (see Appendix M). To divert women’s minds and bring their energy back, I asked everyone if they could focus on their photovoice. The involvement of the women in the displays helped them to reduce their intimidation and make them comfortable. Participants then started coming to the displays and
interacting with the women which changed the dynamic of the situation further increasing their confidence for their presentation.

We started our presentation followed by an interactive session. The process was similar to the session in Bardiya however the women seemed to be more confident in facilitating and interacting with participants. The women and the participants were not only laughing and eating food together but also exchanging their contacts. The workshop was concluded by a performing drama which made people cry and become emotional. A survey was conducted to evaluate the workshop (Result of the survey will be discussed in Chapter Five).

**Continued Solidarity Group Meetings: After the Completion of the Second Action**

**Day Twenty Five: May 20, 2014 (5:00 pm-7:00 pm).** The meeting started with six co-researchers. The purpose of the meeting was primarily focused on reflection on the workshop held at the Kathmandu University. Interestingly, one co-researcher proposed to facilitate the meeting and asked everyone to share their reflections on the workshop. While sharing their reflections, one woman posited:

> I was very intimidated in the beginning of the workshop and felt guilty of coming to the academic forum. Once people started to come to the photovoice exhibition I gradually felt at ease and later when we were facilitating the conversation café, I felt very honored and respected. I felt they valued our wisdom.

Another woman concurred with her points and added:

> I was also afraid in the beginning. The way they were talking and behaving us made me feel like a valuable person. The participants admitted that they were very naïve about the issues of reintegration of trafficking survivors and asked me to fill them in. By hearing
this from them, I totally forgot that we were in a formal institution while talking to them, I made eye contact which was a very big thing for me.

Another woman added:

The first time I felt both participants and we were equal. There were no hesitations, no embarrassment and no judgment. They were just curious to understand more about reintegration issues and I was sharing my own issues which made me feel like I was teaching the highly educated. I really enjoyed this workshop and I wonder if we could do more workshops like this here in Kathmandu?

Overall, everyone agreed that the workshop went very well and we achieved our goals - to raise awareness around reintegration issues - which also reduced their hesitations and fear of public speaking. While reflecting, the co-researchers shared their experiences on photovoice displays and admired the researcher for this idea. For instance, one of the co-researchers stated:

Of course, I enjoyed the photovoice process including taking photos, sharing with you the reasons why the pictures are important to me and writing narrations about the pictures,. I never thought the pictures would touch everyone’s heart. Wow! What a great thing we did. I still do not believe that this is our work.

Another woman added:

When I read my own narrations, I came to recognize my knowledge and wisdom that made me feel proud of being me. In the beginning, I did not believe for a second that the pictures and writings belonged to me. If I was not a trafficking survivor I would not have gotten this learning opportunity.
Similarly, another woman concurred with her and added:

>What I realized after the photo exhibition was that the photovoice became a great source for raising awareness of our issues besides the interactive sessions and the drama. These photos speak about us and we do not have to say anything. It was our work and we all should be proud of ourselves on how much work we have done through this research process.

The group expressed their interests to display the photos in other places as well and requested me to find out more venues for photo exhibitions. Before concluding the meeting, the solidarity group talked about the possibilities of focus group discussions with other trafficking survivors for sexual exploitations, who are not a part of this study, to find out the commonalities and differences in their reintegration. Unfortunately, this aspect of the study had not been approved by the Ethics Board. I told them about these limitations and promised to support them if they could recruit participants for the group discussions and could manage their time for these tasks. The women seemed to be very excited about this meeting however no one indicated that they would take a lead role for this initiative and thus it was tabled for the next meeting.

Before concluding the meeting, the women recognized the importance of an awareness raising campaign associated with their issues in reintegration and thus they recognized their continued involvement in social campaigns was crucial and everyone graciously agreed to distribute the awareness-raising poster developed earlier to people and agencies. Before we adjourned the meeting, the research team scheduled the date for a learning session on data analyses (May 26) and the celebrations for the study completion (June 22).
Accomplishment of the day (outcomes of the meeting). Following are the key achievements of the day:

1. The co-researchers found their exposure to publicly speaking in an academic setting helped them to reduce their fear and inferiority complex.
2. The photo exhibition was found to be an additional knowledge construction and an awareness tool.
3. The co-researchers acknowledged their hidden knowledge and wisdom and the importance of utilizing them in multiple ways, and their impact on public awareness around the issues of their reintegration.
4. The drama was executed and performed very well.

Personal reflections. I was very delighted to hear when one of the co-researchers claimed that she could be a teacher based on her own experiences. She was the one who was not sure in the beginning of this study if she was going be a part of each activity as she thought there was nothing she could contribute to the study process except sharing her own experiences. It was amazing to hear the process had transformed them and the co-researchers came to realize their transformation. Further, the co-researcher who performed the drama for the first time stated:

I can’t believe that I did fantastic job. Most participants came to me and congratulated for my performance by saying that the acting I was doing and bad words I used were perfectly suited in the context of issues of trafficking of women and children and reintegration of trafficking survivors. This made me feel that I achieved a lot through this study process.

Day Twenty Six: May 26, 2014 (3:00 pm- 7:30 pm). The objective of this meeting was to provide experiential learning opportunities for the co-researcher team through their
involvement in data analyses. Five co-researchers were in attendance at the beginning of this meeting. I started the meeting by sharing how to analyze data with the highlights of coding and categorizing. I also demonstrated to the group how to analyze the data by using the raw data obtained from peer interviews. After twenty minutes, other two co-researchers also joined us and I shared the same information with them.

I subsequently asked each individual to analyze the raw data on their own by distributing a transcript of the peer interviews. Everyone found it was a very challenging job, but it was equally motivational and enjoyable to them. Once everyone came up with codes, I invited each woman to share the codes with another person for her insights. It was very interesting to see how they were arguing and providing their comments on each other’s work. Once both individual agreed on their coding, I asked the women to share their work with the larger group that allowed other people an opportunity to provide their comments and insights by changing coding and adding more coding. The process was undoubtedly lengthy and intensive for them as they had never been exposed to this work. I then invited the women to make a group of four and develop themes and sub themes based on the coding they had and shared with the larger group for their suggestions and comments by providing colourful small cards (Figure 4). In the meantime, a couple of women thought it was very intellectual work and thus they did not have an interest in working on this and wanted to leave for home. This made other women who were truly enjoying the work upset. Recognizing this, I gave them a break and asked them to come back for other activities.

After the break, the women indicated that they wanted to continue working on analyzing data and developing themes. Therefore, I asked the women who wanted to leave for home if they were fine with this arrangement. Although they were uncomfortable to leave in the middle of the
work they apologized and left, and rest of the group continued to work on data analyses. Very interestingly, the women came up with some delightful themes from peer interviews (details will be discussed in Chapter Five). Since the co-researchers indicated that they were looking forward to individual interviews, I scheduled the date for semi-structured interviews based on their availability and the meeting was adjourned.

![Figure 4](image.jpg)

Figure 4. The solidarity team was involved in data analyses

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The following outcomes were achieved:

1. The co-researchers were provided with an opportunity to learn about data analyses and they subsequently became meaningfully involved in coding and categorizing.

2. By developing themes based on the data from peer interviews, the women contributed significantly to this knowledge construction process.

3. Women reported that they felt very honored to analyze the data which was collected from the interviews they conducted themselves.
**Personal reflections.** I was certain that the co-researcher team would enjoy the data analyzing process however it was amazing to see how they became excited as they went through the process. For example, one of the women reported:

*You know, I woke up this morning with excitement as we will be learning data analysis. I heard people utter this term several times but I never thought I would be doing data analysis one day. May be that’s why I was motivated to come here early today which is very unusual for me, right?*

Another woman concurred with her points and added:

*Same here.... Well...I was very curious to know what data analysis looked like and how it can be done. It was not easy to learn for sure but I am learning and enjoying. The more we do the more we learn so let’s pick days this week for more practice. If we enhance our knowledge on data analysis, we can later claim that we can do research. This gives us credibility for our promotion.*

The transformative capacities that the co-researchers demonstrated certainly inspired me to provide them more opportunities not only for coding and categorizing but also for writing reports. Unfortunately, the time did not allow us to move towards the writing part as my departure for Canada was on July 24, 2014 and the women had a very busy schedule.

**Day Twenty Seven: June 1, 2014 (12:30 pm- 4:00 pm).** Meeting was scheduled for 12 pm however only two co-researchers arrived at 12:15 pm. The two women indicated that they wanted to develop the agenda for the meeting before others came so that they could start immediately once everyone joined them. While having lunch, in the meantime, a few researchers came to join us and we developed the agenda for the meeting. In total, six women were present.
One woman stepped in and facilitated the meeting by sharing the agenda developed and asking the group if they wanted to add anything in the agenda.

One woman brought a couple of pictures to share with the research team and asked if we could still do this in our meeting. A few women were under the impression that since we already had a photovoice exhibition at the workshop in the university, there was no reason to take more pictures. I told them any photos taken before celebrating the completion of this study were totally acceptable for this dissertation purposes. I further clarified that we might not have time to develop the pictures in a poster format for other exhibition purposes but I could certainly incorporate the pictures in my dissertation. The women shared her pictures with the group which made everyone very emotional. Moving along, I shared with the group another exciting opportunity for us to do a workshop in a school – this time Chelsea International Academy in Kathmandu. The group was thrilled. With enthusiasm, the research team picked the date for the workshop (June 8, 8:00 am to 10:30 am).

A few women wanted to develop the agenda for the workshop but one woman said she was more interested in continuing to analyze data instead. Recognizing that the next workshop would be pretty much the same as it was before, everyone agreed with her and moved towards the work of analyzing data. However, the group then decided to start the workshop by performing the drama followed by an interactive session. They also slightly changed the questions for the session based on their last experience at the university. The women realized that they did not need any further practice for the drama so they decided not to meet as a group prior to the workshop.

I invited the co-researchers to continue to analyze the data from the peer interviews at an individual level in the same way as they analyzed in the past. It was very interesting to see the
women when they were arguing with each other, especially while developing themes after coding and categorizing. Once everyone agreed upon the themes developed, I provided them another transcription from the first interactive session held in Bardiya and encouraged them to work in a group of two. Although it did not take much time for the women to complete coding and categorizing, the solidarity team spent a bit time in establishing themes based on the work of the small groups. This was an easy task but it was very intense for everyone, especially those who did not enjoy data analyses last time. Thus, we took a coffee and snacks break.

After the break, I shared a good news with the group. The Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary would be recognizing the co-researchers with a certificate. I asked the group to provide me their official names to put on the certificates. This made the group feel very honored and excited. One of the co-researchers said:

*I never thought we would be recognized with a certificate. Thanks for seeing the value of our knowledge and involvement in this study. This project changed us a lot and provided an opportunity to change society.*

I perceived that the group wanted to receive the award from someone renowned and thus I told them that I would be contacting the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare to ask if the Minister could attend the press conference and present this awards. I asked the co-researchers if they had someone else in mind to present the certificates. One of the women replied to me:

*I don’t understand why we need someone to come and give this award to us. I can’t speak for other people but for me I want to receive this award from you, Rita didi, who provided us this powerful learning opportunity which helped us not only to build our confidence and self-esteem but also to change society. I never got that much respect from*
anyone in my life. For me, it is my honour to get this award from you, didi. It would be more valuable if you give this award to us.

The rest of the group applauded. We decided to distribute the award at the celebration day of the completion of this study, scheduled for July 22.

The Third Collective Action: Responses to Intersectional Oppressions and Violence Against Trafficking Survivors in a Public Forum

Third Educational Campaign. On June 8, the solidarity team arrived 30 minutes early for the preparation of the drama and photovoice exhibition before we started the workshop at the Chelsea International Academy. Most participants from grade 9 and 10 were present and the drama was started at 9:15 am. As before, the participants laughed at the beginning of the drama but were in tears later as the story became very serious and sad. When the drama concluded with a very happy ending, the audience cheered and gave us big applause.

As soon as the drama was completed, one of our co-researchers invited the participants to divide into four groups for the next session of the workshop which was facilitated by the co-researchers. As per our early conversations with the principal of the school, only grade 10 students and their teachers attended the second session. However, a few professionals such as lawyers and professors also joined the group and provided their insights and recommendations on reintegration strategies. The workshop was concluded by presenting a summary from each group.

After the workshop, the research team had lunch and then decided to go to a Botanical Garden, Godhawori, for both joy and a debrief meeting. I took a lead role for facilitating the debrief meeting and invited everyone to make a circle and sit on the ground. I asked everyone to
reflect on their experiences from the workshop today. One of the co-researchers started by saying:

You know what messages I received from the children/participants today. I am surprised that they think I am already reintegrated to my society because I am living with my parents. From a societal prospective, if we are living with a family we are reintegrated. Moreover, if we have a job, the community perceives that we are fully reintegrated. In fact, it is so called reintegration. How can someone make this assumption for us without any facts?

Another woman agreed with her and commented:

This is why we need to be doing these types of activities to raise awareness around our issues. Today, I am very happy that they learned tremendously about our reintegration issues and became aware of citizens’ role in addressing the issues. My group reported that they learned a lot from our session today.

Another woman added that the participants had promised to share their learning with their families and friends to make our campaign successful. Another woman said:

I have a very renowned lawyer in my group and he was surprised when he heard the barriers that we experience in reintegration, especially legal and administrative challenges. He asked us to contact him if there are any cases that we need to discuss and/or file.

One of the women expressed her appreciation in having this meeting in an open space. She highlighted:

It was not necessarily a need to talk about our issues in a closed room. By discussing our issues in this environment and learning from participants today, I felt I have done nothing wrong in my life. I used to blame myself for my situation but now...”
Before we adjourned the meeting, everyone agreed that today’s workshop was very effective as it allowed participants an opportunity to learn survivors’ reintegration issues and to help them recognize their own roles and responsibilities in supporting survivors in their reintegration.

**Continued Solidarity Group Meetings: After Completing the Third Collective Action**

**Day Twenty Eight: June 11 (3:00 pm - 7:30 pm).** The meeting started with the presence of six co-researchers and later one more co-researcher joined us. This was the last formal meeting before we wrapped up this study and therefore everyone seemed to be sad with low energy. When asked which areas they would like to discuss today, the majority indicated that they wanted to learn more about data analyses and to talk about the press conference scheduled for June 20.

The co-researchers then got involved in analyzing data obtained from the workshop at the Chelsea International Academy and interviews with stakeholders by following the same procedures as they went through in the past. The one difference is that most of the students used English to write their evaluations so we had to make sure to give those documents to women in our group who spoke English. It was remarkable to see how the women were engaged in arguing and supporting each other while coding and categorizing the data and developing themes. After they completed data analyses, I asked them if they still wanted to continue working on data analyses and I found a positive response. Then the group worked on the data from solidarity group meetings and interviews with stakeholders. The solidarity team essentially reviewed the themes they developed in the past and identified the differences and similarities on their own definitions of reintegration and societal perceptions on reintegration.
The solidarity team wanted to present what successful reintegration meant to them and how the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) and the media could support survivors in their reintegration. Therefore, I invited each individual to write 5 recommendations for both MOWCSW and the media and then as a group to develop final recommendations. Some women seemed to be confused and needed more clarifications and thus the women helped each other to understand more about the process. The women got meaningfully and significantly engaged first in developing guidelines for the media (see Appendix N) and then the draft recommendations to the MoWCSW. Once the women developed these letters, they moved onto analyzing their reintegration issues and subsequently developed a comprehensive analysis of reintegration chart for the presentation purposes (details in Chapter Five). The two women who would be presenting at the conference practiced in front of the group and incorporated group feedback in their presentation. Subsequently the research team developed an agenda for the press conference and assigned the roles and responsibilities for each individual. Three people put their names forward for public exposure and one of them took upon the role of Master of Ceremony (who also did emcee role in two other workshops). Others agreed to make a presentation and read the recommendation letter for the media at the conference. The two women gave the media consent as well. Although only three people signed up for the conference, the other three women expressed their willingness to come as audience to the conference.

Before concluding the meeting, I wanted to ensure that the women were still interested in focus group discussions with other survivors as indicated in the last meeting. The women looked at each other and one woman said, “I want to do this for sure but I doubt if we could be able to do this before we conclude this study due to our busy schedule.” Everyone echoed her points and
thus the research team decided to withdraw the idea of focus group discussions with other
survivors and publications of poem as well. I also asked if they wanted to continue working on
the awareness raising campaign through the distribution of the poster. They said that they did
want to continue. They found that they could change society and thus their continued
involvement was crucial. In this way, we concluded our formal solidarity meetings of the
research project. Figure 5 below shows the solidarity of the research team.

Figure 5. Peer researchers exhibited their solidarity in responding intersectional oppressions and
violence against survivors

Accomplishments of the day (outcomes of the day). The major key achievements of the
day are:

1. The co-researchers exhibited their knowledge and abilities in analyzing data by
   meaningfully becoming involved in coding categorizing and developing themes.
2. The research team developed a recommendation letter for the media.

3. The research team discussed and identified what successful reintegration meant to them and then developed a comprehensive analysis of reintegration strategies for their presentation at the conference.

4. The group also developed a draft of a recommendation letter for the MoWCSW and asked each individual to review the draft and provide feedback by June 16.

**Personal reflections.** Based on their involvement in data analyses in the past, I knew that the co-researchers knew how to do it. However, the way they were developing themes and engaging and arguing with each other astonished me and made me very pleased. Their critical thinking and dedication to analyzing data showed that they had very good knowledge and abilities. Also, while developing a comprehensive analysis of reintegration chart, one of the co-researchers who was very introverted gave me a pleasant surprise when she said:

> It was amazing how far we are coming along through the study process. Look at us and look at the work we have done - I feel like I am still dreaming. I never thought that I had that much energy and wisdom to work as a group. These are our products and I can tell everyone that I can certainly do actions based research. Who knows this may be my career in the future as I know data analysis as well.

In sum, the research team was significantly involved in knowledge generation process through solidarity group meetings which was identified as a key transformative and emancipatory research tool. While discussing the issues of trafficking of women and children and reintegration of trafficking survivors, the women critically analyzed structural violence and gender oppression making women and children vulnerable to trafficking and making them also being doubly victimized. Through praxis, the women also identified personal and social
transformation that was achieved (which will be discussed in Chapter Five). While the solidarity group meeting was recognized as important for knowledge generations and transformative impacts methods, the women were also involved in an interview with stakeholders as another knowledge generation tool which will be presented in the subsequent section.

**Phase III: Interviews with Stakeholders**

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, interviews with stakeholders as another knowledge generation method was chosen in one of the solidarity group meetings and subsequently was executed by the peer researchers team throughout the study period. As demonstrated earlier, both methods such as the solidarity group meetings and interviews with stakeholders were conducted simultaneously, which helped the co-researchers not only to select agencies for interviews purposes but also to reflect on their interviews and adjust the interview guides. Other women who had not done interviews with stakeholders became inspired and started connecting with the agencies that they chose for an interview. The process also allowed women to discuss how they could improve their interviews (for more details please refer to Phase II). Since I was not involved in interviewing the agencies, I was not required to get approval from the ethics board in accordance with the ethics board’s decision. However, the agencies provided a verbal consent to co-researchers to name their agencies in this dissertation. The agencies that the women selected and interviewed are shown in Table 2 below.
Table 2. Peer researchers interviewed representative(s) of different agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Agencies/Individuals</th>
<th>Interviewer(s)</th>
<th>Times of Interviews</th>
<th>Information (Websites)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shakti Samuha</td>
<td>Anuska &amp; Pratima</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://shaktisamuha.org.np/">http://shaktisamuha.org.np/</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Pratima, Lalgiri &amp; Swoyeta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://shaktisamuha.org.np/">http://shaktisamuha.org.np/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mendo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>WOREC Nepal</td>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.worecnepal.org/">http://www.worecnepal.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Maiti Nepal</td>
<td>Mendo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.maitinepal.org/">http://www.maitinepal.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Terre des Hommes</td>
<td>Pratima &amp; Swoyeta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.terredeshommes.org/">http://www.terredeshommes.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nepal Police</td>
<td>Anusk &amp; Lalgiri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/">https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Foreign Employees Rescue Nepal</td>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Currently not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Serve Nepal</td>
<td>Kabita and Tara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.serve-nepal.org/">http://www.serve-nepal.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>NGO Federation</td>
<td>Saradha &amp; Anuska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ngofederation.org/">http://www.ngofederation.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Serve Nepal</td>
<td>Pratima &amp; Swoyeta</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Lalgiri &amp; Mendo</td>
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<td>Individual Free lance</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the peer researchers insisted on the necessity to interview lawyers and picked some renowned lawyers to contact. However, the women were not able to meet them for interviews due to time constraints for both. More importantly, the co-researchers themselves arranged all the interviews except for two that were set up by me. Similarly, I gave a company to
one of the co-researchers as per her request when she was going to interview with one of the agencies. By recognizing the need to build her confidence and make her comfortable with the research process, the co-researcher felt it was important for her to go with the peer researcher for this interview. While she did not end up taking a formal interview role, she did explain the study in the beginning of the interview in response to the interviewee who was curious to know about the study project.

With the permission of the co-researchers, I hired Udvhasika Giri who had also played in a drama in Bardiya to transcribe both the discussions from the solidarity group meetings and interviews with stakeholders for data analyzing purposes and to include in the dissertation later when translated into English (the findings of the interviews with stakeholders will be presented in Chapter Five).

**Phase IV: Collective Actions in Response to Intersectional Oppressions and Violence Against Survivors**

As illustrated earlier in this chapter, through praxis the co-researchers were meaningfully involved in selecting collective actions and acting upon them. The purpose of the collective actions was to provide education about their issues in reintegration and motivate the audiences to become their allies in accomplishing their goals. The collective actions that the co-researchers were involved include: (1) educational campaigns: interactive sessions (presentation and conversation café), street dramas sessions and educational flyers; (2) press conference; and (3) recommendation letter to the policy makers.

**Educational campaigns: interactive sessions/ workshops, street dramas and flyers.**

As illustrated earlier in the chapter, by recognizing gender oppression and the need of collective actions to address the issues of reintegration, a number of workshops were organized and
facilitated by peer researchers in different locations which will be shown in the Table 3 below. After completing the activities, the research team distributed surveys to the audiences for their feedback which allowed the research team to improve their activities. The findings of the evaluations will be presented in Chapter Five. In addition, the group also distributed the posters to communities and posted them in many neighbourhoods in Kathmandu and Bardiya.

Table 3. The table reflects a number of different activities/actions that solidarity team was involved in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
<th>Interactive Sessions</th>
<th>Dramas</th>
<th>Evaluations</th>
<th>Photovoice Exhibitions</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Shree Sukra High School and open space in Bardiya</td>
<td>May 2nd, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Laliguras High School, Bardiya</td>
<td>May 2nd, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Open space in Bardiya</td>
<td>May 3rd, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kathmandu University, Kathmandu</td>
<td>May 18, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chelsea International Academy, Kathmandu</td>
<td>June 8th, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Press Conference, Nanglo Restaurant, Kathmandu</td>
<td>June 20, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Press conference.** The press conference was held on June 20, 2014 from 2:30 pm to 4:00pm, at the Nanglo restaurant in Kathmandu. Forty-nine-participants, including the media, representatives from Shakti Samuha and other anti-trafficking agencies, and people from academia were in attendance. The goals were to share the process and the findings of the study
and to provide recommendations to the media. The poster for this event is shown in Figure 6 below.

![Poster for the press conference held in Kathmandu](image)

*Figure 6. A poster for the press conference held in Kathmandu*

The conference began with a welcome remark by the same co-researcher who had emceed the last three workshops. Then the researcher briefly highlighted the study and two peer researchers who spoke in the last two workshops provided further details. This involved the process and findings of the study, collective actions and transformative impacts on both personal and societal levels. Then program coordinator, Charimaya Tamang, former chairperson of Shakti Samuha, was invited to share her impressions on the study and the roles of the peer researchers.

The conference concluded with a co-researcher presenting the recommendations/guidelines for the media, which was developed earlier in a group. Food was then served and the audience was invited to visit the photovoice exhibition displayed in the same room. Two co-researchers had given the media consent and therefore they were interviewed. Further, I was invited the next day for an interview by one of the television channels (please refer to the link for more details [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMH1gORoi-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMH1gORoi-Y)).
A recommendation letter to the policy makers. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the draft of a recommendation letter was created in the last solidarity meeting and the research team agreed to review this letter at an individual level before finalizing it as a group. Once it was finalized and was ready to print, one of the employees told one of our peer researchers that it needed to be approved by Shakti Samuha before it was delivered to the MoWCSW. Once I was called to come to Shakti Samuha for a meeting, I phoned and asked other peer researchers if they could come to the meeting, but unfortunately due to their busy schedule only three co-researchers could attend this meeting.

The meeting began with a bit of tension between the research team and the Shakti Samuha management team when they asked us to take out some of the recommendations from the letter. In response to them, one of the co-researchers countered:

We know how much difficulty we are going through in our reintegration and you could not understand our pain because you are not in the place that we are. We know what we want and what government needs to be doing for the quality of our lives.

Then Charimaya Tamang who had been very supportive for this study stepped into the conversations and stated:

I agree with you and I know what you meant. I understand the pain because I am not that different than you. But at the same time we need to be very mindful and cautious what we are writing because you folks are representing Shakti Samuha. This is the voice of Shakti Samuha not only of the Community-based Action Research Group.

As per their suggestions, the co-researchers essentially agreed to adjust some words and everyone became happy with the changes. Then, the research team was acknowledged for their dedications and hard work in this study and was further asked if they could exhibit the
photovoice in the office of Shakti Samuha. This proposal made us very proud and happy and we handed in the exhibits to them for a display. Although the conversation began with a stressful situation, it converted into a positive meeting. Finally, the meeting concluded by acknowledging the agency for their incredible support with a certificate, provided by the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary.

Before we finalized the letter, one of our co-researchers and I had met the Minister Bimala Mainali for the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare and talked about the study and the recommendation letter that the research team wanted to hand over the Government of Nepal. Upon receiving a positive response, we had set up a time for our second meeting with the Minister to submit the letter. In fact, all members from the solidarity group indicated their willingness to go together and submit the letter to the Government however only one woman was available on that time given.

We met at the main door with very excitement but unfortunately, we found that the co-researcher forgot to bring her identification card which was required to enter inside. When she was about to go back to her home to get the card I got a message that the Minister had to leave in 10 minutes and thus I was obliged to go inside on my own, accompanied only by a photographer. I met the Minister for MoWCSW and read the cover letter and the recommendations (see Appendix O). As per my request, she also gave a brief speech in which she promised that she would take this letter to the respective committees for their considerations while developing a new Constitution and formulating and changing the laws, policies and programs associated to trafficking and reintegration. The meeting adjourned by taking a group picture.
Day Twenty Nine (The Last Solidarity Group Meeting): Art Healing Therapy and Celebrations of the Completion of the Study

As the solidarity group went through the study process, we had recognized the need of focusing on our health and well-being because of our significant involvement in critical analyses of gender oppression and structural violence made us become very emotional and sensitive. Some of the women who were trained in art therapy graciously offered to facilitate the session for the research team. The date was picked for June 20, 2014. Everyone was present except one of the women who just had a baby a few weeks ago, and everyone seemed to be excited about the session. Three different activities were executed on that day: (1) reflections on the press conference; (2) art healing therapy; and (3) celebrations of the success of the solidarity group in response to intersectional oppression.

Reflections on the press conference. The meeting started with reflections on the press conference and everyone agreed that the conference achieved our goal of raising awareness around their concerns and issues to the journalists. One of the women stated “I found out that our recommendations made some journalists very uncomfortable and they seemed to be resistance in following the recommendations”. Another woman commented:

We wanted to show them some of the questions they ask for survivors are very inappropriate and unacceptable. They just need to know we are no different than others. I don’t care if they are happy or not. I must say they are one of the perpetrators who make us vulnerable in our reintegration.

Overall, the research team recognized how the study process transformed each individual and also helped them to create space for social transformation which will be discussed in the Chapter Five. Prior to moving to the main agenda, one of the co-researchers shared with the
group that the date, Sunday June 22nd, which we had picked earlier for the celebrations of the group’s success would not work for her due to her unpredictable family health issues. Another woman expressed similar concerns and proposed to celebrate the event on this very day. I waited to hear what the other women would say. They looked at each other and they eventually supported the idea of celebrating the event today. I then called the peer researcher who just became a mother and requested that she came along her baby, even just for the celebration part. She knew the original date for celebration so she was certainly not prepared for this invitation however she indicated her willingness to attend this ceremony. By recognizing the difficulties of transportation, I told her to take a cab and I would cover these expenses. She then agreed to come.

I subsequently called my daughter, Ruska Adhikari, and asked her to bring all the certificates to the meeting place. I also invited the two other individuals Umesh Khadka and Udvhasika Puri who became a part of this study for dramas, but unfortunately Udvashika could not attend the celebration with such short notice. Then the co-researchers ordered lunch for everyone in one of the restaurants near by the meeting place.

Art healing therapy. The purpose of the art healing therapy was to promote a mindfulness peace among the team. Keep in mind that some of the information shared in the session was also used while analyzing data and interpreting them. The art therapy session started by one of our peer researchers who asked everyone to take an art paper and sit comfortably on the floor. She then asked us to take a long breath for three times and close our eyes and visualize the individuals/ environment/ things and the hands of monsters who made our life miserable and horrible. After five minutes, when we were instructed to open our eyes. I noticed that everyone appeared to be very low with no energy even to speak a single word, and their anger and sadness
were explicitly projected on their face. I never saw the group in such a low and angry mood. We were then invited to draw the pictures of the individuals/things and the situations that we had visualized on the left side of the art paper. Everyone was involved in sketching of something associated to their lives and took no more than 10 minutes to complete the task. Everyone then shared their drawings with the larger group. It was an incredible learning experience for me to see how the women drew the pictures, most abstract drawings, and linked their stories with the sketches. Their narrations spoke to the feminization of poverty and intersectional oppression and clearly showed how their worldviews around the issues they face had shifted from individual to systemic issue as a result of the change their ontological position over the period of the study.

Once everyone got a turn to share their drawings, the facilitator invited us to close our eyes and think about the individuals/environments/things and the hands of good people who made our lives comfortable and meaningful and brought lots of happiness to our faces and joys to our lives. We went through the same process as we did for the first exercise and finally we shared the drawings of the sketches of individuals/things who were important to us. While sharing, lots of happiness and hopes were explicitly depicted on everyone’s face which changed the dynamics of the environment and everyone started laughing and joking around each other. In the meantime, another co-researcher came with her newly born baby and the facilitator explained the art therapy to her and asked her if she wanted to be a part of this. Although we already completed the art therapy session the facilitator went through the same process with her and she shared her drawings with the larger group. In this way, we completed art healing therapy (see Appendix P). We then took a break.
Celebrations of the Success and Completion of the Solidarity Group in Response to Intersectional Oppressions and Violence Against Survivors

We started our celebration by acknowledging everyone for their meaningful participations and dedications for this study. I then expressed my gratitude to the peer researchers for their meaningful and significant involvement in this knowledge construction process and awarded the certificates to each woman. The group wanted to take a picture when they were holding the certificates and therefore we took a group picture (Figure 7).

![Figure 7. Acknowledgement of the co-researchers. The group picture was taken during the ceremony of the success of the completion of this emancipatory research](image)

Before concluding the ceremony, I invited the co-researchers to make a circle and share their final insights related to their participation in this study process through the use of a “ball of yarn”. I explained that everyone would have an opportunity to say something and as per their request, I did a demonstration for their understanding how this game would function. Once everyone seemed to be fine with this exercise, I began by sharing my own experiences and threw the ball to the next who raised hands to speak. While holding the ball, each gave their
comments. When the ball was tossed to the next person, the tosser held on to the yarn. The last person threw the ball back to me and I offered a final comment by inviting everyone to stand up and hold the ball tightly. I then asked the group to share their final thoughts if they had any.

A majority of the research team talked about how the study helped them in achieving personal transformation and in recognizing their own identity. For instance, one woman said:

*I always shamed myself prior to my involvement in this study and felt guilty for being who I am. Look at me now I am a completely different person. I can talk to people. I am not shy anymore. I have no fear in saying the right things.*

Another woman added, “*The biggest learning experience for me was that I understood the feminization of poverty and gender oppression as the most common factors contributing to making us marginalized and vulnerable to oppression*”. Another woman stated, “*For me, I found this study helped us in strengthening our relationships and now we have solidarity*”. Another woman said:

*If someone trusts us like this and bring us together we could do a lot and change society. Now we know how participatory action research works and so please Rita didi, bring a research project in the future and give us with the opportunity to work with you. I recognize we all have knowledge and wisdom and we just need a platform to utilize them. This is the most rewarding experience for me.*

After completing the exercise, I invited the peer researchers for their reflection on the exercise and they commented that the game made them feel more connected and everyone was equal regardless of their socio-economic locations. One of the women said:
I had recognized that we all have unique knowledge and experiences and I found that neither did we face any competition nor were we treated differently throughout the study period. This exercise reminded me that we all are same—our voices are heard.

After this exercise, we proceeded towards the restaurant for lunch where a reporter came for an interview with two co-researchers. The beauty of the celebration was that everyone was present and shared their comments on the study and formally acknowledged each other for their knowledge and wisdom and tireless efforts in responding to intersectional oppression and social injustice.

Section II: Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

Prior to beginning this study, especially during the ethics approval process, no one anticipated that risks in this study would be as high as they turned out to be, or as similar as they were to the risks the co-researchers encountered in their everyday lives. However, as we went through praxis, co-researchers took on more responsibility and ownership for the project and became more vocal about the risks that they were taking to be part of it. They also boldly identified new activities that they wanted to undertake to share the results of the research in the community, particularly the educational campaigns and the press conference, and identified new risks that came along with these new activities. As this section will demonstrate, co-researchers were full partners in identifying potential risk, assessing its significance, and putting in measures for risk mitigation.

Their full partnership in the risk assessment and mitigation process was a goal of the project and a significant component and value of PAR. From the moment that women were asked to consider joining the study, we started a discussion of risk. The formal study documents and the more informal discussions emphasized the importance of informed consent and made a
commitment to participants that if they saw unsupportable risks associated with being a part of this study, they could withdraw without repercussions at any time. They were told they could choose to be part of any or all components of the project. The choice was theirs, according to their perceived assessment of risk. This grounding helped set the stage for the risk-negotiation that was to follow as the project evolved under the leadership of the women themselves.

The most frequent risk the women identified concerned their families and it was this risk, unfortunately, that the project heightened as it evolved. When the solidarity meetings ran during working hours, co-researchers were best able to keep their participation hidden from family members if they felt the need to do so. When workday meetings became difficult, co-researchers decided to move the meetings to weekends. They soon began to discuss how challenging it was to get time away from family to participate in the weekend meetings and the risk mitigation measures they used to be able to continue to participate.

For women whose families did not know about their past, the shift to weekend meetings left them struggling to find an acceptable reason to be away from home. They could not tell their families about the research project and had to concoct other reasons, such as having to put in more hours at work. As one woman explained:

_I had a hard time leaving my home today for this meeting. When I told my husband that I was going to work he seemed to be very upset and asked if it was overtime. When I said no, you know what he said, he told me to take children with me. I was not sure if I could take the children so did not say anything and left home. I am sure when I return home his mood will be the same. I am sure he will leave me if he finds out about my past, and I cannot even imagine how I could live my life with two children without him._
Even some women whose families knew of their past deemed it too dangerous to disclose their participation in the study for fear of their family’s reaction. In the words of one co-researcher:

Although my husband and family are aware of my past they do not know about my involvement in this study. I am sure they would not support me to be part to this study. I do not want to hear that I should be ashamed of my past. They think my past life experiences should be silenced and not shared with anybody. Once they find out that through this research, I am telling people what my life was in the past they will not treat me well at home. I know my family. My identity at home for the “in laws” will shift to “besya” or “Randi” which will remind me of my past and I do not want to go down this path.

Co-researchers in divergent situations – those whose families knew they had been sex trafficked and those whose families did not – saw the risk they were taking in remarkably similar ways. They saw that participating in the study risked their identity shifting within the family, from respected wife, mother, and daughter-in-law to a fallen, shamed, or shameful woman.

Co-researchers noted the guilt and fear they felt for lying to their families so they could continue with the project. As one women reported:

When Rita didi phoned me for today’s meeting, my husband was with me. I was not comfortable talking to her. After our conversations, he asked me with a surprise who that person was as he had never heard the name before. I had to lie to him saying she is a volunteer with Shakti Samuha and wants to meet me today. But I am not sure how long I am going to lie to him. I am already nervous. I do not want to miss even a single meeting and I love coming to this meeting. At the same time, I am making my life complicated. I
wish I did not have to lie to him and that he knew everything about me. It never happens. I know when he finds out how I spent my childhood, he will divorce me. I am sure my in-laws will also support him in his decision.

Many co-researchers felt similarly torn between the value they placed on being part of the project and the stress it placed on them for lying to their families about their activities and in increasingly the likelihood that their families would come to know of -- or be reminded of -- their hidden past.

The second common theme in risk identification, assessment, and mitigation, is that co-researchers accepted the offer to choose among project activities. Some co-researchers declined to take part in the more public components of the project. As one woman explained:

*I badly want to participate in the press conference but I am doubtful and afraid about it. If my name came in the news or someone saw me talking at the conference, my life would be dismantled. I know my family would never accept me with my past. I do not want to take any risk with my family life. I would rather prefer not to attend the conference or to come the conference but not to take any roles.*

Another woman agreed, adding:

*I agree with her. It is even more than that. My family and community know I work with Shakti Samuha but they do not know the details of my work and especially my past. If I go out and share this research with others, I will be in trouble. Once they come to know about my past, their views about me will definitely shift the way they view me from an “employee with Shakti Samuha” to “returnee from India”. I am afraid of this change. I have no more energy to deal with this issue. I am fine with not attending.*
Interestingly, none of the co-researchers assigned the same kind of risk with another relatively public component of the project: conducting interviews with stakeholders. All members of the group continued to interview various agencies and did not encounter any risks during the interviewing period. This element may be significant to other researchers since it suggests it may always be worth asking people, even people in high-risk situations, if there are components of a PAR process they would consider safe enough to join.

**Process for Risk Identification, Assessment and Mitigation**

Co-researchers evaluated their risks individually through self-reflection and collectively through group discussion. No one influenced their individual decisions in any way and the entire research team supported their self-made decisions on their level and manner of participation.

The group also developed some collective strategies, which included:

1. As a researcher, I promised them that I would not be calling any co-researchers outside of the working hours.
2. As a researcher, I ensured the co-researchers would not take any tasks related to this study to home.
3. As a researcher, I ensured that the co-researchers made their decisions without any pressures on what areas/activities that they wanted to get involved in.
4. Each co-researcher was under no obligation to attend each meeting if they encountered some obstacles in home.
5. If co-researchers at any time felt the risks of continuing the research had increased beyond their comfort level, they could withdraw without any notice and with no repercussions.
6. Childcare services were offered if needed to allow the co-researchers to participate.
This list is notable for two reasons. The first is that many of the measures concerned my behaviour as outside researcher. The co-researchers identified actions of mine that could put them at risk and I agreed to govern my actions accordingly. For all of us, individual safety was important and so too was making it possible for each woman to participate. The second notable element is that the provision of childcare served as much for risk-mitigation as it did for barrier-reduction for participation. Many of the co-researchers simply could not leave their homes outside of work hours without taking their children with them. If the project had not accommodated that need, if women had been required to tell their family that they were going somewhere where they could not bring their children, they may have been compelled to explain where they were going and risk making a disclosure they did not wish to make. This experience suggests measures for risk mitigation must be defined by members of the group themselves to ensure that they fit the particular context and needs of the group.

**Section III: Challenges Experienced and Self-care Mechanisms**

The section presents the challenges I experienced during the study period and also provides my coping mechanisms. The challenges I experienced during the study period were documented in my personal journal and we also discussed in group meetings. Some of the key challenges experienced during the inquiry process are: (1) confusion associated with the methodology and the process of the study; (2) balance of my insider and outsider roles; (3) balance of work time and study commitment; (4) using research methods and doing activities; (5) messy and ambiguous; (6) demanding a great deal of time; and (7) power differences between Shakti Samuha and the solidarity team. While experiencing the challenges, I developed some self-care mechanisms as well which will be presented later in this section.
Confusion Associated with the Methodology and Process of the Study

I recognized that since this methodology was new to Shakti Samuha and peer researchers, it was very challenging for me to help them understand how the process worked in the beginning of the study. When I approached Shakti Samuha for their support to recruit participants, I did explain the methodology and the roles of the participants in detail and was very clear that this study would demand a long time of period, ranged from 8 months to 1 year. As we went through the process, I recognized that Shakti Samuha was confused about the values of PAR and the study process and became upset with me as I did not consult with them for any further meetings and activities. It is true that once I met the co-researchers and they agreed to be part of this study, I started direct contact them instead of working through the staff of Shakti Samuha. This was later perceived as an inappropriate way and created tensions among us. My impression was that the co-researchers and the staff from the research committee with Shakti Samuha had conversations around the research at their levels and I did not need to update them. They wanted to know how many times we were going to meet in a month and how we communicated to each other. Although the consent form said that the group would be meeting two times in a month I was afraid to refer to this consent form as the women already expressed the predetermined time would not be sufficient for them to do everything that wanted.

In order to address this conflict, I set up a meeting with Shakti Samuha and explained about the significant roles of the co-researchers both in scheduling meetings and determining collective actions. I clearly said that even though I brought this study project I minimized my role and helped them to lead the study. Eventually, we both agreed that I would send a brief update to the research committee periodically. The updates included only meeting times and actions that women were involved in, not the group conversations that we had.
Insider and Outsider Positionality

By sharing the same socio-cultural environment including language, beliefs and values as the co-researchers and by being female who has had experiences of living in the male-dominated society that perpetuates gender violence, I considered myself an insider with the other women in the research group. Moreover, I had a prior knowledge and experience by working on the areas of trafficking and gender violence. We treated each other as friends. However, one day when I talked to them as if I completely understood the issue of trafficking, one of the co-researchers helped me to recognize my outsider role by saying, “You don’t understand how we were going through and you never understand this”.

Several times, especially when we were discussing experiences on trafficking and reintegration, I came to recognize my outsider position which made me feel disconnected to the group and I was afraid to make any comments and/or say anything. Indeed, I am an outsider as I live in Canada and went to Nepal for this study. I have a different class privilege and am an educated woman. Although I have spent time conducting research in brothels, I have not experienced being sex trafficked.

This insider-outsider dynamic had further perpetuated by developing a concept for a drama and playing a counselor role in the drama, and presenting research project at the press conference. By having this experience, admittedly, I experienced difficulties in balancing my role as an outsider and insider and in anticipating what my role would be tomorrow. I struggled indeed with my role. However, I became very mindful and cautious what I said and how I made comments on discussions by reflecting on my own behaviors and writing journals. Further, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, by having reciprocal relationships with co-researchers and promoting power dynamics I attempted to balance my positionality because “the degree to which
researchers position themselves as insiders or outsiders will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the dissertation” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 30).

**Balance of Work Time and Study Commitment**

Keep in mind that the co-researchers were employed in Shakti Samuha and each had different roles and responsibilities at work. A couple of women worked in a hostel had more responsibilities with 24/7 hours than others which became a barrier to meet all in a group and also to meet on time. As illustrated earlier, not everyone could attend each meeting due to their workload during the work time and we attempted to address this by scheduling our meetings for weekends and after working hours. Unfortunately, this move escalated the problem for those women whose families did not know they were participating in the study because they didn’t want their families to know about their past. It was more difficult for these women to get out of the home on weekends. This hindered some researchers from attending every meeting held on weekends as well.

**Using Research Methods and Doing Activities**

The peer researchers chose different methods and activities for this study however the co-researchers team eventually decided to abandon the diary method since some women were not confident in their writing abilities and others did not want to use their family time for writing diaries.

In addition, the research team identified the need for different activities but unfortunately, we recognized doing all the activities were not feasible. Some of the activities, including meeting with other trafficking survivors (outside of the study group), two more dramas and interactive sessions in the most two affected districts of trafficking, a health expo, and a group workshop for
all the agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions and MOWCASW in Kathmandu, were extracted from the activity list. Further, the women reported that their involvement in photovoice was not satisfactory as they could have taken more pictures and done more narrations.

**Messy and Ambiguous**

As the study process evolved, I came to recognize that this study became messy and ambiguous. The challenges appeared when the research team chose methods and then had to start again when some of the peer researchers got confused. Moreover, the researcher often had to remind co-researchers to consider their roles and responsibilities. In one meeting, I asked the women if they had a chance to start interviews with stakeholders and in response to this, one said:

*We are the ones who were very excited about our commitment but now I don’t even remember all of them. This week my focus was on photovoice and I totally forgot there are other tasks I am also responsible for. Also, our study is very vague and no one knows what happens tomorrow. Every day we discuss new items and agreed upon it. It then changed next day, which made me feel lost as it was hard to center on one thing.*

Another woman concurred her and added:

*For me, I missed the last two meetings which made me feel like I was completely new to the study. There was lots of new ideas that I was not aware of and the changes on our earlier discussions. I am really really confused. Why it is so chaotic? Can we make it simple so everyone feels like we know what we are doing?*

**Demanding a Great Deal of Time**

The co-researcher team was aware of the time period required for this research since the beginning of the study however no one anticipated that the study would demand more than five
meetings in a month. As we were approaching our first performance date in Bardiya, we recognized the need for more meetings for rehearsals and everyone agreed upon this. However, it appeared to be a challenge for a majority to come to a meeting directly from work and stay late. The women reported that they got very exhausted at the end of the day and it heightened their tiredness for cooking food and cleaning dishes in home.

In addressing the issue, I attempted to reduce the frequency of meetings but the women were the ones who told me that they were always looking forward to coming to this meeting. One of the women said, “This study demanded a great deal of time which was not expected in the beginning of this study. Yes, I am tired most of the time but believe me when get here I would forget everything and become very energetic. I wish the study would never end”.

Power Differentials in Between Shakti Samuha and the Research Team

With the support of Shakti Samuha, the co-researchers were recruited for this study and they as employees were accountable and responsible to their employer. Therefore, the women were expected to consult with their employers before they made any decisions for this study. This made me uncomfortable as the women had completely different roles at work and research. This was demonstrated by asking the research team to share the script for a drama with the management team for their review and incorporate their comments on the drama. Similarly, without consulting with the management team, the research team picked the date for a trip to Bardiya which was later cancelled until management permission could be secured. As per telephone conversations, I submitted a brief proposal of the trip to Bardiya for their approval and after a month, permission was essentially granted for the trip. Further, while the research team developed key recommendations to submit the MOWCSW, the management team called us for a meeting and asked us to make some adjustments based on their feedback provided. Overall, the
solidarity team recognized that we had limited freedom for this study due to the power sharing issues.

**Self-Care Mechanisms**

As I discussed above, I experienced some challenges during the study period. Obviously, I sometimes became very sad and emotional as the study progressed, especially when the women were sharing their experiences in trafficking and reintegration and also when they were performing dramas. I attempted to control my emotion as I did not want to ruin the entire meetings and therefore I went to a washroom and cried and came back to the meetings. Also, crying in a public place is culturally considered inappropriate as well. In fact, I just pretended I was completely fine. I found myself that I was often very low psychologically, physically and emotionally outside of the setting, and therefore I developed some strategies/activities for my health and well-being and they are as follows.

1. I wrote a reflective journal on a daily basis.
2. I participated a few social gatherings in peer researchers’ homes.
3. I watched lots of romantic and action Bollywood movies.
4. I learned how to play Harmonium (A traditional musical instrument in South Asia) and I played this every day and sang mostly hymns and local songs.
5. I started teaching community development course for Master students at the Faculty of Social Work in the Tribhuwan University, Kathmandu.
6. I met lots of relatives, acquaintances and friends from school and universities.
7. I attended different religious activities and sang hymns in both private and public places.

**Section IV: Quality and Credibility of the Study**

Qualitative researchers in general do not accept positivistic claims of knowledge and
validity and therefore those claims are not applicable to evaluate PAR projects (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McTaggart, 1998). The process of establishing validity, for example, in PAR is the level and degree of participation of the “co-researchers” (Cornwall, 1992; Reason & Bradbury, 2006) and the emancipatory knowledge-building process (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Park, 1993). From the epistemological framework of PAR, critical knowledge and interactive knowledge generated through the process of dialogical process established the credibility of the study, and each knowledge form has its own criteria of credibility (Park, 1993). However, it is essential to establish some criteria of assessing the quality for PAR and they are used as indicators of quality for this study which are presented in the subsequent section as proposed by Herr and Anderson (2005). Keep in mind that validity is the word proposed by authors that is usually associated with positivism and I rather prefer to use the word credibility, however, the term is not replaced here in this dissertation. These criteria are: (1) process validity/outcome validity; (2) democratic validity; (3) catalytic validity; and (4) dialogic validity.

**Process Validity/Outcomes Validity**

Process validity involves praxis or a dialogical process of reflection and action (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) and outcome validity is the result of process validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005). As illustrated earlier in this chapter, solidarity group meetings were conducted by eight co-researchers and the researcher in a way that facilitated a dialectical process of reflection and action, allowed the women with opportunities to critically examine and unpack gender violence and oppression and their relationships with their vulnerability in reintegration, develop reintegration strategies/activities and essentially act for social change and transformative ends.

According to Reason and Bradbury (2006), praxis involves four phases of investigative cycles several times including “cycling between action and reflection, looking at experience and
practice from different angles, developing different ideas and trying different ways of behaving” (p. 150). Evidences in the narrations revealed that this study promoted a process/outcome validity. One of the co-researchers, for example, stated:

*I have become interviewee in many studies. Many researchers came and asked me to tell my stories. We sat facing each other in two opposite sides so I did not even see what they noted on a paper. I did not know how they interpreted and wrote my stories. I was never involved in a research that allowed me to conduct an inquiry about myself. We are the ones who talked on our own issues in a group meeting with or without pictures and developed actions to address the issues. I can’t believe, I am one of them who facilitated conversation cafe at the Kathmandu University. This is a completely different and unique research project.*

Another peer researcher added:

*The first time when Rita didi told us the approximate time frame for this study I was not sure what she was talking about but now I know what she meant. Lots of good discussions, resistance, rejection, anger and lots of laugh are a part of this study. I just love the process of the study.*

Overall, as discussed earlier, the solidarity group meetings exemplified that the co-researchers were meaningfully involved in the critical cycling analyses process which allowed them to evolve the study by identifying issues in their reintegration and addressing the identified issues through collective actions. This gives credibility to the study. As grounded in the individual narrations, this study clearly demonstrated the process/outcomes validity.

**Democratic Validity**

Democratic validity refers to the authentic participation or the democratic participation of
participants involved in this study (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Democratic participation requires participants to be actively involved in the research process from the beginning of the study to the process of data collection and data analysis, and also in action for social transformation. I assert that the study established the democratic validity. For instance, one peer researcher stated:

*I can’t believe that my suggestions were well taken and incorporated in this study. I never thought I would be interviewing people like our chairperson, which was a great achievement for me. I was also involved in data analysis of the interviews that I collected. Unbelievable.*

Another woman said something similar:

*Now we know why we are called co-researchers. We were the ones that chose the research methods and the agencies for interviews. Also, we chose the actions and performed them. The freedom we had made me feel like it was my responsibility to make this study successful. It is my own baby.*

Through the critical research process, the researcher’s role as a facilitator is mainly to help participants uncover structural and institutional factors and to encourage participants to share their realities in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. One woman suggested, “*I as a participant came to join the study and I even did not know that when my role shifted to facilitator and then became a researcher*”. By building egalitarian relationships and providing each participant equal opportunity for their involvement in every action and reflection phase over time, the study established trustworthiness of data as suggested by Reason and Bradbury (2006).

Further, as illustrated earlier, participants demonstrated their solidarity by creating a learning and inclusive environment and encouraging mainly those who did speak much in group meetings, to provide their insights/comments and facilitate meetings with the result that no
voices were left out. Furthermore, the co-researchers were primarily given decision-making responsibilities for developing agenda items for group meetings together with choosing research methods and doing actions with transformative intentions. Overall, by promoting power dynamics and addressing power differentials among members of the group, this study advanced and achieved democratic participation.

**Catalytic Validity**

Catalytic validity is about personal transformation of those who are involved in a collective study (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Through the participatory approach, researchers and participants who were involved in the study had critical understanding of the social reality under investigation and also moved into actions to have transformative impacts (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2005). Park (1993) posited that “PAR must contribute to the transformation of the oppressed into historical subjects who are capable of critical reflection upon the conditions of their oppression and autonomous political action to overthrow those conditions” (p. 112). Freire (1973) referred to this as "conscientization" meaning knowing reality in order to transform it. For example, a co-researcher said, “I am very slow in everything and I can’t even write as others write. But guess what! Through this study, I was involved in data analyzing process which built my confidence and made me feel proud of myself”. Through the process of the study the women gained a critical consciousness of how social structures are implicated in their oppressions and were involved in advocacy practice in response to intersectional oppressions. Furthermore, as a researcher/facilitator, I gained deepened understandings of the issues the women experience in their reintegration (See Chapter Five for more details).
Dialogic Validity

Lather (1986) compared this validity to face validity. Face validity needs to be seen as much more integral to the process of establishing data credibility. Guba and Lincoln (1981) recommended “member checks” for the credibility of data in qualitative studies. This is also known as “external validity” or “transferability” of the findings in the qualitative research world. Reason and Bradbury (2006) posited that the outcomes of collective studies should not be limited to the traditional written report. Therefore, alternative methods of dissemination of findings such as awareness workshops, press conference, and street dramas were conducted as liberatory research tools.

To elaborate, the peer researchers were significantly involved in sharing the study process and findings through a number of activities such as a press conference and workshops and some of them felt comfortable sharing through media interviews. As a researcher, I also shared my learning experiences and the findings of the study with the public, through media such as T.V. and daily newspapers in Nepal. By sharing the study findings and the process with certificate students at Columbia College and multidisciplinary students with undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Calgary, the study exemplified that the knowledge sharing process have been expanded to the community at large. In addition, I also shared key findings at the Social Work Symposium 2017, at the University of Calgary, and at national and international conferences such as, Global Social Science Conference 2014, Social Work Conference 2015 at the University of Fraser Valley, and SWSD Seoul 2016. Moreover, I submitted a portion of my research to peer-reviewed academic journals and three of them are published. This demonstrated the collective knowledge we constructed through this study has been disseminated to an academic community as well.
Summary

By adopting the integrated framework, this chapter presented the four interconnected phases of this emancipatory inquiry process and process outcomes. For instance, the first phase described as a researcher how I started gathering information and corresponding with different agencies for further information prior to the actual research process starts. The second phase explained the entire knowledge construction process through the use of different emancipatory tools including solidarity team meetings, photovoice, peer interviews and collective actions. Similarly, in the third phase, I presented the list of the interviews that peer researchers interviewed as a part of the study process. To reduce confusion, I want to clarify that the interviews with stakeholders administered by co-researchers are also part of knowledge construction process. However, as I noted earlier in this chapter, the model I adopted to present the research process for this dissertation purposes had three phases. Therefore, I also separated the interviews with stakeholders from phase two and discussed individually in phase three with a vision to reduce confusions and also data analyses purposes. But keep in mind that all the phases are interconnected to each other and overlapped which are aligned with the values of praxis. Figure 8 below shows the process of integrated phases of the entire study process below.

I entered to this inquiry with some uncertainties and excitements with the fear of self-consciousness. As I presented earlier in the second phase of this chapter, as the study progressed, the solidarity team was found being significantly engaged and participated in the study which helped the group to build relationships to each other together with created foster dialogues and allowed for meaningful conversations. Through the process, other aspects such as capacity building and democratic participations of the research team were greatly promoted which led the group to get involved in collective actions based on the strategies developed to respond to
intersectional oppressions and violence against survivors. Through the advancement of transformational and experiential learning opportunities, the research team recognized personal and social transformations were achieved in various levels and collective knowledge was constructed. Finally, this emancipatory inquiry process was completed by celebrating the completion of the study: acknowledgement of the co-researchers; art healing therapy, food shared, and interviews of two co-researchers by the media.

In addition, this chapter also highlighted some of the challenges I experienced during the course of the study along with the coping mechanisms that I developed for my self-care. Finally, this chapter concluded by presenting the quality and the credibility of the study.
Figure 8. Praxis: the figure shows the progress and the summary of the integrated phases of the emancipatory inquiry process
CHAPTER 5: SUBSTANTIVE OUTCOMES (RESULTS)

This chapter discusses the substantive outcomes related to the topics of trafficking and reintegration. The eight key themes are: (1) root causes of trafficking; (2) a critical analysis of socially constructed issues of reintegration; (3) cumulative negative impacts on survivors; (4) transformational changes; (5) survivors’ self-concepts; (6) unpacking reintegration; (7) deconstructing reintegration; and (8) reconstructing reintegration.

Section I: Root Causes of Trafficking

As stated in Chapter Four, the co-researchers agreed to participate in the study with an understanding that the aim of the research was not to explore their trafficking experiences and that they would not be asked to reflect on or discuss these aspects of their lives. However, as the study progressed, the co-researchers experienced challenges in talking directly about reintegration without discussing the issues of trafficking. Recognizing the need to critically understand the issues of trafficking, the research team engaged in comprehensive analytical discussions about the root causes of trafficking and shared personal stories based on the photographs they took. Ultimately, the research team identified an intersectionality of oppressions that increased Nepalese women’s and children’s vulnerability to trafficking, as shown in Figure 9 below. According to Dhungel (2017c), the factors were: (1) poverty/class; (2) social division/cast; (3) gender inequality and patriarchal norms; (4) neo-colonialism/global capitalism; and (5) globalization/urbanization.
Figure 9. Socially constructed root causes of trafficking

Poverty/Class

The study identified poverty and class as major root causes of trafficking of women and children (2017c). Poverty and class demark people in binary terms such as rich and poor and also create practices of and justifications for exclusion and inclusion. As one of the co-researchers lamented:
One day my teacher asked me to go out of a classroom because I was not in school uniforms. My family was not in position to buy the uniforms for me so I did stay outside of the classroom and watched the inside activities from windows for a few days as I wanted to learn. I felt bad for doing this. I then stopped going to the school and started working for others as a cowherd. One day, a couple of my neighbors proposed me to get involved in their sari business and asked me to come to India with them to learn about the business. I do only remember I was in a train and then.... After a couple of days, I found myself in a very dark room and later I found it was a brothel, not a sari shop.

Another woman shared:

Since we lost our home and land due to my father’s involvement in drinking and playing cards, we then moved from our community and started living in a cowshed in a new community... I did not go to school after grade 3 due to the difficulties in balancing my household workload and school assignments. Wherever I went no one seemed to be interested in talking to me in my neighbourhood/community as we were labeled as poor class family. One of my neighbors approached me to come to Kathmandu with her for a baby-sitting job. We needed money for food and shelter. With the permission of my parents, I left my home for Kathmandu but I reached India instead.

Social Divisions of Caste and Ethnicity

The social divisions of caste and ethnicity also serve to increase women’s and children’s vulnerability to trafficking (2017c). In the Nepalese context, there are four caste divisions: Brahmin, Chhetri, Viashya and Sudra (considered the ‘untouchable’ caste). The study found that these social divisions are deeply rooted and deeply impactful on people’s lives. Critical discussions in solidarity group meetings centered on social divisions: How higher caste people
are privileged with power and access to resources and how lower caste people have less social power, virtually no access to resources, and are shut out of socio-economic participation.

Members of disparaged ethnic groups face similar challenges. Socially constructed divisions divide people into “dominant” and “subordinate” groups as suggested by Ngo (2008, para 5). The study found that the subordinate group labeled as *untouchables* in the local context experience what is commonly known as an “inferiority complex”.

Lower caste and disparaged ethnic groups often determine that leaving the oppressive society is their best option for a better life and began to search for an alternative settlement for their survival. This leaves them more vulnerable to offers of relocation and thus trafficking. For instance, one co-researcher shared:

*As you know I belong to a low caste and I was trying to avoid the discrimination against me. I was discriminated everywhere like in school and social gatherings in my community several times, actually almost every day, which made me feel that I should leave this community and go somewhere that no one knows me. One of my relatives from my own neighborhood, who was working in India, asked me to come with her in India where I could get many jobs. I was looking forward to escaping from my village so I left without informing my parents.*

**Gender Inequality/Patriarchal Norms**

The research identified the pervasive nature of gender violence as a key factor in maintaining gender inequality perpetuating patriarchal norms (2017c). The research team critically analyzed patriarchal norms and values that perpetuates gender violence and oppression. One of the women narrated:
Being born as a girl, I had to take care of my brothers and work at home which reduced my desire to go to school, and one day I quit. No one in my family encouraged me to go back to school. I was even told that you have to go to other’s house after getting married so you rather learn household chores.

She further added:

I later ended up leaving my home and going outside the community. If I had gone to school, I would have been smart and learned about trafficking and also would have become aware of this. I never thought one human being can also sell another human being. Who can I blame for this situation? Sometimes I blamed myself who was born as a girl and sometimes I got mad at my family who did not want me to go to school just because I was not a boy.

The group also identified policies and legislation that maintain and perpetuate gender inequality. One co-researcher stated, “According to our laws, a parental property is inherited by sons, not daughters, so the society, even our family, see us as though we are a burden to them.”

Another co-researcher echoed her and shared:

This cruel society sees women as commodity, who are born for entertaining men and providing services to them. What ashamed values! We are the ones who give them lots of power, which is being exercised upon us, escalating our vulnerability to trafficking. If we were treated in the same ways as our brothers were treated, our situations would be different now.

**Neo-Colonialism /Global Capitalism**

The study identified neo-colonialism or global capitalism as another contributing factor to vulnerability for sex trafficking to India. Dhungel (2017c) reported/ “the research team
recognized that the unequal relationship between India and Nepal meant that it is Nepalese children and women who are trafficked to Indian brothels, and not the other way around” (p, 36). The traffickers usually take Nepalese children and girls to those parts of India where prostitution is legal, subjecting one nationality to the laws of another nation, with insufficient intervention by the Nepalese government on behalf of their own citizens. As one of the co-researchers stated:

_The Government of Nepal is aware that our girls are trafficked to Indian brothels but unfortunately in order to prevent trafficking and repatriate trafficking victims, our Government does not take any initiatives to discuss this issue with the Indian Government. This is just because of power that Indian Government has._

Another woman concurred and added:

_You know but this is more than that. Not everyone but most of us knew that we were going to India for employment. The question is why India. Of course, we heard from childhood that India is comparatively a rich country where people get jobs easily and dress up nicely. I know my father’s friends were in the Indian army and when they came back to home they brought lots of chocolates and toys for their children. That’s how we knew about India from childhood. I think it was tradition to go to India and find jobs._

These conversations reminded one of the women of an incident in India, which she described this way:

_I still remember the day when the Indian Government released us who were under 18 from Indian brothels and asked the Nepalese Government to take us from India but it took almost six months for our government to come and bring us back to Nepal. Further I heard that Government did not want to bring us back and they did later just because of_
the pressure from the Indian Government. We all know that how India exercises power upon the Nepalese Government.

Globalization/Urbanization

This study identified that globalization and urbanization are contributing factors that expose women and children to trafficking (Dhungel, 2017c). O’Brien (2008/2009) argued that “globalization, part of a market-driven, monocultural global economy, has contributed to the collapse of economies and a destruction of the environment in developing nations, thus supplying a pool of poor women and children for the sex industry” (p. 14). Dhungel (2017c) argued that “In the Nepalese context, globalization and urbanization operate hand-in-hand to make village life more difficult, city life more enticing, and women and children from the villages less able to recognize the risks posed by traffickers” (p. 37). One of the peer researchers affirmed this analysis when she stated:

I came to Kathmandu after I finished grade 10. I saw very beautiful girls in western clothes that I never even imagined I could wear these types of clothes. I was always in our tradition clothes so this means a completely new thing to me. Also, I saw people talking on a cell phone and I did not even know what it was until I came to Kathmandu. I badly wanted to buy a cell phone and wear nice clothes and in the meantime, somebody offered me a job- to take something to India- and I thought it was one-time job but I could buy all the things that I want from this work and I accepted the job even though I knew I was not doing right thing. Taking some illegal things with you was a dangerous job but I did not know that after the completion of the work I would be ended up in sex slavery.

Another woman echoed this point when she added:
I was born in a village. If you are not in a school for whatever reasons, you have no choices - either you do household things or leave the village. I mean if you want to make your life better you have to move somewhere where lots of opportunities are available. I heard several times that only lucky people can go to Kathmandu and I wanted to prove that I was one of them. Going to Kathmandu became my dream and one day I left my village for Kathmandu. If I had everything in my village I would not have come to Kathmandu.

The study’s unanticipated detour into an examination of the root causes of trafficking helped fuel insight into the challenges trafficking survivors face in their reintegration back into Nepalese society. The subsequent section presents the socially constructed issues that the research identified.

**Section II: A Critical Analysis of Socially Constructed Issues of Reintegration**

The solidarity team critically discussed and constructed collective knowledge on the issues and challenges they experienced in their reintegration. They recognized that the identified challenges are not isolated; they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, leading to an escalation of the marginalization survivors experience in their reintegration. For the purpose of closer examination, co-researchers pulled out various elements that form this climate of violence, while not forgetting that in real life, the elements do not operate in isolation. The elements are: (1) gender oppression; (2) systemic enablers of oppressions; (3) socio-cultural and religious exclusions; and (4) microaggressive behaviors. Figure 10 below illustrates the socially constructed reintegration issues experienced by trafficking survivors.
Figure 10. Socially constructed issues of reintegration experienced by survivors

Gender Oppression

Gender oppression is a compounding, serious and multilayered factor faced by trafficking survivors in their reintegration process. The women identified these gender-based challenges in their reintegration: (1) patriarchal norms and values; (2) feminization of poverty; (3) discriminatory practices; and (4) perceptions of women and their roles.
Patriarchal norms and values. The deeply rooted patriarchal norms and values of Nepalese culture were among the most pervasive factors that women reported they experienced. For instance, one of the co-researchers stated:

*I have a problem with our male dominated society which perceives me as a female trafficking survivor, differently. I know a few male trafficked survivors and I am not saying they do not have any issues in their reintegration but no one raised a question about their characters. This cruel society does not say anything to men who sleep with multiple partners and also have many wives in home. For me, I was viewed and called as Besya (derogatory term for women who sleep with multiple partners) in my home and community as well. How can I claim that I am reintegrated in this situation? I guess, if I was a male trafficking survivor my situation would be different now.*

Another woman concurred and added:

*You know I fell in love with a man whom I told later about my history, and I gradually lost his interest. Whenever I asked him to meet me he pretended that he was busy and later he dumped me without telling anything. He wanted to get married only to a virgin girl and I am sure his belief was reinforced by his family and this society which truly believes that a woman can sleep with only one man in her life and surprisingly, this does not apply to men. If he was a trafficking survivor and I had done the same that he had done to me, this society would tell me “come’on do not be stupid”; men are men who never lose their virginity and they are always sacred. What a stupid belief our Nepalese society has!*

Feminization of poverty. Feminization of poverty was identified as a multifaceted contributor to women’ and children’s vulnerability to sex trafficking. The research identified
these elements in particular: (1) income deprivation; (2) deprivation of capabilities; (3) deprivation of enjoying basic rights such as freedom, respect, and dignity; (4) underestimating knowledge and abilities; and (5) single-mother households.

**Income deprivation.** While the co-researchers were employees of Shakti Samuha, a progressive non-governmental organization established to help survivors reintegrate into society, their incomes were not sufficient to allow them full access to resources, knowledge/skills required for job advancement, or healthy lifestyles. In the words of one co-researcher:

*I am happy that Shakti Samuha hired me otherwise I am not sure what could/would happen to my life. However, the money I make from the work is not good enough even for basic food such as rice and curry. As you know I am diagnosed with HIV and doctor has told me to take more nutritious food and fruits but I can’t afford them. As a result, I always feel week and need to take time off from work. I wish I could eat healthy food and get more vitamins, but how?*

Another woman commented:

*It was easy for the government and agencies to say that they were supporting us by providing jobs. But everyone knows the supports are not good enough. Does anyone know any survivors who are working with the Government? Do they hire us? Do they have any mechanisms for us to hire us in their reintegration policies? Not even in peon jobs. It is only reintegration in policies, not in practice.*

She paused and said:

*Can you tell me how many survivors are working in a management team in the agencies working on anti-trafficking efforts? It is very sad that mostly the positions were captured by men and some other non-trafficked women, and our roles are to execute the decisions*
made by them. I think it does not truly matter how much education you have and how
smart you are; once you are labeled as a trafficked woman you are viewed as “kehi
najan manchhe” (You know nothing). It is very obvious, but no one admits this. The
reality is we are expected to work in restaurants and massage parlors.

**Deprivation of capabilities.** Women reported that they were becoming poor and staying
poor because they had no mechanisms to develop their capabilities and move forward with their
lives. For example, one peer researcher shared:

> I want to gain more education and take more skills building trainings so I can build my
capacity and get good jobs. Working and going to school at the same time is not a cup of
tea for me but I can’t quit my work as I am the breadwinner in my home. I wanted to do
more and I know I have the capacity to do more than knitting and making jewelries but
my dream never came true as I did not have money to pay for more learning.

Another co-researcher echoed her points when she said:

> I am in the same situation. I wanted to do some meaningful job allowing me to uplift the
lives of women affected by trafficking. I never got an opportunity to organize events and
facilitate group discussions. Also, I want to take a leadership training to build my
leadership skills. I am sure building my competencies around these areas would help me
to work in a different position. Unfortunately, these learning/training opportunities are
provided to those who already have higher education with lots of skills and knowledge,
working in leadership positions.

**Deprivation of enjoying basic rights such as freedom, respect, and dignity.** The
trafficking survivors reported that even in their reintegration, they were still deprived of enjoying
basic rights. For instance, one peer researcher stated:
My husband knows my history and he is now in the Middle East for his employment. He calls me more than five times in a day and asks me what I am doing and where I am. He does not want me to do anything except work. When I was going to perform the drama in our workshop at the Kathmandu University he called me several times and asked me why I was not still in home yet. He suspected that I was with another man and you know what he said? Unbelievable! By calling me Bhalu and Randi (sleeping with multiple men), he told me that he could not trust me because of my past. This is not who I am. There is no freedom in my life and my life is not my life.

Another peer researcher narrated:

In my home, no one including my husband and in-laws treats me nicely. They always treat me as if I was their servant. If I said something back to them they attacked me by saying, “You don’t have rights to talk to us like that. You should be grateful to us that we allowed our son to marry you, otherwise you would still be unmarried. Who is going to marry you?” Every day I go through this. I am afraid to talk to people even outside of home. I am tired of being treated like this.

**Underestimating knowledge and abilities.** The peer researchers spoke of the significance of being underestimated in their reintegration experience. One of the co-researchers reported:

My education is only grade 10. But I as a staff do have lots of experiences working in anti-trafficking areas and did lots of field work in the past. While we were preparing our trip for Bardiya, the management team wanted someone to talk about our agency and they were going to ask someone working in the Bardiya branch office for this job. When I said to them I could do this job they did not trust me and told me that they needed someone who was very eloquent and knew more about the agency. This made me upset.
and I further said I had been in the field and talked about our agency with communities several times and there was nothing that other people could speak that I couldn’t. We are the ones who were affected by trafficking and formed the agency. How fair is it to say this to us? If we can’t articulate the issues of trafficking and what needs to be done for prevention of trafficking, I don’t think anyone can.

Another woman reiterated this point when she said:

When people do not recognize our experiences and abilities, I think they need to be more educated about the issues of trafficking and the reintegration of trafficking survivors.

What I mean by this is when we were involved in a drama performance as a part of this study the leadership team asked us to change the script as this did not project the contemporary stories. Also, when we wrote recommendations to the MoWCSW we were also asked to change the languages and vocabularies because the words we chose were very lay. This was the place we could express our anger, frustration, and advocate for human rights but none seemed to be understanding neither of our pain nor experiences.

The more I wanted to do, the more I feel I am devalued.

**Single-mother households.** The study suggested that single mothers have increased difficulties in their reintegration. One of the co-researchers said:

I can’t even fulfill my daughter’s basic wishes. One agency pays for her school fees but I should buy all supplies for school and other necessary things such as clothing and food. Moreover, when major festivals are around the corner I get more panicked due to my financial situations. I start cutting everything to save money for festivals, however I can’t celebrate festivals in the same ways as my friends do. They have an extra support from their husbands but I am the only one earning money and overseeing all household
expenses. I know how painful it is? When you have only one daughter and you can’t do anything for her as she wants. I wish single mothers had some extra supports from the government.

After a pause, the same woman added:

_I become nervous when one of us get sick. This is because so many costs are involved in doctor’s visit. Also, buying medicine is beyond my capacity which makes me feel vulnerable and I start thinking I wish I had gone to school in my childhood and had good jobs._

**Systemic Enablers of Oppressions**

Some key institutional barriers that trafficking survivors experienced in their reintegration are: (1) lack of progressive reintegration laws and policies; (2) deficient criminal justice system; (3) systemic exploitations and abuse; (4) systemic denial of rights to earn, marry, and claim nationality; (5) silence and condemnation as a social norm; and (6) freedom of traffickers.

**Lack of progressive reintegration laws and policies.** Co-researchers identified a serious lack of progressive reintegration policies. One of the peer researchers shared:

_I think on the one hand our government is not taking our reintegration issues seriously enough to have developed reintegration laws and on the other hand the existing reintegration policies are not progressive. For example, upon arrival in Nepal, a survivor is taken to one of the eight rehabilitation centers, nearby her home, but unfortunately she cannot stay more than one year. This time period is not good enough. You know why when I came here I was mentally disabled, so it took almost one and half_
years for me to get recovered and when I was in a recovery process they asked me to leave the shelter.

Another peer researcher also identified specific policies that need to be changed when she said:

*Our policies are only limited to a pink book. The policies talk about the initiations of the government for a reintegration fund and 50 percent of the fund can be distributed to trafficking survivors for their personal growth and financial support. But neither I got any money from this fund nor I heard this from other survivors. Where is the fund and who is leading this? Do you folks know anything?*

**Deficient criminal justice system.** The peer researchers identified two main deficiencies of the current judicial procedures that harm their reintegration: (1) burden of proof; and (2) protracted criminal judicial procedures.

**Burden of proof.** One co-researcher shared her experience to illustrate how the Nepalese judicial system discourages survivors’ pursuit of justice by placing too much burden of proof onto them. She said:

*When I came back to Kathmandu, with the help of a local agency, I filed the case against the trafficker who trafficked me to India. During the investigation, I had to go to the court very often and one day a lawyer asked me to provide a proof that I was a victim of trafficking which pushed me to work as a sex worker in a brothel. I told him how I was trafficked but they wanted me to provide more evidences to prove the accusation. This reminded me of my stay and the dirty work I was involved in …very painful. Where should I go and bring more evidences? Do you think I am reintegrated now, especially when I go through all the difficulties one after another?*
Another woman provided a similar example:

*I had a really bad experience when I was trying to prove that I was a trafficking victim.*

*More exploitations in multiple ways. A government lawyer asked me to show my stomach to ensure if I was trafficked to a brothel or not. I was 13-14 years and I thought this was a part of the investigation. I then showed my stomach to him. I felt very powerless and cried later when I got home. I felt I was exploited and double victimized. This is how I started my reintegration process.*

**Protracted criminal judicial procedures.** Women discussed the challenges of lengthy judicial procedures and its impact on their current family lives. One co-researcher, for instance, shared this account:

*Seven years ago, I filed the case within one year of returning to Nepal and the court process is still going on. Sometimes I need to go there and sometimes they just call me and ask me some questions. It was just last month, they called me when I was with my family at home and therefore I did not answer the phone. My family does not know anything about me and my case in the court. After an hour, they called me on my cell phone again and I was in the kitchen at that time and my husband answered the phone. He found that I was involved in a trafficking case and was called to the court in two weeks as a part of investigation. He asked me why I became involved in the trafficking case instead of lawyer from Shakti Samuha and why he was not told about this. I became very nervous and told him I was supporting a trafficked woman in her case through my work but he did not believe me and said he was going to find this out from other sources. I am feeling low every day, thinking what happens if he knows it was not someone else*
but that it was me dealing with the court. Then my family life will be destroyed. Every day I am living in this fear in my reintegration. My married life is not safe.

Another woman echoed this theme when she said:

I filed the case six months after I came to Kathmandu. But guess what, my case is still running and I don’t want to deal with the court anymore as I want to forget everything that happened to me in the past. The more I want to forget this the more I remember just because of the investigation process. I feel I am going to give this up but I can’t because the monster who put me in this situation is walking freely outside, and my heart does not get peace.

**Systemic exploitations and abuse.** The study identified exploitation and abuse from Nepalese government officials at the Nepal-India border as a significant and under-recognized problem. For example, one co-researcher recounted this experience:

While returning from India, the police officials stopped me and checked my luggage. I asked them why when I was going to India no one stopped me and why I was checked when I was coming back to my own country. He told me that they were not stupid to check the women when we were going to India simply because we had no money. But coming from India means I made money.

The woman paused to regain composure and then said:

You know, he further said he knew I was in sex work in India and used very dirty words for me and then asked me for money. I gave all the money that I had and came to Kathmandu with nothing. I was very excited and looking forward to my step in my motherland and in this terrible way I was welcomed to my country. I still remember the words he used for me. Such a great start for my reintegration.
Another co-researcher reinforced this finding when she said:

While going through investigations, one of the police officials promised me that he was going to support me and provide justice at any cost as he knew I was genuine. ......But he demanded once the case was finalized that I go out with him.. I knew what he meant. I felt very helpless and did not say anything to him. I know not everyone is the same, but if the people who are in government uniforms and work for the government to provide us service and justice treat us like that, I question where should we go for justice? Who can we trust?

**Systemic denial of rights to earn, marry, and live.** The study identified the systemic denial of these rights in the women’s process reintegration: (1) denial of the rights to earn income; (2) denial of the rights to marry; and (3) denial of the rights to live.

**Denial of the right to earn income.** Being unable to earn income once free of the sex trade became a serious issue for women as they attempted to reintegrate into society. One trafficking survivor told the group of this experience:

> I went to one of the agencies for an interview for a front office job position and it went very well. I told them at the end that I was a trafficking survivor and I wanted to be independent. They told me immediately that they did not hire the people like me. They further said if they hired me their image will be tarnished. You know who would hire us? It is obvious only the agencies working in anti-trafficking areas because we do have the experience of trafficking so we are good to work as frontline workers. Is this the only qualification we have that gives us credibility for a job?

Another woman concurred with this point and added:
I agree with her. I am currently working for Shakti Samuha and I can’t even imagine what happens if I lose this job. I am not an expressive person and my education is only grade 8. I think Shakti Samuha is the only one agency that provides a job to those who are returned from trafficking. Even anti-trafficking agencies do not hire me because they think I do not have any skills. The reintegration policies speak about employment for survivors but they never take any initiative in creating jobs for us.

**Denial of the right to marry.** Whether due to traditional Nepalese social norms, personal choice, or some combination, co-researchers expressed a strong desire to marry as part of their reintegration process and expressed profound disappointment in the roadblocks put in their way. One co-researcher, for instance, reported:

*I certainly want to marry but how? My family thinks that I should not be married just because of my history and they don’t even think anyone will marry me once they know my past. Once I saw my friends come to visit their parents with their husbands I used to feel bad and thought I wish there was someone who could come and say sympathetically he would marry me. My friends usually tell me I am not virgin anymore so no one will marry me. I know getting married is my dream that never comes true. I stopped visioning the dream like that. Is it sin to dream like that?*

Another woman said:

*I am married but I am always afraid that it would not take that much time to turn my married life to ugly relationships. My husband does not know anything about my past. I did not tell him this because I was sure that if he had known this, he would not marry me now. I am sure once he comes to know this this he will kick me out from home. My*
married life is not safe. It was not our fault but still we get penalized in multiple ways. Marriage is one indicator of our remigration but am I reintegrated in this situation?

Another woman reinforced this theme when she said:

I felt in love with a few guys in the past. I did not want to hide the truth with them and guess what, once I told them they started pretending that they were busy and later stopped seeing me. They wanted to be seen as nice guys so they just went far from me without telling anything. I still remember the man who told me that he truly wanted to marry me but his family did not support him for our relationship because they knew my past so he decided to break up with me. I know he was lying but I could not force anyone to marry me. He wanted to get rid of me.

**Denial of the rights to live.** The study found that the trafficking survivors were often treated as second-class citizens and sometimes were denied their Nepalese citizenship altogether. One of the women recalled the role that denial of citizenship played in an assault she experienced:

People do not even think that I am a Nepali and this is my country and I have the same rights as others. When people came to know my history and my poor health condition, I was often told that if I were you I would go back to the place and work where you came from. You worked there and it may be easier for you to settle there instead of here. I know what they were referring to and it was very heart breaking. I did not have guts to break my silence.

Similarly, one of the women reported:

I was trafficked at the age of ten and therefore, had no citizenship certificate at the time of my trafficking. As you all know one should be 16 years of age to obtain a citizenship in
accordance to our Nepali Law and to apply for jobs we have to show our citizenship.

When I returned to Nepal I went to my own village to apply for my citizenship with my father. One of the government officials told me that there was no evidence to prove that I was Nepali as he had never seen me in the village until today. He then refused to recommend me to obtain citizenship. The official asked my father why are you bringing her here and why does she need citizenship now? I know what she did in India and I don’t want to support her by granting her citizenship. She does not need Nepalese citizenship; she can work in India.

**Silence and condemnation as social norms.** The study recognized the pervasiveness of silence and condemnation in Nepalese society and culture. Co-researchers spoke of three forms of condemnation: (1) rejection from families and communities; (2) stigma attached to the women; and (3) blame on survivors.

**Rejection from families and communities.** Women’s success in reintegrating was profoundly influenced by how their families and communities responded. For instance, one peer researcher stated:

> One day I went to fetch water in a public water tap where I met some of my old friends. They did not want to talk to me but I just went and said hi to them. But they were so rude. They did not talk to me but they just talked to each other and said if they had worked in brothels they would not have come back. They rather preferred to die. The trafficked women are randi (sleeping with everyone) and they need to be penalized.

Another co-researcher made a similar point when she said:

> When I came back from India, my own brothers treated me differently and said why did I come back and for what reason was I here. One of my brothers even said, “When you
went to India you did not think about us and our reputation. Now you remember us. If I were you I would have killed myself. There is no reason for you to live in this world.”

Another co-researcher provided this story:

One day our family was invited for a social gathering in our relative’s house. When my brother found [out] I was also going with them he was surprised and said he was not aware of that. He seemed to be very uncomfortable with this and he further said everyone knew about my history and people would not appreciate my family if they took me. He told me “you should stay in home and no need to go anywhere”. I ended up not going with them and I cried the whole day. This is what my reintegration looks like.

**Stigma attached to women as women.** The study suggested that silencing and condemnation of survivors has a particularly gendered expression. People expressed disapproval about a survivor’s womanliness, as the following stories from co-researchers demonstrate. Said one woman:

> I am still recognized as a victim of trafficking. Although everyone knows my name but people prefer to say me “the woman returned from India” and “the woman affected by trafficking”. What kinds of message they want to pass; I am a characterless woman and I can easily sleep with anyone... anyone... very interesting... If I talk to someone’s brothers and husbands, people ask me what I will be doing with them. They suspected I was trying to attract them towards me. Our image is tarnished very badly. I don’t think the way people view us will change until the universe is dismantled.

Another woman stated:

> When people come to know that I was a victim of trafficking the first thing comes to their brain is I must be HIV Positive. They usually say no wonder you seem to be weak. What
does the doctor say? How do you pay for your medicine? Does your employer know about this? Poor you! They seem to be very reluctant to hug or shake hands with me because of the taboo we survivors have. We are randi, besya, characterless women, HIV positive people- this is how people think about us.

**Blame on survivors.** The women identified the widespread perception that those who are sex trafficked are responsible for the trafficking. For example, one of the co-researchers stated:

*When I was child, I was very different compared to other my friends. I was very outspoken and playful. I got easily connected to boys and mostly played with them. When I was back, this society judged me based on my childhood behaviour and blamed me by saying they knew already that one day I would run away from home and become bhalu (sleep with many men). I am the one who is responsible for my own trafficking according to them.*

Another peer researcher stated:

*I was accused of being guilty by my family and friends just because I left my village for employment and went to Kathmandu but I did not get work in Kathmandu. I saw other people at my age in nice clothes and talking over the cell phones. This made me feel sad and I imagined how it would look when I had my own cell phone. I got a job offer in India and I left Kathmandu along with my good friend. But you know what they said to me. They said I was the person who ran for good food and nice clothes and that’s why this incident happened to me. They think I am currently facing a curse of my sin as a result of being greedy to make more money for unnecessary things. How I am living now is a part of atoning for my sin.*
**Freedom of traffickers.** The study revealed that how trafficking survivors perceive their reintegration experience is deeply affected by the state and community failure to hold traffickers accountable. Co-researchers did not feel fully reintegrated until the specific traffickers who had betrayed and sold them in brothels were prosecuted and penalized. In the words of one of the co-researchers:

> When I came back, you know the first thing I did? With the help of my family, I filed the case against the trafficker. But guess what, my case was dismissed by saying I was unable to provide sufficient evidence to prove the person guilty. I know how that happened. The person had good connections with political leaders and I am sure their power came in play. I was very helpless and angry too! I could not sleep for many days and lost my trust in the justice system. I am not sure if I will even reintegrate fully until the monster gets penalized. I am not a lawyer neither a judge but I can curse him. If God exists, I pray to him and ask to fulfill my wishes. May God give him a terrible life so he could reflect on his sins and atone for his sins. At least it makes me feel happy.

Another woman said:

> I am sure my trafficker, the person who sold me in India, is walking freely on streets. I do not remember his face and I am certain I wouldn’t even recognize the person if we encounter each other. But if I came to know this was the person who made my life miserable I would not let him go. If I filed the case, the court would ask me to provide evidence which I don’t have. The person deserves to be sentenced to death. I wish I knew the person and chopped him into pieces and put salt on it... I wish his life became restless like a fish without water. I will not get salvation until the person gets punishment for his acts. How do I feel reintegrated with this feeling?
Socio-Cultural and Religious Exclusion

Formal religion plays a strong role in Nepalese culture and society. People tend to be adherents to the Buddhist faith and participation in ceremony is widely expected and valued. Co-researchers reported that they experienced religious exclusions in two ways: externalized exclusion and internalized exclusion.

Externalized exclusion. To be excluded from religious community and expression holds particular shame and hurt for many survivors, as this peer researcher explained:

One of my neighbors had a religious ceremony and unmarried girls from the community were invited to worship at the ceremony and obviously, the girls should be virgins. It was my fault I should not have gone. The way they treated me was very offensive. When I was in line to be worshipped, they said very rudely that I did not deserve this honor as they did not regard me as an unmarried because I already lost my virginity by sleeping with several men in India. I was asked to get out of the line and I then came back to home with lots of tears.

Internalized exclusion. Co-researchers identified how their many experiences of condemnation, silence, and exclusion led them to isolate themselves from family and community as a way to avoid further humiliation and as an expression of their own internalized shame and oppression. One of the peer researchers stated:

I do remember the day when our family was celebrating a religious activity in home and our priest asked me to come forward and do worship to God. As you know this is a part of religion that an unmarried girl is regarded as a Kumari (Living Goddess) and they have significant roles especially in religious activities. I am a very religious person. My faith in religion did not allow me to cheat myself and the priest as well. I did not want to
have any bad results for my family just because of my participation in the rituals. I decided not to do anything and I just ignored the priest and went to my own room and cried and cried…. No one had told me anything but I was the one who thought this was not the right thing. I still do not feel comfortable attending any religious activities. I am not sure if God can forgive me for the things that I did in the past. This is probably my karma from my last birth.

Another peer researcher expressed a similar sentiment when she said:

*I think I have the same fear in attending any types of gatherings either in my community or at work. I usually do not go anywhere. Let me share my recent experience when our research team was going to the Kathmandu University for the workshop. I was worried about getting offended and being judged at the workshop. I thought what happened if they treat us very badly. I had never been in that type of setting so I was nervous and had an inferiority complex due to my past. I truly did not want to go to the workshop but everyone seemed to be very excited and thus I did not say no. This is just one example but I do have this feeling pretty much every day in my life.*

**Microaggressive Behaviours**

One finding that emerged from this research was how trafficking survivors experience on a day-to-day basis the subtle and nebulous forms of oppression known as microaggression (Sue, 2010). Furthermore, the study suggested that these micoraggressive behaviours have a direct and negative effect on women’s ability to reintegrate into their communities and families. The typology of microaggressive behaviours against socially disadvantaged groups suggested by Sue (2010) is adopted to critically understand and analyze the phenomenon as experienced by trafficking survivors.
The study documented the pervasive presence and variety of microaggressions against trafficking survivors, as demonstrated in Table 4. Dhungel (2017b) categorized the microaggressive behaviours that the co-researchers reported in three different levels: (1) microassaultive behaviours; (2) microinsultive and behaviours; and (3) microinvalidation behaviours.

Microassaultive behaviours. The study identified that trafficking survivors experience microassaults verbally and non-verbally in their everyday lives. An example is when people who are aware of a survivor’s past in the sex trade use explicit and intended derogatory remarks to demean the survivors. Survivors reported experience of microassaults that can be categorized in three taxonomic themes: (1) use of derogatory language; (2) hidden demonstration of rejection; and (3) exoticization and objectification.

Use of derogatory language. The peer researchers reported that people who know their past often use very hurtful and demeaning words against them. The women were often called terms like ‘besya’, ‘randi’, and ‘bhalu’ (whores or characterless women who sleep with multiple partners). People would frequently tell them they were “mines and sources” of HIV/AIDS. One participant shared:

One day I went to fetch water in a public water tap where I met some of my old friends. They did not want to talk to me but I just went and said hi to them. But they were so rude. They told me that I brought HIV from India so they did not consider me their friends anymore and also they did not want me to use the same water tap because I am a dirty person. I can’t believe what they said …They said if they had worked in brothels they would not have come back. They rather preferred to die. The trafficking women are randi (sleeping with everyone) and the source of HIV. We should not let them stay here in our
village. Who knows if they want to sleep with our brothers and fathers. I know if I see them again they would treat me the same way.

Similarly, another woman lamented:

I have this experience even in my own home. I am frequently called by ‘bhalu’ (whore) in my own house. My own husband and in-laws utter the word “besya” and ‘bhalu’ for me. When they are not happy with me especially you know when I do not have time and/or am not feeling well to do household chores. You know what they say ...do not speak back to us we all know you are bhalu. My past does not allow me to enjoy my life at all.

Women reported feeling confused by these terms and often led to consider the possibility that the sentiments expressed might accurately reflect who they are. The words also forced them to reflect on their past more than they wished to, or at times when they didn’t wish to, and this led them to feel very low and frightened. One of the participants stated, “When people call me “besya” I start interrogating myself. Am I really ‘besya’? Is this my real identity in this society?”

**Hidden demonstrations of rejection.** In addition to outright condemnation blatant marginalization, the study identified the phenomenon of a false front of acceptance that masks practices and attitudes of rejection. For instance, one survivor shared this story:

I met a guy in a small gathering and gradually we started liking each other and then dating. He was aware of my past and I was happy that he accepted me as who I am. When his family found this, they were always nice to me when we met, but behind my back they tried to convince him that I was not a good fit. He attempted to ignore them for a while but later he could not leave his family and deserted me. This also made me think critically that no one recognizes me as who I am now and instead everyone views me as a
woman who was in brothels. I don’t know what my identity is and I am truly exhausted now.

Another woman commented:

When I was in school, I met a few friends and I enjoyed their company. One day I told them I was trafficked to India and I am still traumatized. They hugged me and expressed their sympathy and said they were with me for any supports. Not surprisingly, slowly and slowly, they stopped calling me and hanging out with me. They did not say anything and they seemed to be ok, but believe me their behaviour was changed a lot and it was very noticeable. I was neither invited in their homes for any parties or any celebrations nor I was asked to go for tea after school. We used to do this a lot. Although we sat in a same bench in the classroom and talked to each other it was a totally different than before. You can imagine how I felt by this changing behaviour. I never never forget this experience.

**Exoticization and objectification.** This study heard trafficking survivors talk of being dehumanized and treated as sexualized objects. People would ask women intrusive questions about their sexual history and their physical body. For instance, one peer researcher said:

When people know my past, the way they look at me was very terrifying. They treat me as an object. They wanted to touch me and sleep with me. When I refuse, they expressed their anger in many ways. Don’t pretend you are a nice girl. Your body and the dress you wear and the way you talk shows that you are the one who seduce men. You don’t have to tell this; your body tells us who you are and what you want.

Another woman echoed this theme when she said:

One day I noticed that my blouse was very low and I pulled up my blouse. My friend told me that I did not need to be embarrassed and she surprisingly told me that she did not
know that I do care about my body and wanted to cover breasts. I did not understand what she was saying and asked her what that meant. My God! Unbelievable what she said. You wore these types of clothes in India, right so no need to feel uncomfortable. You are used to this. How sad their honour is honour and our honour is shit.

**Microinsultive behaviours.** The study identified that trafficking survivors experience microinsultive behaviours in multiple ways. Their experiences are categorized in three themes: (1) assumptions of ignorance and inferiority; and (2) assumptions of personal life.

**Assumptions of ignorance and inferiority.** Survivors reported that people assume them to be ignorant and incapable of accomplishments outside of what they imagine the sex trade to be. Women said they often experienced this demeaning attitude through the small compliments they are paid. One of the participants recalled this instance:

> *It was just two days ago when I was acting as master of ceremony at the press conference where we were sharing our findings of this research, that a couple of women congratulated me for the wonderful job I did at the event. They said you look very smart and intelligent but not every survivor is like you; you are so different than other survivors. Despite these, we are still surprised how you got trafficked?*

Another woman shared:

> *When people know that I am a survivor they assume that I am HIV/AIDS positive and often ask me if I am taking medicines. When they find out that I don’t have any physical health issues I am then told “Wow! You are so lucky. You are different than other survivors”. I don’t know why they said this.*

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Assumptions of personal life. Study participants reported that people assume survivors will never be accepted back into society or ever able to experience the ordinary joys of marriage and motherhood. One of the participants, for instance, shared:

When people find out that I am married and have a child, they become surprised and ask me with a very different tone “Oh! I am glad that you are married and with whom are you married? I know some survivors who are still single. Our society does not encourage families and men to get married to trafficking survivors, right?”

Another woman concurred with her and stated;

When I told people that I have a husband and a daughter, they seemed to be surprised and told me that I was so lucky that someone married me because in most cases people wouldn’t even date someone like me. What a great compliment I got.

Microinvalidation behaviours. This research identified microinvalidation behaviours against trafficking survivors as pervasive, intentional, and delivered in such a way that they are very difficult to report and act against. The women reported their experiences on microinvalidation as categorized in two themes: (1) dismissal of feelings and experiences; and (2) assumptions of poor abilities and skills.

Dismissal of feelings and experiences. Survivors reported that their feelings and experiences of microaggressive behaviours against them were not validated and were quite summarily dismissed. Survivors said that when they told someone of their experiences of microaggressions, they were often told they were being too sensitive and/or the person who conducted the hurtful behaviour did not mean to be hurtful.
One co-researcher, for instance, shared:

*I am usually a very slow person. One day I asked people at my work to teach me how to work effectively and efficiently, I was replied by saying “I don’t know what you were doing when you were supposed to be in school, and no matter how hard you work, it doesn’t really help your learning when your foundation is not well laid.”* I recognized that it was very inappropriate and disrespectful and I went to my manager to complain but instead of supporting me she humiliated me more. I was told that this is my reality and wherever I go I will face this. She said there is no need to take it seriously as she is sure they didn’t mean what they said.

Another peer researcher added:

*I cannot work in kitchen because I have an allergy to cold water. See, my hands are very dry and look like I have some disease. I know it is eczema. I told my supervisor this many times and asked her to give other work instead. She told me that I always have this problem and I am always weak. There is no work for me. I felt bad I talked to her directly and shared how I felt because of her comments. She was very defensive and she told me: “You are overreacting. What did I say - you are just weak all the time. This is true. You look tired all the time and you know the reason. You just do not want to work”*. Instead of recognizing my experiences and giving supports, she said that so rudely.

**Assumptions of poor abilities and skills.** The findings of the study suggested that the women are devalued regardless of their education, work and lived experiences. For instance, one peer researcher said:

*We work for the agency, formed by trafficking survivors, but we are never asked for our opinions or any suggestions associated with the future directions of this agency. This is*
just because those who are at the management level think we are not intelligent and we do not have educational qualifications as they have. There is no room for our thoughts and if we raise our voices we are told that this is not something that they are supposed to worry about because it is not a good idea.

Similarly, another co-researcher echoed her points and added:

When we were going to do interactive sessions in different places through this study, we were told we could not represent the agency we work for because they thought we did not have good enough knowledge and potential. How sad is it to think that a survivor is not capable enough to represent an agency formed by survivors?
Table 4. Evidences of microaggressive behaviours against trafficking survivors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Microassaults</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of derogatory language</td>
<td>You are the source of HIV.</td>
<td>You are polluting our communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of citizenship and treated as other</td>
<td>I don’t want to support you by granting you a citizenship. You can go back to the place and work where you came from.</td>
<td>You don’t belong in our country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden demonstration of rejection</td>
<td>My boyfriend’s parents were always nice to me when we met, but behind my back they tried to convince him that I was not a good fit.</td>
<td>You are not welcome in our society or family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exoticization and objectification</td>
<td>Perpetrators often asked me to sleep with them and once I refused they said you are a whore and now you are pretending not to be one.</td>
<td>You are a commodity for the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Microinsults</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions of ignorance and inferiority</td>
<td>Couple of women congratulated me for the wonderful job I did at the event. They said you look very smart and intelligent and not every survivor is like you.</td>
<td>Trafficked women are not smart and lack intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions of personal life</td>
<td>When people find out that I am married and have a child, they become surprised and ask me with a very different tone “Oh! You are married?”</td>
<td>It is unusual for people like you to be loved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapproval of religious participation</td>
<td>I am asked if I am attending religious activities held in communities in a hope that I will say no.</td>
<td>You are not pure enough to attend religious gatherings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Microinvalidations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal of feelings and experiences</td>
<td>My supervisor shut me down when I shared how people commented that I was very sensitive.</td>
<td>This is your perception but that is not the reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions of poor abilities and skills</td>
<td>When we were going to do interactive sessions in different places through this study, we were told we could not represent the agency we work for because they thought we did not have good enough knowledge and potential to talk about the agency.</td>
<td>Survivors do not have the potential to hold a professional job or to have a knowledgeable position in the society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source – Evidence of Microaggressive Behaviours against trafficking survivors, adapted from Dhungel (2017b, p. 134)
This study also showed that these microaggressions have cumulative negative impacts of women’s experiences in reintegration. This cumulative effect is briefly discussed in the following section.

**Section III: Cumulative Negative Impacts on Survivors**

The harmful consequences of microaggressions as experienced by women trafficking survivors, especially in the process of their reintegration, are multi-leveled and result in multifaceted trauma. The research categorized them in five layers: (1) biological and physical trauma; (2) emotional and psychological trauma; (3) behavioral trauma; (4) cognitive trauma; and (5) social trauma. The concept of “trauma” was chosen as alternative language to avoid pathologizing survivors while still acknowledging the deep impact of their experiences. Figure 11 below, depicts the cumulative impacts of the reintegration trauma experienced by survivors.
Biological and Physical Trauma

The study drew a link between the challenges that peer researchers experience in their reintegration and an adverse impact on their health. Co-researchers shared that increased blood pressure, headaches, and hypertension were most common in their experience. For instance, one of the women commented:
I am tired of dealing with the challenges I face— one after another. My experience on microaggressions is not a new phenomenon as it occurs every day. What it is new now, I got hypertension and migraines and more recently I am diagnosed with high blood pressure. These have interrupted my sleeping patterns and I eventually ended up taking anti-depression medicines. While dealing with a financial crisis, how can I afford money for extra medicines? I am already taking last stage medicines. This has increased my blood pressure and may be diabetes later... who knows. All they are interconnected.

Another co-researcher said:

My head is very heavy all the time and this was started right after the trafficking incident and I am used to this, but what surprises to me, I recently got a terrible pain on my both legs, especially the carves ache badly when I go to bed and it is not going anywhere regardless of medicine I take. I know this is something that I got from people who treated me very badly. Doctors told me it was the symptom of stress but I would say this is the result of oppression.

Emotional and Psychological Trauma

Trafficking survivors reported feeling distressed and anxious immediately after the incidents. The women further reported an array of emotions and sentiments, ranging from anger, irritation, frustration, fear and depression to marginalization and hopelessness. For instance, one co-researcher said:

I become very emotional all the time and cry. One day I feel different and get excited for the next day but all of a sudden people/the society force me to recall my past which makes me low again and sometimes get very frustrated. The more I try to forget the past, the more people surrounding me remind. I am tired. I can’t get over it. I cry a lot when I
am alone. My experience of reintegration is different. The discrimination and oppression against me completely diminished my self-confidence and I feel hopeless and am always in fear.

Similarly, another co-researcher highlighted:

I am now diagnosed with severe depressions and bipolar illness. I know this is because the way people insult me in my reintegration. When people ask me if I learnt everything including make-up, dress up, and so forth in brothels, obviously, it reminds me of the past that I don’t even want to recall. I have to live with this trauma everyday which is even more harmful than the time I was in the brothels. I am worried about what my next day would look like as it is very unpredictable. Someone comes and hurts me. But, this makes me feel tired and fatigued all the time- no more energy to say anything.

**Behavioural Trauma**

The women identified rudeness and hostility as ways they have responded to the microaggressive behaviors they experience and spoke of these reactions as different to how they behaved before and even during their experience of being trafficked. One woman, for example, reported:

*I never thought I would be so rude to people including my own daughters and family. I know I frequently behave badly and shout at them for nothing. I think I even cross the limits sometimes. I know I did not exhibit my good behaviour when we were in Bardiya for our workshop. I was very rude to my coworkers and Rita didi and I said something not appropriate to Rita didi in the second day of our trip of Bardiya. I know she did not take it personally and I apologized to her later. She is very understanding but if instead of her there was somebody else, I doubt we are still in good relationships and doing this*
study together. This is how mostly my morning starts. I am aware of my behaviour but there is no way I can control myself. I am still trying but ...

Another peer researcher said:

People underestimate my knowledge and talents. If I say something, people neither will take my ideas seriously nor acknowledge. One day, I had an interview but I did not get the job. Guess why, in response to their questions I felt I wanted to be honest and I told them I was trafficked to brothels in the middle of the interview. They just looked at each other and said they did not want people who have not so good reputation. This made me feel I was nothing and I was dumb. I reached home with a grumpy mood and fought with my husband and in-laws by throwing pots and serving spoons everywhere. Actually, I am becoming very moody and wild these days. I wish I could behave normally like others.

Cognitive Trauma

The peer researchers reported that they found themselves being not very productive sometimes just because they were confused. Some women also shared they were concerned about their capabilities and abilities in their work. For instance, one peer researcher narrated:

I wanted to be a physician when I was child but how could I be a doctor with this brain? There was no single day I did not have to go through difficulties in my reintegration either at home or work. My brain is always occupied with other thoughts which hinder me to produce quality work. I don’t even think if I am given to do some different work rather than the job I do now, you know I take care of the kids in our hostel, I would be able to do that. I do not trust myself for the work that I need to use my brain. I am not a creative and not a brainy person anymore.
Another co-researcher shared:

*I do work in the kitchen; washing dishes and cleaning was my primary job. I am glad that I am doing this because I have a memory issue and my brain is very slow. For this job, I don’t have to be smart and also no need to use my brain. I always feel inferior and am concerned to be judged if I say/do something wrong. Thus, you can see I am silent most of the time. Even though I am allergic to water, I am worried to switch to another work just because I am not good enough, smart for another work and I do not want to be fired.*

**Social Trauma**

Isolation and exclusion were identified as social consequences of microaggressive behaviours against trafficked women. Survivors reported that they no longer had any interest in attending social gatherings held in their families and communities. Underlying this feeling was women’s fear of people’s unpredictable behaviour towards them. One co-researcher, for example, highlighted:

*I do not like doing anything except going to work and coming back to home. I avoid going out and attending any other family/community activities. I do not remember when I did go out and had fun with family and friends. I am always afraid about going out and being engaged with people as I am not sure how people will treat me. The stigma attached to trafficked women has demeaned me publicly several times. I don’t feel safe in a crowd and do not want to be humiliated anymore.*

Another co-researcher commented:

*For me it is more than that. I do not trust people anymore. I don’t know who I trust. I am afraid to talk to people. Who knows if they sell me again or want to take an advantage of*
my past? I am a different person now so it is not easy to do that but .... I get anxious
easily and in big gatherings and I am tired being gazed at. I do not want sympathy from
people. This is our past let us forget. Wherever I go out, my behaviours make me feel I
am a very anti-social person. I rather prefer not to go anywhere; at least I can take
breath peacefully.

Section IV: Transformational Changes

The solidarity team recognized that this study, with its many experiential learning
opportunities, was instrumental in achieving transformative changes. Brookfield (2012) argued
that transformative learning opportunities are those where “previously uncritically assimilated
assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open,
permeable, and better validated” (p. 142). In this research, the transformational changes were
identified at two different levels: (1) personal transformation; and (2) social transformation.

Personal Transformation

Personal transformation occurred for every member of the solidarity team, with
distinctive results for the co-researchers and for the research. The transformation is analyzed in
the subsequent section.

Personal transformation for peer researchers. Peer researchers reported an increase in
their capacity and their knowledge through the praxis (Dhungel, 2017a). Most importantly, the
women recognized the study helped them transform in many ways and build their skills through
their meaningful involvement. Figure 12 – a Wordle - provides a visual description of the key
words that the co-researchers generated related to their individual transformation through praxis.
Their key identified transformative areas are: (1) collective knowledge creation; (2) bonded
social capital; (3) skills development; and (4) paradigm shifts.
Figure 12. This figure depicts the key words that describe individual transformation identified by co-researchers.

*Collective knowledge creation.* As the study progressed, the peer researchers demonstrated that their skills and knowledge were advanced and advancing, especially when the research team was engaged in identifying the root causes of trafficking and the issues of their reintegration. This was reinforced by their participation in developing strategies to respond to the identified oppressions. By using the strategies developed, the team was involved in performative actions including interviews with stakeholders, photovoice, conversation café, street dramas, and evaluations of the dramas. Moreover, the degree of their participation in interviews with audiences and data analyses was substantial and brought irreplaceable insight to the study from their lived experience of trafficking. The study design allowed the research team to differentiate between the perceptions of trafficking survivors and of the agencies on successful reintegration.
In addition, the recommendation letter submitted to the MoWCSW and the key suggestions for the media provide evidence of the collective knowledge of the solidarity team.

The concept of the street dramas and performances was one of the most successful creations of our collective knowledge. The co-researchers contributed substantial knowledge on a practice reintegration model that this study suggests should be implemented by the community at large. Overall, the knowledge creation process was categorized by ongoing mutual feedback and self-reflection. The following evidence reveals that the peer researchers recognized their meaningful involvement and contributions to knowledge construction. One of the co-researchers said:

*I did not even think about what makes me feel more reintegrated as I experienced lots of challenges in my reintegration, but since we as a group began to discuss our own issues I recognized that my challenges are not different than others. I always blamed myself...why I am not educated, smart as others but now I know I can do anything...... anything...... I am damn serious now...you know when we created a chart on/of what needs to be done for our reintegration I was amazed how much knowledge I had. In fact, this is the best way that we could engage in knowledge generation and share what we need in our reintegration, an evidence of collective work.*

Another co-researcher added:

*This study has not only provided us profound opportunities to share our own knowledge individually/collectively and but also to identify as a group what this oppressive society needs to do for our reintegration. We also documented what gaps are in programs and services provided for survivors. I found individual voices will not take that much time to convert into collective voices if opportunities are given. We are in one now. Well! Very
good solidarity team... Honestly speaking, I would not have any guts if I was not a part of this group. We are the ones who wrote a recommendation letter and handed in to the MoWCSW. I am very proud of this collective work and the knowledge we produced.

**Bonded social capital.** The research team recognized that this study helped them to strengthen relationships among themselves. One of the co-researchers commented:

We all work in the same place for so long and I knew about my co-workers that we are all survivors. When we saw each other, we used to say hello, and sometimes we were together in field work and trainings, but we never had any opportunities to work in a group like this. This is the first time we are learning from each other about our experiences of trafficking and reintegration. Moreover, our trip to Bardiya and the drama we performed together brought us very close and made me feel we are very connected to each other. I found we are now one. It is an incredibly powerful experience for me in terms of relationship building and understanding each other.

The following comments provided by one woman exemplify bonded social capital:

Since we started this study we became friends. It does not mean that we had conflicts before we came as a group, but we never knew each other in the same way as we know now. I trust them now, and share lots of personal things with them. Not only with them, but also with Rita didi. As the study progressed I came to know her as a very friendly and open minded individual. Again, she was the one who I shared my own family crisis with yesterday which I never did with anyone before. I was feeling very hesitant even to talk to her in the first few meetings. I am glad that we have our own research group and she is our ally as our strength.
Skills development: The women identified three different types of skills they developed through praxis: (1) transferable skills; (2) technical skills; and (3) interpersonal skills.

Transferable skills. The peer researchers exhibited increased knowledge and skills, obtained from sessions on questionnaire development, interviewing skills development, data analyses, and conversation cafe. For example, one of the co-researchers offered this reflection on how the process built her capacity:

I cannot believe that I learnt profoundly through this study process which built my self-confidence and self-esteem a lot. I still remember the day when we were going to develop questions for peer interviews and I thought I would leave the room because I thought I did not have the abilities in this type of work. But after we discussed in a group how to develop a questionnaire I thought it was an easy task. Also, after doing a mock exercise and then actual interviews with my peers and stakeholders, I built my self-confidence.... moreover, once I was involved in data analyses, I believe I can be a part of any research projects in the future if opportunities are provided. Now I am confident in my abilities on community based research.

Another peer researcher agreed, saying:

I can’t believe I interviewed those who I did not even think that I could talk to them face to face. Now I am not afraid doing any interviews. Do you want to hire me the next research? Hahahah... You know this study provided me a forum not only to learn new things but also to put them in practice. While I was doing a master of ceremony job for the first time in one of the interactive sessions, my heart was pounding and getting nervous but once I continued to do this job until the end of this study I felt like I am good in public speaking. The best part of the study was when I did emcee at the press
conference. Wow! Unbelievable! I never thought I would speak in such a large gathering of the media. Guess what now! Everyone including my boss, co-workers and friends view me differently and give me nice compliments. I was already asked by people for an emcee task in one of their event, isn’t it nice?

**Technical skills.** The co-researchers reported increased skills and confidence in using technical devices as a result of the training they attended on basic computer skills and photovoice. One of the women described it this way:

*I never used a computer in my life so I was very afraid before I came to this session. But after an hour I felt I can do this. I learnt basic skills such as how to open the computer and how to transfer the pictures from our cameras to the computer. What else do I want? I am happy that I don’t have to ask others anymore to do this work for me.*

Another woman expressed happiness with the results this way:

*I used my phone all the time for pictures but this is the first time I learned that we can use our phone for research as well. The first time when didi talked about photovoice I had a hard time in understanding the link of the pictures and the goal of the study. When our pictures were developed and we were asked to describe the pictures I then realized the relationships between them. Further, when we exhibited photovoice at the University for the first time I did not believe that the pictures and the narrations belonged to me. It was amazing. This process is in fact gradually building my skills around computer, cameras, and my writing but I did not even realize until we had something tangible in place.*

**Interpersonal skills.** Peer researchers said they built their interpersonal skills through this study and that this development is extremely meaningful to their lives. As one peer researcher commented:
I was trafficked at the age of seven and since then I have been very afraid to talk to people. I never talked to anyone except with the people at work and home... only work related conversations. Now look at me .... someone told me yesterday that I have become a new person as I engage in conversations; I interact with people; I make eye contact while speaking, and also make jokes around people. Yes, I began to socialize with people since I have joined this research project. I am very happy that I can go and easily talk to my daughter’s teachers.

Another peer researcher stressed:

As you know I was very silent over the first month of this study and was very nervous when I found each has some roles for this study. Our researcher used to encourage us to speak up and told us it was totally ok to express our anger but I was not sure what to say. Gradually, I started sharing my thoughts/ideas and then I realized that everyone liked my ideas. I still feel afraid with people but I guess I have become strong and taken initiatives to engage with people. I am also famous. hahahaha....at work from the day when I made a comment on our programs in a meeting.

**Paradigm shifts.** Brown and Tandon (1978) pointed out that empowering research should reorient participants’ perceptions of the structural violence and oppressive cultures influencing attitudes and behaviours. The women reported that the dialogical process of this study helped them to develop their abilities in critical thinking and analyze the socio-political context of Nepal. Further, the study found changes in their attitudes and behaviours. For example, one co-researcher became aware of her own anger, the roots of it, and how she could harness it to help improve her life. This dialogue thread demonstrates her change process. She began by saying:
I was the first child who was born in an impoverished family so I felt obligated for financial support to my parents. Well…. I did not want my siblings to starve and then die. Thus, I did escape from home for employment purposes to India. When I came back to Nepal, I was rejected by my family and community. I accepted this as a norm.

After taking a long pause, she continued:

Once we as a group discussed our political, social, and economic situations and their link to our vulnerability from a critical lens, I came to know that neither it was my fault to be born in a poor family nor my parents’ choice to live in poverty. I must say it is completely wrong to think that way. Why would I develop coping mechanisms for my reintegration? Now, I am very angry at this unjust society that first made me vulnerable to trafficking and then treated me as ‘other’ especially in my reintegration. To me, it is not acceptable anymore. I know what we need to do regain our respect but I think they are the ones who need to work on their side- not ours.

Another co-researcher went through a similar journey. At the beginning of the research project, she stated in peer interviews that “having good relationships with community society and family means reintegration to me”. As the research progressed, her thoughts changed. She later said:

Financial independency and sustainability is more important to me. After I returned from India my sisters even did not talk to me for many years, and since I started sending money for my father’s treatment …he is very sick now…they are the ones who call me and asked me for more money. My family relationships are grounded in my financial status….no money means no family. I learnt this through my involvement in this study.

My thinking was shaped by the way I had grown up in this society but now I use my brain
and ask questions of myself and people before I come to a conclusion. I am a critical thinker. People told me at work that my behaviour is changed since I joined this study as I am very vocal and rejection has become a part of my life. I agree that my self-determination is enhanced. Yes, I cannot be silent anymore. Why would I?

**Personal transformation for the researcher.** Through journaling, I recognized, documented, and drew my own personal transformation through the dialogical process of the study. Some of the key transformative changes I identified in myself are: (1) recognizing my own privilege; (2) in-depth understanding of intersectional oppressions and structural violence against trafficking survivors; (3) changes in my worldviews; (4) reflections on my positionality; (5) skills development; and (6) strengthened relationships with co-researchers. Figure 13 below shows the keywords that describe my personal transformation.

![Figure 13](image-url)

*Figure 13. This figure depicts the keywords that describe my personal transformation*
**Recognizing my own privilege.** As Hall (1975) suggested, I also recognized my own privileges; I re-conceptualized the role of academic expert researcher into a catalyst role; my focus shifted to working with co-researchers to identify their issues, address the identified issues through a dialogical process, and take performative actions. Although I share a common socio-cultural background with the women, I recognized that factors such as class, citizenship, and education gave my voice unearned and disproportionate opportunity to be heard. For instance, in addition to calling the agencies for interviews, the women deferred to me before they felt confident taking on roles. Furthermore, when co-researchers called the agencies and MoWCSW to request interviews, they waited three weeks to hear back and then asked me to intervene. As one of the participants said, demonstrating her understanding of how privilege operates, “Didi, why don’t you call them and arrange our meetings with them. They do not even respond to our phone calls. If you call them I am sure they will give you a positive response”.

I had many more opportunities to recognize, analyze, and attempt to disrupt my privilege. When we completed our first workshop in Bardiya, for instance, workshop attendees repeatedly approached me to congratulate me for the work I was doing. Very few approached the co-researchers and expressed appreciation for their work and their incredible efforts for social change, although I had publicly acknowledged their great leadership and creativity at the end of the workshop by stating “This program was not possible without the co-researchers. They deserve a big applause”. Despite my attempts to democratize my knowledge and power throughout the study process, as Hall suggested (1991), social forces continually made a demarcation between co-researchers and researcher and positioned me as the key person for this study project. This reinforced traditional power relationships among the research team despite our many efforts to disrupt them. As one co-researcher explained:
We are given freedom to make decisions and choose methods for the study. In fact, we as co-researchers are doing whatever we want to do. But some of the incidents and experiences made me feel that we are still participants, regardless of our roles for the study and the way we are treated by people outside.

In-depth understanding of intersectional oppressions and structural violence against trafficking survivors. My initial and ongoing review of literature related to trafficking and reintegration of trafficking survivors enhanced my knowledge of the issues. But it was the dialogical process and the methods chosen as vehicles for social changes in the field that explicitly cultivated my prior knowledge and made me think analytically about the women’s experiences through the lenses of an anti-oppressive practitioner and a feminist researcher. Further, as our study progressed, I witnessed the devaluing of the women and their knowledge and expertise in many formal and informal settings. It became clear to me that people with privilege and a vested interest in maintaining the status quo are often afraid of losing their power and status and thus they control survivors and prevent them from gaining personal and professional growth opportunities. For instance, when one of my educated male friends found that I was going to Bardiya with the co-researchers, he asked me: Do you think you are safe in Bardiya? I asked him to clarify what he meant by safe and he replied:

*It is very clear. You are going with the women who were trafficked in India. They were prostitutes. I know you think you know them but I doubt if you know them very well. What will you do if they go to sleep with men in the village? I do not trust them.*

It shocked me to learn that he had such disparaging thoughts towards the women. I replied very bluntly:
You are one of the oppressors who always want to visualize women sleeping with men. I am very saddened today that you are my friend and I feel shame to be your friend. How can you not think that your own daughter, wife, and relatives could have been in that situation? Now I know you must need education around this oppression so come to see our street dramas and change your perceptions against them.

More importantly, as the study process progressed and I learned and witnessed how intersectional oppressions are deeply rooted in Nepalese culture and society, I became more and more uncomfortable with the imposition of dominance in survivors’ reintegration and began to question the significance of this project. I wondered about my aspirations, ethical stance, and dedication to fight against gender oppression through social justice research and practice: Would this truly bring social change? I doubted but I started having conversations with my friends, some of them were lawyers and policy makers with the Government of Nepal, and Faculty members with the Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Anthropology/Sociology. These conversations certainly helped me to overcome these feeling and continue with the study.

Changes in my worldviews. Being an immigrant to Canada from Nepal, I developed a number of coping mechanisms, such as attending to mainstream events, learning the names of Western food and pop culture and saying ‘thank you’ and ‘yes’ for everything to integrate into Canadian society so I could enjoy my life here. In addition, my work as a community social worker with the City of Calgary helps me learn to interact respectfully with people who experience more and different layers of social marginalization than I do, and to appreciate and recognize their struggles and resiliency. But through this study I learned even more how oppressive society reinforces the marginalization of vulnerable people and limits their ability to develop and maintain sufficient coping strategies to build healthy, fulfilling, and enjoyable lives.
For instance, the following statements from one co-researcher deepened my understanding on their vulnerability:

*When I came back I was humiliated and mistreated in my village and I thought I rather stay in my home. If I did not go anywhere I would not hear any bad comments from people. Actually, I am still doing the same. I hardly go anywhere except home and work. This is the way I feel safe in my life. What can I do? I wanted to be accepted so I talked to people very nicely regardless of their behaviours but it did not work. I guess this is how I am responding to this society.*

Another woman shared:

*You know what I do as a part of my coping mechanism? I write a poem sometime and work in kitchen most of the time. I just wanted to pretend everything was normal but .... I don’t know what else I can do. I can’t push people to treat me nicely and not to discriminate me because of my past. I am curious to know how you are coping with your challenges.*

The same woman asked the group if we would be developing a coping mechanism through this study after we developed a reintegration model. Her interjection made me realize that this is a further gap in literature, social work practice, and reintegration policies: coping mechanisms for trafficked survivors who are attempting to reintegrate into their families and communities have not been identified or developed. As our research team started to talk about this gap and what role we might play, a few co-researchers expressed feelings of sadness and frustration. One of the co-researchers explained it this way:

*Do you still think it was us who need to develop a coping mechanism to address the identified social issues? I am now disappointed and I cannot believe we are still thinking*
that we need to do more... After doing so much acts for social change in the last few months? What’s the point then? This is the responsibility of the society and government so we can suggest them what they are required to do. I am not going to do anything from my side, sorry.

Later that day, I revisited this discussion in my journal and felt ashamed for encouraging people to share their coping mechanisms. I came to think that I was perpetuating an oppressive environment which even in the course of “helping” and forming “alliances” continues to reinforce and heighten intersectional marginalization. Overall, I must claim that this revelation as the most significant change to my worldview as a result of this research project.

Reflections on my positionality. Over the course of the project, my role as an outsider and insider switched back and forth many times and I often needed the help of the co-researchers to see when the switch was happening. For example, I saw myself as an insider in our solidarity meetings, particularly while we co-created meeting agenda items and reintegration strategies. But I had the tendency to immerse myself too deeply in the process of the research and provide my own analysis and insights in a way that was not helpful. I would not always notice that my outsider status was suddenly again present and my voice dominating the group. In one memorable encounter, I asked the group to replace their casual words with more formal words in the recommendation letter we were to submit to the MoWCSW. One of the co-researchers objected and said this to me:

Didi, I know what you are saying, but we are the ones who are living our lives with pain so please let us write what we want to see changes on reintegration policies. At least we can express our anger through this letter.
This was not the only instance. Many times throughout the project I was reminded that despite all we have in common and the close relationships we’ve developed, I am an outsider to the women’s experiences of trafficking and reintegration. As I became more aware of these dynamics, I less often needed the co-researchers’ assistance to see the switch. At the press conference, for example, I felt completely like an outsider because truly I had no answers for the questions raised by journalists and the other audiences. I do not have the lived experience of trafficking and reintegration that was needed to answer their questions.

My role switched in a different way several times throughout the project as I moved from researcher to facilitator and eventually to mentor when co-researchers were facilitating solidarity group meetings and practicing for peer interviews and stakeholder interviews. As I built my knowledge and gained mentorship experience, I asked myself this question: *Have I recognized and supported equal status for mentor and research team?* Through my reflection and journal entries, I was challenged to and finally was able to claim my distinctiveness within the group while still promoting an equitable group dynamic and reducing power differences through various strategies, such as at each meeting asking the group to develop agenda items and facilitate.

*Skills development.* The study increased my knowledge and skills in script writing and drama performances, methods of social change, coping, healing, and creative expression that were new to me as a social worker. Thanks to the positive feedback from the co-researchers about my contribution to creating the concept and writing the script for the street drama, I used the technique again back in my social work practice with communities in Calgary. In addition, my community development, facilitation and research skills were enhanced by the insightful
questions the co-researchers asked. More importantly, my skills related to engaging in international research aligned with the local context were also developed.

**Strengthened relationships with co-researchers.** Both the co-researchers and I reported that our relationships with each other were strengthened through this study process. We had few opportunities to be together outside of our formal meetings, but even so, we created such a sense of trust that co-researchers were willing to share their personal issues with me by telephone or through face-to-face meetings. Moreover, we all became very emotional while celebrating the completion of the study and I promised to keep in touch with them after I returned to Calgary.

For the first year and half of my return to Calgary, I called all peer researcher once a month. Even now, I still call them frequently and ask how they were doing and some occasionally call me. About six months ago, one of the peer researchers called me to ask if we could do PAR research together on the topic of the health implications of HIV-positivity for women in Nepal. I was very pleased to hear that she was taking initiative to do more research and that she was very confident in her abilities, but unfortunately I was unable to commit to the project due to work, personal, and funding challenges. However, after I complete my doctoral degree, I will help explore funding possibilities for this research.

**Social Transformation**

The co-researchers and I also identified ways in which we believe we transformed society through this project and what evidence we have to support our claims. The solidarity team discussed and came to realize the difficulties of measuring social transformation. For our project, one major issue was the shortness of time and contact we had with our audiences and other stakeholders. As one of the co-researchers said:
I am sure we made lots of changes in peoples’ perspectives against us and of course the society at large benefitted from our campaigns but we can’t list and document them now. It is too early to measure the impacts. I think it would take time to see the changes.

Another co-researcher concurred when she added:

I know we could not anticipate there will be any big changes by now. But I am sure this would have immense impact on individuals and the society. I believe we provided education to those who never thought that reintegration would be a challenge for people like us.

The research team did identify three key indicators that can demonstrate social change has arisen from the project (Dhungel, 2017a). These key indicators are: (1) educational campaigns; (2) counsel to the media; and (3) submitting a recommendation letter to the policy makers.

**Educational campaigns.** The study team determined that the very existence of our educational campaigns is evidence of social change. Workshops and street dramas about sex trafficking and reintegration are unusual in Nepal, particularly those developed and led by survivors themselves. It is safe to say that most Nepalese will never have experienced such a thing and that bringing the opportunity right out into the community was a substantial contribution to social change. The feedback we received from audience members supports this claim and also indicates that we were able to reach people who have contributed – knowingly or unknowingly- to the oppression of trafficking survivors. For example, one co-researcher reported this feedback from an audience member:
I know I did treat you badly and I used lots of dirty words for you when you came back from India. This drama helped me understand your pain and silence. We blamed you for this situation but I learned this society pushed you to come into this situation. But from now I will never treat anyone badly. I saw my reflection in one of the ladies who played a bad role in the drama. This is a very eye opening drama.

In another audience, a school teacher stated to a co-researcher, who reported back to the group:

_I was involved in lots of interactive sessions on trafficking issues in my life but this was the first time I got an opportunity to learn about the challenges that our girls face in their reintegration. I never thought that they would have so many issues. I admire the women who came all the way here and did this session for us to understand their issues. I am going to share this learning with other students who were not here today and will encourage them to share with families and friends. This is the way we can support them in their reintegration._

**Counsel to the media.** Our press conference, where survivors shared the systemic challenges they face in their reintegration and what it meant for their psychosocial wellbeing, was similarly a significant intervention into the social fabric of Nepalese life. Of particular significance was the way co-researchers spoke directly to the journalists about how they should interview and write about survivors. The co-researchers rejected the position of object of a news story and took the subject position. For example, one co-researcher addressed the conference with these words:

_I have been asked several times to share what happened in brothels. This is something that I do not want to remember and also you do not need to know this. What you need to know_
that we need all of you and your supports. You can do a lot through the use of your pen. 

You can change our lives.

Feedback from attendees of the press conference suggest this was an effective intervention. As one of the journalists stated:

*It was a good learning opportunity for me who just began a career in this field. I will be very cautious and sensitive what I ask and how I write about them. After this presentation, I got very motivated and feel like I want to work in the areas of gender violence such as trafficking and child abuse. Thank you for organizing this conference.*

The willingness of the news media to report on the news conference suggests this message reached many more people. Several national and local newspapers published the stories exactly how we wished they would. They highlighted the press conference, the challenges the survivors faced in their reintegration, and the support and attitudes survivors most need from the community to help them with their reintegration. Please refer to the links for more details.


**Submitting a recommendation letter to the policy makers.** The co-researchers’ determination to bring their voices to the highest level of policy development in the country is another sign of social change. A group of researchers went to the Ministry of Women, Children and Welfare to describe the study and indicate their intention to submit a letter to the government with policy recommendations and a request for increased funding for anti-trafficking interventions, especially reintegration. The Ministry met the women, acknowledged their resiliency, and committed to support them in whatever ways they could do. After a few days, the
recommendation letter was submitted to the Minister, who expressed her concerns on the issues of trafficking and reintegration of trafficking survivors and assured the team that she would certainly forward this letter to the respective committees for their consideration. While none of this is a guarantee that the women’s recommendations will influence the Government of Nepal’s policy development or resource allocation, the team’s ability to get an audience with the Minister and the Minister’s welcoming response were interpreted by the group as a sign of social change.

In this way, the solidarity team was significantly involved in many collective actions for social change. The team saw some immediate evidence of social change and realized that some changes will take an enormous amount of time to occur and may never be recognized as being connected to our interventions. Despite these impact assessment problems, it is worth noting that the solidarity group felt very positive about their actions and the reception, and expect to see changes at micro and macro levels that will make it more possible for them to enjoy their lives in their reintegration. The subsequent section sets out what changes the research identified as most helpful to survivors in their reintegration and what the solidarity group expects and hopes to see as a result of their actions and the actions of others over time.

**Section V: Survivor Self-Concepts**

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the research team recognized the importance of understanding how each survivor identified themselves. Therefore, the group wanted to incorporate a question related to their identifications in the questionnaire for peer interviews. While analyzing data, the group indicated their interest to document the themes they developed related to self-concepts, which are presented in Figure 14 below. These concepts diverge and at times are oppositional to dominant perspectives that conceptualize survivors.
Some survivors reported that they wanted to be recognized as resilient, as people who continued to be involved in anti-trafficking efforts with the vision of preventing trafficking of girls and women. For instance, a peer researcher argued:

*I am a trafficking survivor. I was trafficked to India and I can see this as an accident just like a car and motorbike accidents. As time goes, people get healed and start forgetting the accident. I know there is no comparison. But, we should push ourselves to forget our past and pain as though it was an accident, otherwise... I want to prevent children and women from being victimized by trafficking and if I am not strong enough how could I support them?*

*I Am a Woman*

Some women were proud of being a woman and wanted to be recognized as women. For instance, one peer researcher said:

*I know I was born as a girl and went through lots of difficulties and I am still facing challenges as a woman. If I was a man I am sure I would not be here with you now and sharing all my experiences. I have good heart and I am healthy. I can do what I need to*
do. I can make money for my survival and I do not have to rely on others. I am proud of being a woman regardless of my past and health issues.

I Am a Victim

Some of the women accepted the term victim as an accurate statement of their identity.

One woman expressed this sentiment well when she said:

I do not know what my identity is. My past is deeply rooted in my brain and its impacts on my current life is very traumatic. This prevents me from moving forward. I have AIDS as a result of trafficking and I get tired most of the time. In this situation, I do not have any words to recognize myself; my health problems gave me a name that everyone knows - a victim of trafficking - and I have to live with this and I think this is how I see myself.

I Am a Mother

Survivors emphasized their identities as mother who wanted to give lots of happiness and healthy lifestyles to their children. One co-researcher narrated:

I did not know that I was HIV positive and I just came to know this when I found I was pregnant. They gave me both good and bad news at the same time and asked me to go for abortion. I was crying when I heard that chances would be high that a child could have HIV if a mother has HIV. My husband became very upset and blamed me for this situation and later he left me. Doctors were unsure if my abortion would be successful because I was six months pregnant and I decided to give a birth to my daughter. She brought rays of hopes to my life and she is free of HIV. After having all these problems, my life would not be that bright if I was not a mother. This is me and this is my identity. I am not afraid to share this with anyone.
I Am Capable

Some women built their sense of identity around their capacities. As one participant said: 

*I work with Shakti Samuha and I also do studies. I work here to make jewelries and knit scarfs and shawls. This is how I introduce myself. But I think my identity is more than that. Despite the pain I went through, and the decimations I face every day, I still feel I am blessed because I am a healthy person and I have abilities to read and write. I can do varieties of work ranging from field work to administrative work. My capabilities and abilities have increased a level of my confident, the source of my strengths.*

Section VI: Unpacking Reintegration

As I described in the earlier section, the research team was involved in interviewing stakeholders and analyzing the data to understand how stakeholders perceived the term reintegration. The stakeholders included the Government of Nepal, agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions, media people, lawyers, police officials, and the general public.

One question resulted in a significant diversity of answers, showing a lack of consensus in how stakeholders understand integration in the Nepalese context. When asked, “In your opinion, what percentage of women are successfully reintegrated in Nepal?” the numbers ranged from forty percent to eighty percent, and half the respondents declined to answer at all.

Stakeholders were more confident in their replies to this question: “What is your understanding of the term successful reintegration of trafficking survivors?” The responses are depicted in Figure 15, below, and discussed in the next part of this section.
Family Acceptance

A majority of participants reported that family acceptance is instrumental for successful reintegration. To be reunited with parents and siblings and to live with them stands as a symbol of successful reintegration.

Figure 15. Perceptions of stakeholders on successful reintegration of trafficking survivors
Community Acceptance

The study found that community acceptance is another important indicator that stakeholders used to measure the reintegration success of trafficking survivors. Participants expressed a belief that in most cases, a survivor is accepted by her family but rejected by her community. Without community acceptance, a survivor’s reintegration is only partial and incomplete.

Marriage

According to stakeholders, a married survivor is perceived as a successful reintegrated woman in the society. Participants also reported that getting married for survivors is a challenge due to stigma attached to them. Until a survivor gets married she is not considered reintegrated in accordance to the participants.

Employment

This study found that employers do not hire survivors regardless of their education, skills, and experiences once their trafficked past came to their attention. According to stakeholders, employers are afraid that if they hired the survivors, they would ruin the image of their organizations. Survivors are expected to work mostly in restaurants, and massage parlors, according to participants. The study highlighted the importance of survivors being able to make a sustainable living in a job of their choice.

Respect and Dignity

Stakeholders expressed concerns about survivors’ rights to live with respect and dignity in the society. They said that survivors are entitled to live with the respect and dignity as any other women are and no one should be able to snatch away those rights. Women should not be discriminated against based on their past.
Health Care

Stakeholders suggested that government should provide free health services to survivors. “We spend enormous amount of money for medical treatment of our women. One visit costs Rupees five-hundred. Medicine is even more costly. The government needs to promote healthy lifestyles and well-being of the women,” one participant said.

Rights to a Secure Future

Stakeholders reported that survivors’ futures should be secured by providing them employment and education. They identified the Nepalese Government as having the responsibility to ensure this change occurs.

Involvement of Survivors

Participants stated that survivors are the ones who need to take initiative to bring their reintegration issues into a public forum, through storytelling, awareness raising campaigns and policy advocacy. In the words of one stakeholders: “Taking initiatives and playing a lead role in responding to their own oppressions is reintegration for me. You need to stand for yourselves as part of your own reintegration.”

The agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions were asked to describe the programs and services they had for survivors in their reintegration. Agencies reported that once the survivors are back to Kathmandu, they are taken to a rehabilitation center close by their home community where they could stay from six months to one year. The goal of the center is to support women for their reintegration. The following Figure 16 shows the process and the services available for survivors in their reintegration.
Section VII: Deconstructing Successful Reintegration

The research team was involved in critical discussions about what makes them successfully reintegrated using the tools such as solidarity group meetings, photovoice, art healing therapy, and semi-structured interviews. As the study progressed, some key themes emerged and were documented collectively; this process continued until the completion of the study. For the purpose of this dissertation, I subsequently used the Onion method and modified to depict their insights on successful reintegration in the same manner as they explained it. This method would be very helpful in the future for the Government of Nepal and the agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions, especially while developing reintegration laws, policies, and programs. The Onion method presents the complexity of survivors’ experiences and calls for change in a clear way that might help their fellow citizens understand how they could support survivors in their reintegration.

Figure 17 below depicts how survivors defined their reintegration as noted in Chapter One. The outer layer of the onion is labeled “Demands” and it refers to what survivors say they want in their reintegration. The middle layered called “Environment” refers to what the survivors wish to achieve in their reintegration. Finally, the core of the onion is labeled as “needs” but is called “Human Rights” here to better express that these are elements women need to be fully
reintegrated into the society, and that these needs are aligned with basic inalienable human rights.

Figure 17. This illustrates a comprehensive analysis of successful reintegration
Section VIII: Reconstructing Reintegration

This section begins with a discussion of a comprehensive definition of reintegration (re-conceptualizing reintegration) prepared by the solidarity team. The next part presents an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model, also developed by the solidarity team from the research data. Both the definition and the practice model are revisions of the originals presented at the press conference. The group provided feedback on those original versions and asked me to incorporate their feedback and other things we had learned to create the final adaptations. As one peer researcher said:

*Didi, we do not have time to talk more about this and this is...one of the most important outcomes of our study, showing our insights, pain, anger, frustrations and recommendations. It would be nice if you use your knowledge and skills to make it more comprehensive so the stakeholders and the Government of Nepal could use this model in the future for reintegration of people like us.*

Since there was group consensus on this matter, I agreed to work on the definition based on the feedback received which is reflected in Figure 18.

**Re-conceptualizing Reintegration**

While reconstructing reintegration, the research team critically discussed and came up with an opening statement:

*Reintegration is a reconstructing phase of the post-incident period of trafficking. In this phase, trafficking survivors attempt to forget and wash away all the bad memories that they carry over from their journey, which*
range from childhood to adulthood (from village to India). Therefore, incidents of trafficking should be perceived as accidents. Accidents happen to people, and people can then recover from them and move on. These kinds of accidents should not stop survivors from moving forward and enjoying their lives. Sadly, this cruel society does not support survivors to forget what has happened to them and move on with their lives. For trafficking survivors, reintegration is an essence, a never-ending process, a feat that extends far beyond the programs and services offered to survivors. Reintegration of survivors is not limited to social, economic, physical and psychologically well equipped. The term reintegration cannot be simply defined in one or two sentences. Therefore, it is important that the broadest reach of the public learn what successful reintegration means to survivors and what needs to be done for their reintegration.

Overall, an integrative definition of “successful reintegration” was developed:

Reintegration is a process and a state of being that promotes a survivor’s rights to choose a community to live in and a livelihood based on her aspirations. Reintegration is a process that centralizes the engagement and leadership of a survivor in developing reintegration laws, policies and programs. Reintegration is a position that secures a survivor’s right to live with respect and dignity. Reintegration is an entitlement of a survivor to be included socially, culturally, politically and economically. Reintegration is a welcoming, safe and an inclusive environment that provides a survivor opportunities to enjoy her life and free from being doubly victimized and violence and ongoing stigma.

An Emerging Theoretical Reintegration Practice Model

Upon reviewing the study’s deconstruction of reintegration, recommendations provided by stakeholders, and the critical insights of the research team on what might have helped them in
their reintegration and what needed to be done, an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model was developed (see Table 5). I begin this section with a vision statement for successful reintegration, together with values and objectives that constitute a paradigm shift from current practices. This vision underscores collaboration and coordination among stakeholders of diverse sectors together with survivors and citizens/communities to address reintegration issues of survivors. The model is coordinated at two different levels: Policy level and Practice/Research level. More importantly, the levels are interconnected and influence each other.
Table 5. Overview of an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders from diverse sectors and citizens/communities work collaboratively with survivors to create a positive environment in which survivors can live with respect and dignity and exercise human rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice, Human Rights, Transformation, Equality, Equity, Integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To pursue social justice and service to humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote multi-sectoral involvement, collaboration, and coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote transformational and experiential learning opportunities for survivors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To advance the engagement of survivors in the process of developing laws/policies/programs and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop and promote rights-based programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote the involvement of survivors in implementing the programs and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop community-based participatory action research and construct knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote allies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm-Shifts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Victim Centered Approach to Integrative Rights Based Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Paternalist Approach to Human Rights Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Income Generating Approach to Economic Justice or Economic Well-being Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From One Size Fits All Approach to Aspirations-based Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving Approach to Strengths-based Approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy level. The policy level centralizes the need to engage and involve different actors/enablers in developing national and international policies in responding to both issues of trafficking of persons and reintegration of survivors. For instance, while TVPA emphasizes the “3Ps”, the emerging theoretical practice model focuses on Partnerships, making “4Ps”, with women/survivors, communities, and stakeholders to respond to intersectional oppressions and violence against women. It is fundamental to recognize survivors’ epistemic position and their lived experiences, to engage survivors and other stakeholders in the process of knowledge construction, and to contribute to national and international laws and policies of trafficking and reintegration of survivors.
**Practice/Research level.** This level proposes the need to involve all stakeholders such as practitioners, survivors and academia and survivors and give them their meaningful roles in generating knowledge and implementing the policies/programs/framework that are collaboratively developed. As shown in Table 5 above, the interactions of and accountability to each actor in the path of responding to intersectional oppressions and violence against women/survivors is critical through the advancement of the four different areas including, coordination, engagement, leadership and solidarity.

**Summary**

This chapter presents the key areas of knowledge that emerged through the study process and collective actions of the solidarity team. The root causes of trafficking discussed from a social justice lens as presented in section I. The challenges that survivors faced in their reintegration were highlighted and critically examined as key themes in section II. Presented respectively in sections III and IV were the cumulative negative impacts on survivors resulting from the multiple form of abuse that they experienced in their reintegration and the transformational changes experienced by both on both researcher and co-researchers through our participation in the study. Narrations as evidences were provided under all theme areas, which positioned the knowledge directly within the words and experiences of survivors.

In order to deconstruct reintegration from the stakeholder perspectives, their views of successful reintegration were outlined in section V, along with a discussion of the programs and services provided by anti-trafficking agencies. This process provided a baseline from which to articulate how survivors identified themselves differentially in relation to their reintegration, as discussed in section V. By using an Onion method, survivors’ views on the meaning of successful reintegration was presented in section VII. Finally, the chapter provided a definition
of reintegration and then concluded with the presentation theoretical reintegration practice model which promotes partnerships and engagement between survivors and the community as a whole.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Through the lens of participatory action research, I sought to answer the question: How do female trafficking survivors perceive reintegration? Working with the solidarity group, we identified three interconnected areas that speak to the survivors’ perceptions of reintegration: the challenges they face in reintegration, the self-concept they carry; and how the whole concept of reintegration can be deconstructed and then reconstructed to better reflect and serve survivors’ points of view. Challenges of survivors in reintegration include the major themes of gender violence, systemic enablers of oppression, social and religious exclusions, and microaggressive behaviours. Survivor self-concepts included a range of identifiers, often seeking to reclaim what trafficking and community attitudes to trafficking survivors tried to take away (I am resilient, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am capable) while not necessarily letting go of the memory or trauma of the trafficking experience (I am a victim). When the group deconstructed the concept of reintegration, they developed concepts based on survivors’ sense of what is needed to support full reintegration, and set them out in various levels with enough specificity that any player (survivor, family member, community member, agency staff, government representative, researcher, general public) can find some recommendation they could fulfill.

Finally, while reconstructing reintegration, we developed an integrative definition to clearly show how survivors perceive reintegration. We set out a provocative statement, asking readers to consider why trafficking should require a more sustained effort of reintegration than other kinds of incidents people experience. We suggest that it is social attitudes more than anything else that make reintegration so difficult. We then set out an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model with a vision, values, underpinning paradigm shifts, and implications for policy and practice. There is an interconnectedness among the four major areas
of findings and their respective themes that substantially reflect survivors’ perceptions of reintegreation into the larger society. Reflecting upon the findings, I can assert that this study responded to the research question for this dissertation.

This discussion chapter brings both a summative and extrapolative lens to enhance the knowledge and findings presented in this dissertation. It also makes some evidentiary claims as to how this study met the study objectives, stated in Chapter One. This chapter provides observations and recommendations on the state of trafficking and reintegration literature, policy, social work practice and education, the community, and the research methodology that was employed. Finally, this chapter concludes with the identification of areas for future research and concluding statements on the purpose of this work and its potential impact.

**Dissertation Objectives**

Chapters Four and Five illustrated both the process and substantive outcomes of this study. This section offers a closer look at the study objectives to ensure that all were met.

**Responding to Objective 1**

*To engage, build relationships, and work with trafficking survivors through praxis.*

The research process established meaningful engagement with eight survivors who worked as part of the solidarity team to create and generate substantive knowledge. The research process, praxis, as described in the Chapter Four and Figure 9, began with engaging peer researchers and building relationships. As the study progressed, engagement deepened through multiple opportunities for dialogue and for democratic participation in key research and dissemination decisions and activities. Through the course of 30 solidarity group meetings, art healing therapy, 16 peer interviews, eleven interviews with stakeholders, three major collective actions (presentations, conversation café and street dramas), and a press conference, the research
team developed positive relationships with each other and experienced strong synergy, openness, and trust.

**Responding to Objective 2**

*To explore collective voices of trafficking survivors associated with intersectional oppressions in reintegration.*

Through the solidarity group meetings and photovoice, the research team reviewed what each peer researcher had to say about intersectional oppressions and violence against survivors. This led the team to develop strategies to respond to the identified intersectional oppressions hindering women in their reintegration. Through this process, the research team was able to construct knowledge on substantive areas, such as challenges to reintegration and how survivors define reintegration, as described in Chapter Five.

**Responding to Objective 3**

*To promote transformational and experiential learning opportunities to survivors and the student researcher.*

The study provided peer researchers with multiple transformational and experiential learning opportunities. The first opportunity was training in facilitation and the chance to apply what they learned in a real life. The next was to learn to develop interview guides both for peer interviews and interviews with stakeholders, to build interviewing and data analyses skills and, most importantly, to actually administer interviews and analyze the data collected. Furthermore, the study provided opportunities for the group to build knowledge on the conversation café, facilitation and presentation skills, and then utilize these skills in workshops in Bardiya and Kathmandu. The women were also able to write a recommendation letter that they submitted to the MoWCSW, and provided key recommendations to the media outlets on how media coverage
of trafficking issues can promote social change. Throughout all these activities, the learning process provided the research team with opportunities for self-reflection, critical analysis of the political climate, and to develop a deep understanding of collective experiences and key areas where change is needed.

**Responding to Objective 4 and 5**

*To achieve transformational changes and to underscore the gaps and construct knowledge in the limited body of literature on reintegration of trafficking survivors.*

As described in Chapter Five, personal transformation and social transformation were achieved during the course of the study. In terms of personal transformation, the co-researchers described gaining an increased critical understanding of their individual and collective experiences of oppression. The study categorized the transformative changes experienced by survivors under the themes of: collective knowledge creation, bonded social capital, skills development such as interpersonal skills and technical skills, and paradigm shifts. Of particular significance is that the study process provided the peer researchers with an opportunity to achieve these changes and express these changes within their day-to-day lives at work and in their families and communities.

In terms of social transformation, the research team agreed that this study achieved the objective of raising awareness of the issues of trafficking and reintegration, primarily through the innovative collective actions. As discussed in the Chapter Five, there is evidence that some social transformational changes occurred immediately after our collective actions. Feeling of hope was expressed among the research team that the impact of the study will include further socially transformations in the future, such as shifts in policy and practices. The team was particularly proud of the many educational campaign tools they designed and implemented. The tools were
rooted in the lived experience of survivors and in the critical analysis and collective solidarity they brought to the project.

Upon reviewing the literature, I recognized an absence of research in the area reintegrating trafficking survivors (Adhikari, 2011; Chaulagai, 2009; Sharma, 2014). The research that was available was often alarming. For instance, Sharma (2014) claimed that “most programs are not successful” (p. 41). These research gaps and program failings made me determined that this study would feature the meaningful engagement of survivors and take a profound look at intersectional oppressions and injustice.

In attempting to bridge the gap in literature, my dissertation provides a multifaceted and intersectional response to the realities of unsuccessful reintegration of survivors. As illustrated in both Chapters Four and Five, the study identified the socio-political climate as one of the compounding factors affecting successful reintegration. This study aims to contribute to both the limited Nepalese and international literature on reintegration of trafficking survivors. This study can add to collective knowledge on: 1) engaging with survivors; (2) engaging with communities and stakeholders; (3) defining successful reintegration; and (4) using the Onion method for analyzing and depicting survivor input.

**Engaging with survivors.** The study exhibited the importance of survivors’ meaningful engagement in the knowledge building process and shows the critical importance of community-based participatory research. The study also showed the importance of survivors being welcomed into the process as full partners and co-researchers. In turn, the survivors brought knowledge, insight, and analysis that greatly added to the collective learning and the strategies for change developed and implemented.

**Engaging with communities and stakeholders.** This study offered peer researchers
exposure to public forums and opportunities to engage with communities and stakeholders through interactive sessions/workshops, street dramas and evaluations, a press conference and interviews with stakeholders. As described in Chapter Four, co-researchers interviewed representatives from a number of agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions. This activity helped them to understand how stakeholders viewed the term ‘successful’ reintegration and to reflect on their own perspectives, which were often contrary to what was described.

**Defining successful reintegration.** This study provided peer researchers with an opportunity to discuss their reintegration experiences critically and define what successful reintegration would look like, as illustrated in the Chapter Five. The result is a significant contribution to the literature: a detailed picture of the elements of successful reintegration from a survivors’ points of view.

**Using the Onion method for analyzing and depicting survivor input.** Innovative data analysis and results depiction techniques were used to produce an emerging theoretical practice model. The Onion method was used to collectively create knowledge on what successful reintegration means to peer researchers and then the results were depicted in a way that was understandable to all members of the research team. This method will be a unique contribution to the reintegration literature. The Onion method is illustrated in figure 16.

**Responding to Objective 6**

*To develop an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model specifically in Nepal but perhaps more widely applicable.*

As noted under objective 5, the study produced an emerging theoretical practice reintegration model that can be used to guide program and practice development and implementation. As illustrated in Figure 17, this model speaks to the benefit of collaborative
work between national governments (in this case, Nepal), all other stakeholders, and survivors for the development of both reintegration policies and programs. The model further suggests the need of allies of community members and support survivors in reintegration.

The research question and objectives, presented in Chapter One and discussed in this section provided me with a foundation upon which to build this study. However, given the participatory imperatives and evolutionary nature of the work, the participants were provided with opportunities to develop other research questions and objectives as the inquiry proceeded, and they did so with enthusiasm. These emerging objectives will be discussed individually in the following section.

**Responding to Objective 7**

*To develop facilitation and interviewing skills of the survivors.*

As illustrated in Chapter Four, after a few solidarity group meetings, the co-researchers were provided with opportunities to facilitate subsequent meetings. Each co-researcher learned some tips for facilitating meetings in the beginning of this study and then applied their knowledge in practice. In fact, the research team demonstrated enhanced facilitating skills by co-chairing and chairing meetings throughout the study period.

**Responding to Objective 8**

*To build knowledge of the photovoice method and its application.*

As described in Chapter Four, the peer researchers were provided with an opportunity to learn about photovoice as a research, storytelling, and social change technique. They learned about its applications and impact on communities, especially with people who directly or indirectly add to the exclusion and suffering of survivors as they try to reintegrate into their families and communities. By taking photographs related to their experience of trafficking and
reintegration and providing descriptions and analysis of each picture taken, the research team gained knowledge of photovoice as an emancipatory research method and demonstrated its effectiveness. The photovoice display was exhibited three times in different locations, as documented in Chapter Four.

**Responding to Objective 9**

*To explore collective experiences of root causes of trafficking of women and children.*

As noted in Chapters One and Four, this study was not intended to gather information on trafficking, especially survivors’ personal experiences of trafficking. However, as relationships of trust developed, team members became interested in talking about personal experiences of trafficking. The team realized that the knowledge created through this sharing would greatly strengthen their understanding of reintegration issues, and contribute to formalizing this knowledge through the research. Group members shared their experiences with the context of the research team, in group settings and also with the researcher individually. This led to a collective analysis of the root causes of trafficking, which is discussed in Chapter Five.

**Responding to Objective 10**

*To explore the health implications of the reintegration challenges faced by trafficking survivors.*

The solidarity team identified multiple health impacts that women experience as a consequence of trafficking and the profound challenge that this poses in their reintegration. The research team determined that these health impacts were also the result of the injustices and intersectional oppressions that survivors face more broadly; the same ones that put them at increased risk of trafficking in the first place. The results are illustrated in Figure 10.
Link to Critical, Feminist and Anti-Oppressive Practice Theories

As discussed in the Chapter Three, critical, feminist and anti-oppressive practice theories are primarily grounded in the liberatory heritage and transformative capacities which are aligned with the principles of PAR. Therefore, it is important to understand how these three theories guided this study, especially the process of action-reflection-action, which is presented in Chapter Three, and further discussed in this section.

As suggested by critical theory, the research team was significantly involved in exploring and understanding, through transformative dialogues, critical reflections and collective actions, multiple realities of their vulnerability and the intersectional oppressions that they face in their reintegration. In addition, as suggested by feminist theory, the co-researchers were involved in analyzing the relationships of patriarchal ideologies with their vulnerability to trafficking and being doubly victimized in reintegration. More importantly, feminist theory guided this study in a way that we created an environment that would appreciate diverse experiences and perspectives of each individual, as illustrated in Chapter Four. Finally, as suggested by anti-oppressive practice theory, the peer researchers were able to recognize their own roles in addressing the intersectional oppressions, which led them to form a Community-based Action Research Group, and pursue of social justice through empowerment and collective actions such as educational campaigns and a press conference. Chapter Four provides details of the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

Contributions and Implications of the Study

As a study rooted in a liberatory process, the research team is interested in making a significant contribution to the areas of policy, social work practice and education, research and community well-being. This section examines the implications of this study in these areas.
Policy: Contributions and Implications

Under the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act 2007, the Government of Nepal has introduced the “management of rehabilitative centers” for the reintegration of trafficking survivors. However, this Act does not provide a definition of reintegration and the roles for government, communities, and the agencies working in anti-trafficking efforts to support survivors for their successful reintegration. In addition, the Act is not being implemented in a way that supports the integration of trafficking survivors, as stated in the Chapter Four. In response, the solidarity team developed and submitted a recommendation letter to the MoWCSW that underscores the need for a separate reintegration legislation and specific reintegration policies for the successful reintegration of survivors. In addition, the team voiced their concerns to the media, talked about how they should depict trafficking and survivors in their work, and asked the media to change their guidelines accordingly. The third and perhaps most far-reaching policy intervention comes with the development of the emerging theoretical reintegration practice model. The model could help the Government of Nepal and agencies to better understand the need for coordination and collaborations with other parties including survivors, communities and academia, and to clarify their roles and responsibilities in addressing reintegration issues. I will be providing a copy of this dissertation to the MoWCSW for their consideration.

The dissertation sets out the following recommendations for progressive policy change:

1. Use the emerging theoretical reintegration practice model proposed in this study while developing reintegration laws and policies;

2. Incorporate the key points from the recommendation letter submitted to the Government of Nepal in the development of reintegration laws and policies;
3. Develop reintegration laws that are grounded in survivor’s experiences;

4. Amend the legislation to stop putting a too-heavy burden of proof on trafficking survivors;

5. Amend the legislation to create a more victim-friendly criminal judicial system. Create a just society by conducting unbiased investigations on cases against human traffickers and issue meaningful and impactful sentences to people found guilty of trafficking that sends a strong message of condemnation for this unacceptable act;

6. Emphasize a structural and critical approach to policies that respond to structural issues and intersectional oppressions;

7. Amend health policies to make the public health care system accessible to survivors;

8. Provide free medication for HIV affected people;

9. Incorporate the topics of survivor reintegration along with human trafficking in the curriculums of schools to raise awareness around reintegration issues;

10. Allocate sufficient budgets to the relevant agencies that address reintegration issues.

In order to implement the changes effectively, the Government of Nepal must actively consult with school boards, communities, and survivors as suggested by the theoretical reintegration practice model in the Chapter Five.

**Social Work Practice: Implications and Recommendations**

My review of literature and the findings of the study revealed that current reintegration programs and services are not sufficiently supportive or constructive for survivors. The study also suggests how programs and services could change. For example, programs would be more supportive and effective if they helped survivors define their own aspirations and then provide
them with opportunities to support personal and professional changes. As one participant from an agency said: “It is very impressive to see how much strength and energy the women have. They interviewed me. This changed my views of their abilities. I will see what we can do for survivors. They deserve more opportunities”.

The findings of the study also suggest that reintegration is intertwined with multi-layered systems of social injustice and gender violence and that solutions must take all these factors into account. The study proposes these specific practice-oriented recommendations for change:

1. Use an emerging theoretical reintegration practice model for addressing reintegration issues;
2. Focus on effective implementation of laws and reintegration policies;
3. Focus on aspirations of survivors while doing assessments of survivors and develop programs based on their aspirations instead of focusing on the mandate of donors;
4. Create a supportive and creative space for agencies to coordinate and collaborate in developing and delivering reintegration programs and services;
5. Emphasize practices that advance advocacy and educational campaigns to raise awareness of reintegration issues;
6. Establish integrative programs and services that are developed outside of patriarchal paradigms;
7. Focus on an integrative rights-based approach instead of a victim-centered approach in programs and services;
8. Provide loans to survivors so they can run their own small businesses;
9. Periodically administer external evaluations without giving agencies a prior notice.
In order to implement the changes, the agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions and local communities are first required to understand what survivors really need and what they want in their reintegration as projected in the Onion model. Secondly, as suggested by the emerging theoretical practice model, all stakeholders including government, agencies, social workers, communities, academia and survivors need to come together and design programs to address the identified issues of reintegration.

Community: Contributions and Implications

By embracing eclecticism, our research team approached a number of professionals including teachers, the media, elected officials, Nepali Police, program directors and developers, reintegration workers, counsellors and community members for both interviews and educational campaigns. Evaluations of the campaigns found that the participants/audiences were provided with an opportunity to reflect deeply upon their behaviours and activities against survivors and also to explore their roles and responsibilities as catalysts for personal and social change. In addition, the group also presented the preliminary findings of the study at the press conference, which helped participants/audiences understand what successful reintegration would be and understand how they could become allies in responding to intersectional oppressions and social injustice. The study makes these recommendations for the community to implement:

1. Understand critically the feminization of poverty and gender oppression;
2. Be allies of survivors and promote solidarity in ending trafficking and addressing reintegration issues;
3. Understand and recognize microaggressive behaviours against survivors and its negative impacts on them;
4. Treat survivors with respect and equality;
5. Create a positive and safe environment for survivors to live with respect and dignity;

6. Be an example of a catalyst and change the world.

In order to implement the recommendations, communities are required to understand the issues of survivors from a critical lens, and support survivors in the pathways of ending intersectional violence against them.

Social Work Education and Research: Limitations, Contributions and Implications of the Study

The research was not designed to focus solely on the trafficking survivors who were working with only one agency, Shakti Samuha, in Kathmandu. I wanted to extend invitations to other survivors working with Shakti Samuha outside of Kathmandu and also to those who were not connected to Shakti Samuha. Since the study process was very organic and fluid, the research team experienced some barriers to extending our research to other survivors and ultimately limited the study within the group which formed and established at the onset. This limitation meant that the study did not include those trafficking survivors who exited themselves from trafficking circumstances and did not contact the agency after they returned to Nepal.

This study employed PAR to organize an extended series of solidarity group meetings that allowed the research team to offer their insights into reintegration, develop and implement strategies, and reflect on all the knowledge and actions that emerged from this process. The unique contribution of the study was the degree of survivors’ involvement in the inquiry process. For instance, the co-researcher team was involved in interviewing stakeholders and analyzing data. They learned a number of emancipatory research methods such as photovoice, poems, and art healing therapy. In this way, the study extends epistemology beyond its usual practitioners. This study made extensive use of PAR by collaborating with co-researchers to choose research
methods and apply these methods for knowledge construction and dissemination. A similar process could be used by other researchers to develop a meaningful and liberatory research project that deeply engages co-researchers in anti-oppressive practice. In addition, the original contributions in substantive areas of this study including a critical analysis of socially constructed issues of reintegration, deconstructing and re-conceptualizing the term of “successful reintegration” and the emerging theoretical reintegration practice model have undoubtedly bridged the gaps in literature.

A key recommendation for community-based research is the need to take up under-researched areas affecting survivors, particularly those that require government, agencies, survivors, citizens, and academia to work together collaboratively, as shown in the theoretical reintegration practice model proposed in this dissertation. Research that links the reintegration needs of survivors with women’s experience of structural violence and intersectional oppression is one example identified by this study. The following are recommendations from the findings of the study that relate to social work education and research:

1. Avoid quantitative and qualitative studies that focus only on individual interviews with survivors. Instead, insist upon community-based participatory inquiries that allow survivors to contribute their indigenous knowledge and wisdom and to advance their critical thinking;

2. Collaborate with men survivors of human trafficking and compare/contrast the similarities and differences of reintegration experiences with those of women survivors. Such comparative studies can help the field avoid a “one size fits all” approach;

3. Conduct quantitative studies with other trafficking survivors for sexual exploitation and test the findings that were analyzed based on the onion method in order to understand
what successful reintegration means to them;

4. Recruit survivors outside of agency networks to participate in studies to make sure you’re including a more diverse representation of the survivor community;

5. Coordinate and collaborate with agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions and other stakeholders to develop a research forum and share learning;

6. Conduct studies that exclusively focus on critical evaluations of reintegration policies and programs;

7. Use the Emerging Theoretical Reintegration Practice Model while developing reintegration laws, policies and programs;

8. Use anti-oppressive practice framework especially for the agencies working in anti-trafficking interventions;

9. Recognize the skills and experience PAR research teams develop and continue to involve them in meaningful dialogues and effective actions even after the completion of the initial inquiry process.

**Concluding Remarks**

This emancipatory study illuminated the enduring wisdom of the mantra from an earlier generation of feminist thinkers that ‘the personal is political.” It also contributed to shifting the public discourse from “trafficking and reintegration issues are individual issues” to “trafficking and reintegration issues are community issues” and “trafficking victims are clients” to “trafficking victims are agents of change”. The study provided solid evidence that this kind of inquiry process changed how peer researchers understand their individual and collective experience of reintegration and promoted consciousness raising. As the study progressed, the co-

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researchers were able to let go of the blame they had internalized for their oppression and recognize structural and social causes. They made transformative changes to their worldviews. The study similarly brought the opportunity for individual and social transformation to the community through its diverse educational campaigns that sought to disrupt the widespread discriminatory attitudes and practices towards trafficking survivors. There is no quick fix to this problem of social attitudes and the denial of basic human rights, and the study has a major impact in this area. More importantly, the study made a contribution and it is significant that the co-researchers themselves, women who are trafficking survivors and know first-hand how difficult it is to be reintegrated back into their families and communities, expressed hope and optimism for the changes that would stem from this work.

Anti-oppressive approaches based on structural, feminist and critical theories confront the social work profession with the need to look for new ways to develop practices and social services for excluded and marginalized populations. This requires a focus on survivor’s community aspirations and shared vision of collaborators that can have a great deal of collective impact. Community-based anti-oppressive practice research allows oppressed communities to come together in solidarity and develop an anti-discriminatory framework that illuminates intersecting oppressions and gender violence and points to practice implications. The social work profession has an obligation to work with grassroots community towards the elimination of oppression.

Oppression is a complex system. The different forms are not distinct or separate. They are intersectional and cyclical and they endure. All those invested in social change – including social work professionals, the Government of Nepal, researchers, survivors, and community members - should be conscious of how cycles of intersectional oppressions and gender violence operate and
endure. Sustainable collaborations among all these players is an effective way to disrupt these cycles and build a new kind of society that embraces survivors, holds traffickers to account, and decreases the opportunities for trafficking. Overall, the emerging theoretical reintegration model together with anti-oppressive practice and community-based participatory research that promotes meaningful and effective engagement of survivors can change the world and can help create a more welcoming, equitable, inclusive, safe, healthy, and vibrant society.
REFERENCES


Schneider, B. (2010). *Hearing (our) voices: Participatory research in mental health*. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto.


APPENDICES


Social Welfare Council

Reg No: 000554
Social Service House
Lekhnath Marg, Lainchaur
Kathmandu, Nepal

11th August 2013

Shakti Samuha
Kathmandu,

Subject: Request to support for research

In reference to the application submitted to the Social Welfare Council by Ms Rita Dhungel, Ph D Candidate, University of Calgary, Canada for conducting research on women/girls sold in Indian brothels and returned back to Nepal, kindly provide information/data and support in her research.

Signed by
Prabakar Shrestha
Assistant Director
Appendix B: A Written Permission Received from Shakti Samuha for this Study

Dear Madam/Sir,
University of Calgary,
Canada.

Shakti Samuha is a Non Government Organization. It is the first organization in the world run by the survivors. It was established in 1996 and recognized as an organization in 2000. Since then Shakti Samuha has been working on anti-trafficking issues for women.

We would like to inform you that Shakti Samuha is supporting to Ms. Reeta Dhungel for her research on the issue of trafficking women for sexual exploitation.

Thank You!

Sincerely,

Sunita Samuwa
Chairperson
Shakti Samuha

Shakti Samuha
Post Box No.: 19488
Gaighat-7, Kathmandu
Email: shakti@samuha.wlink.com.np
Website: www.shaktisamuha.org.np
Appendix C: Ethics Approval for this Study

Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board
Research Services Office
3rd Floor Mackimmie Library Tower (MLT 300)
2500 University Drive, NW
Calgary AB T2N 1N4
Telephone: (403) 220-3782
Fax: (403) 289-0693
cfreb@ucalgary.ca

November 19, 2013

Daniel Wulff

Dear Daniel Wulff:

RE: Reintegration of female trafficking survivors in Nepal

Ethics ID: REB13-0410

The above named research protocol has been granted ethical approval by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the University of Calgary. Please make a note of the conditions stated on the Certification. In the event the research is funded, you should notify the sponsor of the research and provide them with a copy for their records. The Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board will retain a copy of the clearance on your file.

Please note, a renewal or final report must be filed with the CFREB within 30 days prior to expiry date on your certification. You can complete your renewal or closure request in IRISS.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your research endeavor.

Sincerely,

Christopher R. Sears, PhD, Chair, CFREB
Appendix D: Consent Form that was Distributed to the Co-researchers

Name of Researchers, Faculty:
Rita Dhungel, MSW, RSW, PhD Candidate
Faculty of Social Work

Supervisor:
Dr. Dan Wulff, PhD, RSW, Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Work

Title of Project: “Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors in Nepal”
This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study is to explore how female adult trafficking survivors perceive reintegration as it relates to their experience after leaving brothels in Nepal.

In addition, my research aims to achieve the following objectives:
1. To contribute to an in-depth understanding of trafficking for sexual exploitation from the perspective of trafficked women.
2. To explore the collective experience of adult female trafficking survivors in the process of reintegration.
3. To generate practical knowledge with trafficking survivors and apply this knowledge towards creating transformative personal and social change through collective action(s).

The research question and objectives outlined above provide the researcher with a primary organizing framework to help begin the study. However, given the participatory imperatives and evolutionary nature of the work, as the study proceeds participants may want to...
develop other research questions that they want to explore and to act collectively in response to their knowledge.

If you agree I will ask you to commit to attend a series of participants group discussions for two hours two times in a month up to eight months or as scheduled by participants who are recognized as peer researchers/co-researchers in the study and an individual conversations, based on the themes developed by participants group meetings, for two hours.

**What your participation involve?**

This research draws on participatory approaches allowing the voices of those who have lived experiences of being trafficked for sexual exploitation to inform the research. Therefore, you will be asked to be part of ongoing dialogue and knowledge creation process focusing on the topic mentioned earlier through a series of participants group meetings and an individual conversation. During the process, you will be involved in sharing your ideas and experiences in regards to reintegration to communities as a whole. You as a group will also be involved in exploring how individuals perceive reintegration and identifying necessary actions for enhancing reintegration of trafficking survivors.

In this type of research, each member has equal status within the research group and therefore each member will have the opportunity to contribute to the dialogical process, specifically for action-reflection-action. You will also be invited for an individual conversation to share your opinions about the anti-trafficking initiatives claiming to respond to your needs. You will be asked to keep a journal or draw images that documents your reflections and actions related to your involvement in the research.

The duration for the study will be seven to eight months depending on the duration of participants group meetings. Suitable meeting times for the Group meetings will be scheduled by the group in the first meeting; however, at least two meetings in a month with a maximum of two hours may be desirable. Individual conversations will also last for two hours. Participants group meetings and individual conversations will be audio recorded. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation without penalty at any time. Should you choose to withdraw all data provided up to the point of your withdrawal will be retained.

**What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

You will be asked to provide some basic personal information such as, name age, ethnicity, educational background, marital status and place of origin. I will record the Participants group discussions and conversations to improve the accuracy of my work. Your responses are confidential and will not be shared outside of my supervisory committee. No one will have access to your name and identifying information other than me. Your name and identifying information will not appear in papers and reports that will be prepared on my dissertation. You will also be asked (if you wish so) to choose a pseudo name of your own choice and you will be identified as such in the research process including dissertations and publications.

**Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**
In general, we do not anticipate any risk in this study that would not be similar to those you encounter in your everyday life. However, some discussions through participants group meetings, discussion questions or opinions may cause emotional discomfort. You may refuse to answer any question and withdraw your participation in the study at any time. Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you need counseling and support, you will be able to access to the counseling services available anytime in the shelter.

Through the processes, the study will help you critically understand the social processes and structures of the issues of human trafficking and reintegration within a historical and a contemporary context. The study will also help you collectively understand your experiences and recognize the importance of possible collective actions for social change. By doing so, you will gain a critical consciousness of how social structures are implicated in your oppression by becoming more aware, more assertive, more critical and more active. You will also benefit by playing a central role in any action plans that may have direct implications for their lives and the lives of other sex trafficked women.

**What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

The Participants group meetings and individual conversations will be recorded, translated into English and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. You will also be asked (if you wish so) to choose a pseudo name of your own choice and you will be identified as such in the research process including dissertations and publications.

The sound recordings and transcriptions will be kept electronically in a password-protected online storage system (Dropbox). Any hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. No one other than my supervisory committee and me will have access to the recordings and transcriptions. I will retain the electronic and hard copy recordings and transcriptions for five years. I will then securely destroy all materials.

You will identify by yourself by name. However, as a measure to protect the participants’ identity, their actual name will not be used in any of the published material or in the transcriptions of the interviews, whether in audio-file format or in the researchers' notes. Furthermore, any identifying features of the subject's life that might reveal who they are will also be changed in publications and presentations of findings. I will make all attempts to protect participant anonymity in all reports and publications. The results of my study, which may contain direct quotes from individual interviews, and focus group meetings, will be published in my dissertation, which will become publicly available upon defense. The results of my study may be published in academic journals, books, or used for conference presentations and/or teaching purposes.

**Signatures**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.
Participant’s Name: (please print) _____________________________________________
Participant’s Signature ____________________________________ Date: _____________
Researcher’s Name: (please print) RITA DHUNGEL
Researcher’s Signature:  Rita  Date: November 21st, 2013

Questions/Concerns
If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:
Rita Dhungel, Faculty of Social Work, 977-1-5537715 or rdhungel@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you’ve been treated as a participant, please contact
Russell Burrows, the Senior Ethics Resources Officer, Research Services Office, University of
Calgary at 403-220-3782; email: rburrows@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The
investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.
Appendix E: Peer Interview Guides Developed by the Co-researchers

Peer Interview Guides

Demographics:

Name: Place of Birth:
Age: Education:
Marital status: Ethnic background:
Date:

1. How would you like to introduce yourself?

2. If you feel comfortable, can you please share your family background with us?

3. How old were you when you were trafficked to India? How long did you stay in India?

4. Who supported you after you returned to Nepal?

5. What was your experience like upon your return to Nepal?

6. What does the term “successful reintegration” of trafficking survivors mean to you?

7. What do you think about your own reintegration?

8. Are you satisfied with the support that you have been receiving from the Government of Nepal?

9. In your opinion, what support can the Government of Nepal provide to trafficking survivors for their reintegration?

10. Any comments about how your involvement with this community based research has changed you?

Thank You for Your Support
Appendix F: Interview Guide for Stakeholders

Interview with Stakeholders

Demographics:
Name: ___________________________ Education: ___________________________
Name of Organization: ___________________________ Time with organization: ___________________________
Date: ___________________________

Dear Sir/ Madam:
We are very pleased to inform you that a group of trafficking survivors are involved in Participatory Action Research on the “Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors in Nepal”. Therefore, we as survivors are here to obtain some information from you for our research. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What is your understanding of the term “successful reintegration of survivors”?
2. In your opinion, what percentage of women are successfully reintegrated in Nepal?
3. What kind of initiatives/ programs, if any, does your agency have to assist with the reintegration of survivors?
4. Do you think that trafficking survivors are successfully reintegrated in our society? What should be done to make a successful reintegration?
5. In your opinion, what types of support does the Government provide to agencies/organizations working in anti-trafficking interventions?
6. What do you think about the laws and policies that the Government of Nepal has implemented for the Reintegration of survivors? Do you have any insights for reintegration laws and policies?

Thank you for your support
Appendix G: A Story Shared by One of the Co-researchers

A Ray of Hope

HI Friends.

I would like to say something which only few know about me. I have two parts in my life: one is how I look outside happy and fine and peaceful. But inside I have many many things to share. I’ve many things to share but I have very vital thing that my loving one should know… I have HIV virus inside my body. Its like all over my body ……in my life. I went up through many ups and downs and I have deep wounds in my mind and heart.

My life is like falling fruit. Sometime I think of my life and what will happen to my future that makes my tears flow down. My heart is hurt which is blamed by family and society just because I am HIV infected person though this is not my fault. I got trafficked in brothel at the age of 13 which is the cause that I listened many painful views and thinking imposed to me. I feel helpless and hope less. Many hidden things are in my life regarding my work and struggle spirit. My long struggle has reached 16 years and I am still standing and trying to do best. I want to build more skills in life, but when it comes to matter of health then unknowingly and unconsciously I feel hurt and feel low. I am unable to do many things just because I am infected person. Sometime I feel like I am even unable to win trust of my colleagues just because I am trafficking survivors along with HIV infected person. Even I lack appreciations though I need and wish a lot - but again I think with hard work and courage I have reached to this stage. So in coming days also I will never lose my heart and spirit. I will never fear and will never be frightened. I will go ahead and won’t look back.

In this situation also I feel rays of sunlight as rays of hope in my life because God has provided me someone to support me for my treatment. Doctor has informed me that my treatment is not going well and its dangerous for me as well as others since there’s lack of proper medical treatment here in Nepal. But presently the situation is somehow better and my life is taking a good turn towards the bright side. Again, I feel god is with me and I will get support. I know life is not in my hand but when I listen others story of struggle then that really encourage me more to do more things. When I go home and close my eyes then many things come in my mind- sick mother, my all younger sisters, my daughter and their future. So I never share anything with them instead I stay alone in room. But when I got this ART HEALING THERAPY training then I have got tools to handle my pains. Previously I did not had interest in many things but now life is different and I want to learn more and more. The training brought positive change in me. All people who knows me sees me in various ways but I am always peaceful as my name is shanti (shanti is peace in nepali). Finally my daughter is power to me. She is my heart and I have to live for her. I control pains for my daughter so that my daughter will be always happy and powerful even at the hard times when I won’t be with her.

I wish this article to have positive impact on the people who are suffering from the same problem as mine.
Appendix H: Questionaires Developed by the Research Team for the Conversation Cafe

Questions for Conversation Cafe

1. What is your understanding of the term “successful reintegration of trafficking survivors”?

2. How can you, as a citizen, support survivors in their reintegration?

3. In your opinion how can the Government of Nepal address the issues of reintegration, as experienced by survivors?

4. What, if anything, did you learn about trafficking survivors’ reintegration from our presentation today? How can we make our educational campaign more effective in the future?
Appendix I: Flyer Used for Educational Awareness on the Issues of Reintegration

Trafficking Survivors Need your Support in Their Reintegration

WE WANT:

• Treat us equally
• Behave nicely with us
• Help us to move on

Thank you,

Community –based Action Research Women Group
Appendix J: Script for the Street Dramas

Street Dramas

Background Narration:
A small house is situated in a beautiful village in a remote area in Nepal. A girl named Mangali, 10 years old, lives in this house. She is not alone; her stepmother and half-sister are also living in the same house. However, she is completely isolated and unhappy. In order to know more about her life, let us go together to her village, especially her house.

(Curtains opens for the public and the drama starts with Mangali’s stepmother who seems to be angry and is shouting at Mangali)

Script for Street Dramas:

Mangali works really hard from dawn to dusk. Her work includes fetching water from a community water tap, cooking food, washing dishes and clothes, and herding cows. All this work makes her tired and when she rests for a minute, her stepmother accuses her of not doing anything at home. Despite of her hard work, she neither gets any recognition nor good enough food from her family. Nevertheless, she does not say anything to her stepmother but goes to a corner of the house and cries or pretends that everything is normal.

One day, when Mangali is washing dishes outside of the home, a man from the village who has just returned from India visits Mangali’s family. When he learns that no one is in the house he says that tells Mangali that there are a number of jobs available in India for those who are illiterate and uneducated. He also tells her that he is the one who oversees the different jobs and that he can certainly provide a job for her if she wants to go to India with him. He attempts to convince Mangali to leave the house and go to India with him. In the beginning, Mangali expresses her unwillingness to leave her family but she is convinced when he points out her
miserable situation in her own home and also promises her that he will treat her as a family member in India. She agrees to go to India with him and makes a plan to leave the house early the next day.

Mangali arrives in India, but does not know where she is until a Madam (who is in charge of the brothel) comes to her and asks her to wear beautiful clothes and put on make-up. At first, she refuses to have sex with clients and is physically and verbally abused, and finally realizes that she has no other option (do or die). She listens to the Madam and starts adjusting to the culture that has been enforced upon her. Days pass, months pass and years pass- Mangali’s tries to make both her clients and the Madam happy. However, one day, Mangali is able to escape from the brothel and returns to her own village and reaches her home with lots of rays of hope.

Mangali first visits her family but unfortunately her step-mother is aware that Mangali has been in a brothel in India. Her step-mother already knew from the person who had sold her to the brothel but he did not say about his involvement in this activity. Therefore, she refuses to accept her and she is exiled from her own home. She is rejected not only from her family but also from her community - her own beloved community. No one talks to her and people treat her as if she were a criminal and was going to murder someone in the community. Sadly, Mangali is completely restricted from temples, common meeting places and religious activities. While enduring this unbearable existence, she comes upon a social worker and shares her story. The social worker accompanies her to Kathmandu and helps her connect with an agency that provides her a place to live educational/vocational classes and life skills trainings. This transforms Mangali in many ways. Mangali expresses her willingness to go back to her village and live with respect and dignity as she was living before. However she is not still confident to go on her own. Thus, Mangali and the social worker go to Mangali village and meet her step-mother together.
Upon seeing Mangali, her mother begins to yell at her. Mangali is a different person now so she talks about her rights, stating that she is entitled to stay in the place where no one can violate her rights. Community members attempt to convince her mother not to accept her and threaten that she too will have to leave the community if she accepts her daughter in her. But at end of the day, Mangali is able to change her mother mind and community’s perspectives about survivors. The drama concludes by creating a welcoming and an inclusive environment for Mangali.
Appendix K: Evaluation Form Distributed to Participants Attending the Street Dramas

Evaluation of the Street Drama

Demographics

Name: ___________________________ Education: ___________________________
Profession: ___________________________ Gender: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________

1. Have you ever seen a street drama presentation on the issue of trafficking survivors
   reintegration?
   (a) Yes  (b) No

2. What did you think about the drama we performed today?

3. In your opinion, did the drama successfully convey a message about the reintegration
   issues faced by survivors in our community?
   (a) Yes  (b) No
   If your answer is yes please explain………………………….
   If your answer is no please explain…………………………

4. What do you think the Government of Nepal should do to address the reintegration issues
   of survivors?

5. What can you, as a citizen, do to support survivors in their reintegration?

6. What was your biggest learning from this drama today?

7. How did this drama change your way of thinking?

8. Any suggestions for us to effectively organize our drama in the future?

Thank you for your participation
Appendix L: Flyer for the Workshop held at the Kathmandu University

A Workshop
Participatory Action Research (PAR)

by

Rita Dhungel, a Doctoral Candidate at the Faculty of Social Work, University Of Calgary, Canada
And
Co-researchers

Date: May 18, 2014 (Sunday), Time: 2pm - 4pm
Venue: KUSoA Auditorium

Rita Dhungel is working with trafficking survivors as a part of her doctoral research, who are currently working with Shakti Samuha, and are willing to share their learning experiences through the journey of the research entitled “Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors in Nepal”.

In the workshop, she will share some of the underlying principles of PAR as a research methodology followed by the importance of PAR with disempowered and disenfranchised populations.
Then, her co-researchers will be sharing some of their learning followed by a drama focusing on the reintegration of trafficking survivors.
Reintegration to me is like this plant- beautiful and green from the outside, but broken and lifeless in the middle where the leaves have fallen. My life is not different from this plant, green but with many broken patches. People behave nicely and appreciate my beauty and smartness, but you know what happens when I share my past with them- I see changes in their behaviour as they gradually distance themselves and stop being my friends. People are afraid to hang out with me. It is very heart breaking when you experience these types of behaviours. I am no exception; it hurts me and makes me feel valueless. I am sure that one day this plant will become green. Similarly, as I go through my life, one day I will overcome my pain and sorrow and get a new life. Yes, I am not sure when the time will come but I am positive that the day will come in my life sooner or later. (Anuska Khadka, Co-researcher)

This photograph reminds me of my past where I was certainly breathing and alive, but I was like a dead body after being repeatedly raped. As showed in the picture, I kept saying, “NO…… NO! LEAVE ME”. How many times I said, “STOP…… STOP….I said STOP IT” but who would listen to me, except the furniture and the walls in the room? Because of that assault, I still cannot overcome my physical and mental illness. (Mendo Sherpa, Co-researcher)
I returned with a ray of hope and I still remember the day when I was coming back to my family and my village: my lovely village. But I did not know people would view me differently and treat me as if I’d committed murders. One day while I went to fetch water from a common water spout, I heard people talking about me and blaming me for my own vulnerability. They were talking about how bad of a person I was for selling myself for money. I also heard I should be exiled from the village. This made me think “I wish I had died in India and had not come back to Nepal”. I could not stay in my village and decided to leave my family and the community. Very unwelcoming and cruel society! (Mendo Sherpa, Co-researcher)

I left my home full of tears just like the girl in this picture, and no one stopped me. The society's views towards me pushed me to leave my house and my family. I wished I could stay in home and spend my life in my village. I wanted to play with my childhood friends but once I was trafficked to India, no one considered me a friend. I am an enemy to my friends and neighbours. How can I claim that I am reintegrated in the society when I must go through all these difficulties? I am tired now. (Mendo Sherpa, Co-researcher)
As shown in the photo, my life has now become like the sky covered in black clouds. See, this photo shows that the sky is burnt in reddish black. As the sun removes the black clouds and bring brightness to the sky, my hopes and aspirations for human rights are motivating me to move forward and deal with all the barriers I experience in my life. I am sure this will help me to continuously work in achieving my goals-fight for human rights violations. I am happy that I have learnt to smile and I am trying to bring happiness to other’s face. I will continue to do this….

continue perhaps forever…..

(Mendo Sherpa, Co-researcher)

Who knew that eating ‘offerings’ (Prasad) that was offered to God, which is considered sacred and distributed to others, would be such a crush to anyone. While walking on a street, two ladies came to me and offered God's ‘prasad’. With a nice smile, I accepted the offer and took the prasad. I don’t even remember what it was. I cannot recall what happened after I took the Prasad as I lost consciousness. When I finally woke up, I realised that I was in a train to India to be sold. (Sweata Shrestha, Co-researcher)
My life has been messed up. I want to see my life organized as shown in the picture. The shawls in different colours are hanging properly. Similarly, I know I possess many skills and talents but I lack the skills to exhibit confidence onto the opportunities. I want to advocate for those who are affected by human trafficking as they need love and support from family and society, so that everyone can live with respect and dignity. I want to make their life organized. No more mess in our lives. (Sweata Shrestha, Co-researcher)

This photo helps me to compare my life with this blooming pink flower. I am sure everyone loves flowers and wants to keep them in their home. When I see this photo, I can picture myself being reintegrated someday. As the flower needs care from people to grow, people like us who are affected from trafficking also need help from our family and community. We need love and affection. Once people show their love and care to me, my confidence increases and I start thinking my life is very beautiful like this flower. This also motivates me to work against human trafficking and further improve the lives of affected women. (Pratima Limbu, Co-researcher)
When I came to Kathmandu from my village, my attention was captured by people who were talking on cell phones while walking. I had never used cell phones and of course not even seen cell phones before came to Kathmandu – it was mesmerizing to me. I really wanted one. I started dreaming of having the phone and talking to my family but I did not have the money and there is no way my family could buy a phone for me so started searching for a job. I accepted a job offer; it was an easy job - I just needed to deliver some drugs from Nepal to India. I went to India with a group of people and I was very happy that I would be able to buy a phone soon. Unfortunately, my happiness did not stay longer. Who knew it would be a fake job. Who knew my wish to have a phone would make my life miserable. Was it my fault to want the cell phone?  
(Shradha KC, Co-researcher)

Being born as a girl in impoverished family became a curse to me. Money was short and we did not have a place to live in. We were living in a cowshed with cows which forced me to seek a job but there were no jobs in my village and thus I left my family and village for Kathmandu. However, I was not aware that being uneducated, finding a job was very difficult. One of my relatives knew of my struggles in Kathmandu and offered a good job in India. Without any suspicion, I decided to go to India and thought my hardship days were over and I would now have a decent and healthy life. Look at me now! I have a very “healthy” lifestyle with a label of “Affected woman from human trafficking” as a permanent title till the end of my life. (Gyanu Limbu, Co-researcher)
Seven is the age to wear good clothes, eat good food and play with friends. But my childhood was different and I did not get anything like others at that age. I had only one set of clothes to cover my body and there was not enough food for our family— we went to sleep hungry several times. Who does not want to eat good food and wear new clothes, especially at the age of seven? I was not even matured to differentiate right and wrong but I wanted to see my siblings enjoying their lives with good food. One of my neighbours asked me to come to Kathmandu with her and I immediately said yes. With the permission of my mother, I left my family and village for Kathmandu. After a year, I was offered a work in India and later I ended up in a brothel. (Lalgiri Gurung, Co-researcher)

I was very happy the day I was returning to my own country. But I did not know that I had health issues. I am diagnosed with HIV positive. I am psychologically and physically very low these days. I take medicines every day and I feel like medicines are my family today— my priority. Every day, when I take medicine I find myself in the past. I then get nervous and lose my confidence and energy to do anything. This is how I am living my reintegration. (Lalgiri Gurung, Co-researcher)

I am living with HIV AIDS and have to take medicines regularly. I have been suggested to take nutritious food like fruits. Sadly, I don’t have money to buy the fruits. Fruits are very expensive. It is easy for doctors to say this but …. I can hardly buy groceries. In this situation, buying fruits is limited to words and sometimes in my dreams. I do not know how I can consider myself being reintegrated in this situation. You tell me - am I reintegrated? …no way! (Lalgiri Gurung, Co-researcher)
Regardless of the problems I went through in my life, I do not want anyone else to go through this. I would like to change the world. I want to make my society and country bright just like a candle does. As shown in the photo, once we light a candle, it removes darkness and gives lights. Similarly, I would like to spread the light into the lives of trafficked survivors and help them with their reintegration. I want to bring happiness in their life and this could possibly bring my happiness back to my life too. I know it is not easy but this is my wish. (Monika Rai, Co-researcher)

This picture reminded me of my childhood years. I was happily playing with my friends and enjoying my childhood. It was such a free life- no stress- no tension. How beautiful this life was. I did not know this happiness would not last long. I was eight years when I was trafficked. I wanted to graduate and become a professional but everything was shattered with this incident. I had goals when I was child but look at me now -I became a person with no vision of career. I have no more goals but I still need to survive. (Monika Rai, Co-researcher)
I found myself in a strange place and later I came to know that it was a brothel where we were going to sell our body. I became hopeless and vulnerable. This picture resonates my life; I was entirely shattered and smashed. I did not see any way to escape from that place. I became like these goats, totally unorganized and unpredictable, and not sure what my life looked like in another few minutes. There was no life and no death… um… I was breathing and I was alive but I was not really alive. No pain and no sorrow. Without any destination, I was wandering here and there. I was not able to do anything and felt as if I lost everything and became a dead body. I was neither in the sky nor on the earth just like the goats in the picture. (Monika Rai, Co-researcher)

My dreams were scattered after I was trafficked for sexual exploitation. Yet, I still have lots of hopes. I want to work in anti-trafficking interventions with a focus on prevention. To do this, first I need to reintegrate myself in this society and then will be able to help other trafficked survivors in their reintegration. I put myself in the situation of the black goat that is looking at another goat on the other side of the bridge. I will have to cross the long bridge to reach the goat that is seeking my help. I don’t know how to cross the bridge but I know I have to save the life of the goat. Similarly, I know there are thousands of trafficked women suffering and I want to convey a message that we all are same- I am no different than you - our problems are the same. What we need to do is to solve our problems in solidarity. I need to create a just society so we, trafficking survivors, can live with respects and dignity. (Monika Rai, Co-researcher)
When I was child, I knew people would sell animals. But unfortunately, I did not know people would sell people too at the time when I was transporting to India. I wish I knew this. My life is exactly the same of the goats who are waiting for customers to buy them. Without any choices, I was also waiting for my clients to buy me and play with me. At least there is no competition among goats about their beauty and the skills to lure clients towards them as I did. I still remember the moments when clients were bargaining over me as if I was a goat. At least, the goats don’t get beaten if they will not be purchased and they are killed once and their lives are gone but I don’t know how many times I was killed and how many times I died. (Lalgiri Gurung, Co-researcher)

In respond to people’s question regarding my future goal, I used to say I wanted to be a doctor. I usually picturized stethoscopes and doctor’s uniforms while going to school. I had to leave the school because my parents could not offer my uniforms and one day I was kicked out of the classroom just because I was not in uniforms. In the search of job I ended up being in a brothel. I am back to Nepal but I still dream of wearing a white coat and saving people’s lives. God’s mercy! I am diagnosed with HIV Aids and I see the doctor every month. Whenever I go to see the doctor I situate myself in his spots and start dreaming this again. He is trying to save my life. My teachers stopped me from entering in the classroom but they cannot stop me from dreaming. (Gyanu Limbu, Co-researcher)
Appendix N: Guidelines for the Media Present at the Press Conference

Our participatory action research suggests the following roles for the media:

1. To convey the voices of the survivors to the concerned government agencies;
2. To focus on incidents of trafficking survivors and the causes of human trafficking rather than on individuals and their stories;
3. To explore issues of trafficking survivors who live in rural areas and bring up their real stories;
4. To give priority to human trafficking and reintegration issues and attend conferences related to those issues with enthusiasm;
5. To create a ‘just’ society by keeping confidentiality of trafficking survivors and bringing their issues to the public;
6. To encourage survivors to be resilient through your writings;
7. To practice media ethics such as:
   - Ask the survivors for their consents before taking pictures
   - Do not use the survivor’s real name and address while writing
   - Be mindful in language and words in your interviews with survivors
   - Promote social justice by being an ally of the survivors.

Thank you for attending this conference. We hope you were able to understand the issues that the survivors face in their reintegration. We sincerely believe you will become allies of trafficking survivors in addressing their reintegration issues.

Sincerely,

Community –based Action Research Group
Kathmandu Nepal
Appendix O: Recommendation Letter Submitted to the Policy Makers

Date: June 17, 2014

To:
Honorable Minister
Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
Singha Durbar, Kathmandu
Nepal

Subject: Recommendations for a Successful Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors

Honorable Minister,

In collaboration with Rita Dhungel, a doctoral student with the University of Calgary and a group of eight trafficking survivors with Shakti Samuha, a participatory action research was conducted from November August 2013 to June 2014. The findings of the study suggest that survivors are experiencing numerous challenges with the reintegration process, both at community and structural levels. Therefore, to promote social justice, we developed the following recommendations for the Government of Nepal to act upon.

- Clearly define the terms “reintegration” and “reestablishment” of trafficking survivors by eliminating obscurity on those two terms.
- Create a just society, by impartially investigating cases of human trafficking and sentencing traffickers with corporal punishment.
- Engage with survivors while developing/amending existing trafficking and reintegration laws and policies to effectively implement those laws and policies.
- Allocate sufficient budgets to all Village Development Committees for survivors’ education and skills development trainings.
- Immediately establish rehabilitation centers in all 75 districts.
- Periodically monitor rehabilitative centers and shelters operated by non-governmental organizations.
- Provide free health care services and higher education to survivors.
- Provide access to survivors in public services opportunities based on merit and endorse a quota system for survivors in public services.
- Include the topics of human trafficking and reintegration of survivors in the curriculum of grade 4 to grade 12.
- Organize awareness programs for survivors’ family and community.
- Recognize individuals and agencies for their contributions in addressing the issues of trafficking and reintegration.
• Punish individuals who cause obstacles and exhibit negative attitudes towards trafficking survivors.
• Criminalize the offenders who discriminate survivors based on their past.

Thank you!
Yours Sincerely,
Community-based Action Research Team
Kathmandu, Nepal
Appendix P: Art Healing Therapy Facilitated by the Co-researchers