

**A STUDY OF
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION
AND
REHABILITATION NEEDS
OF WOMEN IN DANCE BARS**

PRAYAS

(A Field Action Project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences)

Mumbai

2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The recent move of the Government of Maharashtra to impose a ban on dance bars in the State, through an amendment in the Bombay Police Act, was ostensibly taken on the grounds that they were having a damaging effect on the moral and cultural fibre of society especially the youth, and at the same time leading to the exploitation of the women and girls working in dance bars.

After the imposition of this ban, strong reactions have come from various sources. From these responses, two main streams have become visible. On one end, is the stream of people opposing the ban, while on the other end is those supporting the ban. The grounds on which these two streams are either opposing or supporting the ban are varied, ranging from the issue of right to livelihood, alternate employment, negative impact on youth, moral and cultural degradation, exploitation of women and trafficking of women and minors.

Since the number of women working in the dance bars is substantial, and given the fact that most of them come from poverty-stricken or marginalized backgrounds, the ban has raised the most evocative response to the issue of livelihoods and alternatives.

As a result of privatisation and globalisation and the changing economic scenario, many avenues in the service sector are being opened up. There is a constant opening up of new sectors for women, and closing down or restrictions/limitations being created in some others in this process. With the employment creation process not keeping pace with the need for jobs, especially at the lower end, avenues which were hitherto either not available or acceptable are being presented as options by the commercial sector. The debate over the ban on dance bars has to be viewed in this overall context.

Prayas decided to conduct a small study to assess the socio-economic situation of women working in dance bars, understand their rehabilitation needs, get to know their responses to the ban as well as what they have in mind about alternative sources of income.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were:

1. To understand the processes behind the entry and the work situation of girls/women working in dance bars.
2. To understand the socio-economic situation of girls/women working in dance bars.
3. To seek out the opinion of girls/women about the ban and the role of the State in the post-ban situation.
4. To suggest alternatives to address the socio-economic and rehabilitation needs of girls/women in this sector.

Geographical location of the study

Data for the study was collected from the city of Mumbai and its suburbs. Interviews and discussions were held with girls/women residing between Mumbai to Borivali, Nerul and Kalyan Bhiwandi, with girls/women at the two government rescue homes at Deonar and Chembur (who had been rescued from dance bars) and from under trial women at Kalyan District Prison.

Methodology of the study

It was decided to conduct the study through the random survey method, along with focused group discussions with the respondents, wherever possible. For the purposes of the study, an interview schedule was prepared. The interview schedule included issues such as reasons for coming to work in dance bars, process of entry, information about family background, socio-economic background, type of work done in the dance bars, earnings and expenditure details, their views about the ban and alternative source of livelihood.

The data was collected by the social workers of Prayas, who spread out in teams of two each in the city and its suburbs. It was decided not to visit the bars but to visit the residential areas where the respondents live. This was done with a view to elicit a more frank and truthful account from the respondents. An area mapping was done of the areas where the respondents live, based on information gathered from primary and secondary sources. The time selected for the interviews and discussions was decided based on the free time available to the women i.e. mostly in the afternoons and evenings.

The study was conducted after the decision of the ban was taken, in the months of April and May, 2005. During the course of the study, we were able to contact around hundred girls/women. Informal discussions were held with them. At times group discussions were held and other times, the discussions were held on a one-on-one basis. Some of women refused to fill the interview schedules and only agreed to have a general discussion on the subject with the interviewers. Though the actual number of interview schedules filled was seventy-two, it is important to note that there were many informal discussions held with the respondents. These discussions and interviews were analysed by an informed team within Prayas. Gaps in information were bolstered by further discussions with key informants either within Prayas or known to Prayas. The findings and suggestions of the study are based on the information gathered through the interview schedules, informal discussions with the girls/women and observations made by the key informants.

Categories of respondents selected for the study

- Girls/women working in the dance bars located in the city of Mumbai and its suburbs.
- Girls/women who have come in contact with Prayas, who had either worked in dance bars (in the past) or had keen knowledge about girls/women working in dance bars.
- Girls/women rescued from dance bars and housed in Protective Home, Chembur and Special Home for Minor Girls, Deonar.
- Under trial women at the Female Section of the Kalyan District Prison.

Difficulties faced in the study

Since the study was conducted in the wake of the decision to impose the ban, the environment was heated and delicate. There was tremendous opposition to the decision of the government from various quarters. Gradually, support for the ban also took concrete shape from some other quarters. In this atmosphere, it was necessary to get the girls/women to express themselves openly in a situation where their livelihood was at stake.

In the beginning, a few women spoke in a free and frank manner. Gradually, during subsequent visits to the areas, the same women refused to cooperate with the team. On finding out the reason behind this, we were given to understand that the women had been warned by some of the bar owners from speaking to outsiders. Many girls/women refused to cooperate on the grounds that they did not see anything coming out of this effort of ours.

II. DATA ANALYSIS

Break-up of the Sample

A total 72 interview schedules were filled from the girls/women interviewed during the study. The statistical distribution (percentage wise) of these women is as follows:

- Women working in dance bars : 65%
- Women who were being rehabilitated by Prayas and had worked in dance bars in the past : 3%
- Women from Protective Home, Chembur and Special Home for Minor Girls, Deonar : 18%
- Women from Women's Section, Kalyan Prison : 14%

(Since both minor girls and adult women have been found to be working in dance bars, therefore they have been referred to separately as girls and women. Henceforth, for easy understanding, the word 'women' will be used while referring to both categories.)

The Process of Entry

Before coming to work in the dance bars, 96% of the women either in their village or in their present place of residence were doing some work like farming, zari work, domestic work, rolling beedis, etc. It was observed that 90% of the women had family responsibilities. For the sustenance of their family, it became necessary for them to work and earn a livelihood.

Along with their earning role, they were also fulfilling their caretaking role within their families. Many women had come to Mumbai with the hope of getting some good job or for better employment options.

Majority of the women informed that they had not come into this sector on their own. Though there were minor differences, largely speaking, there appeared to be some similarity in most cases with regard to their process of entry into this sector. The general feeling was that one could get jobs in Mumbai. Before coming to Mumbai, they were told or given an impression by 'middlemen' that they would get better paid jobs here. Based on such information acquired by them, and on the faith/trust in these 'middlemen' who had approached them, the women came to Mumbai. The description of their coming to Mumbai, in the words of a few of them is as follows:

"I was brought to Mumbai a year back and made to forcibly work in the bars. In the beginning, for a month, I attempted to run away but all efforts failed in this regard. Therefore, I am forced to live here."

"I was sold by my relatives to a dalal for Rs.20,000/-. I have to send money regularly home from the earnings of working in the bar."

"I was deceived in my village and brought to Mumbai. I do not know the local language of Mumbai. I wish to go back to my village, but there is no way out."

These statements clearly show that these women were brought to Mumbai with the hope of getting a good job. They were unaware about the type of work they would be given, prior to being sent to work in the dance bars.

The Presence of 'Middlemen'

It was found that many women in search of jobs had come to work in the dance bars through some 'middleman'. It was observed that there was an exchange of money between the 'middleman' and the family or the bar owner during the process of getting the women from their villages to Mumbai and their final entry into this sector.

These 'middlemen' appeared to have good contacts with the bars owners. There are reports that the middlemen receive commissions from the bar owners for bringing these women to work in the bars. They play an active role in getting the women to Mumbai, and aid the process of settling/adjusting to the lifestyle of the bar. In the initial stages, they help the women travel to and fro from their place of residence to the bar, and keep a close eye on them to prevent the women from running away. It appears from the study that any woman who has been brought by a 'middleman' cannot go about on her own, especially in the initial stages. It was observed that in some cases, threats and force were used on the women to gain their consent for agreeing to this work.

The process of entry seems to follow a pattern. The woman is told that the money given to her family when she was brought to Mumbai is like a loan. Until she repays this money, the woman has to abide by what the middleman says/wants. Such women do not have the freedom of selecting a bar of their choice. During this study, it was also found that there have been cases of minor girls being locked up in rooms.

Another process observed was that in the case of plain-looking women looking for better options or requesting for work, the 'middlemen' agree to find them work in Mumbai on commission basis, either before or after getting work. She also has to bear her travel expenses to come to Mumbai.

But if the woman is young and good-looking, these 'middleman' pay an 'advance' to her family (either the husband or parents or some relatives) before bringing her to Mumbai for work.

It becomes visible from the above scenario that elements of human trafficking are present in the process of entry into this sector. In our opinion, it fits into the definition of human trafficking as per the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, 2000. The Protocol defines trafficking as ".....the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction, or fraud, or deception, or the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" The entry process also amounts to a violation of Article 23 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits traffic in human beings and *begar* and other similar forms of forced labour.

The 'middlemen' deceiving the women and bringing them to Mumbai, not revealing the nature of work to be done prior to being brought here, locking them up or keeping a close watch on their movements, the exchange of money involved for getting them to Mumbai, physical and mental harassment – all such illegal acts prove the trafficking issue beyond doubt. It is clearly seen that there is a need to take legal action against such illegal acts and against these 'middlemen'.

Work in Dance Bars

Many of the respondents who work as dancers in the bars informed that they had not undergone any special training for dancing. A few of them observed that to get to work as a dancer in the bar, their complexion, height, hair length, and personality is taken into consideration. Based on these criteria, it is decided whether they get work as dancers or as waiters. This decision many a times is taken by the bar owner.

The data showed that the girls dress up in a specific style while dancing. They dance to the tunes of popular film songs. They need to practice a lot to dance well to the tunes of such songs. They have to continuously stand while dancing. Some of the women informed that if they were unable to stand and dance at a stretch due to physical strain, they were given the option of sitting beside a customer. In some places, the woman's opinion is taken whether she is comfortable sitting beside a customer before she is asked to do so.

During the dance, the women have to change their dress, ornaments and make-up as per the song and this has to be done very quickly, between the change of songs.

The type of work done by women who work as waiters is to serve liquor to the customer, and offer to sit beside him if he wishes so. It was informed by the women that to work as a waiter there was no special skill required. But they have to sometimes face and bear the mental stress of indecent advances and uncouth behaviour of the customers.

The break-up (% age) of the sample about type of work the women were doing is as follows:

Dancers	: 57%
Waiters	: 26%
No information available	: 17%

The work timings in the bar started from evening till early hours of the morning, as late as 2.00 a.m. At times, it continued until dawn. The environment in the bars could not be termed as safe for the women. Many women informed that they had to travel to and fro from their homes to the bar by train, taxi or auto-rickshaw. The night traveling was considered unsafe by the women. The to and fro journey from their home to the bar was mostly done by the women in 'fixed' taxis or auto-rickshaws who charged them twice or thrice the actual meter fares.

As mentioned earlier, the 'middlemen' brought the women to work in the bars without revealing much information about the nature of their work. Having landed here and with no other social supports (except the middleman), lack of other viable skills for income, lack of knowledge about possible job options, and their situation of vulnerability due to their socio-economic situation, returning back to their homes or villages becomes almost impossible. They have hardly any option but to stay back here and continue with the option presented before them. Thus, it becomes necessary to give a serious thought whether these women are to be viewed as 'workers' choosing an occupation out of free choice.

Socio-Economic Situation of the Women

a. Age

The (% age) distribution of the women contacted during the study is as follows:

Less than 18 years	: 6%
18-30 years	: 87%
31-40 years	: 6%
Age not known	: 1%

During the study, it was observed the majority of the women were between 18-30 years of age. During our visits to the Special Home for Minor Girls at Deonar, it was observed that there was a steady flow of minors rescued from dance bars as compared to their percentage shown through our study. It was very difficult to get access to minors living in the area. So most of the minor girls interviewed were those who were housed in the Special Home (during the period of data collection) and agreed to be interviewed.

The study shows that 93% of the women interviewed were below 30 years of age. The emphasis on youth as criteria for getting work in dance bars clearly emerges from this.

b. Educational status

Illiterate	: 50%
Primary level (Upto 4 th Std.)	: 13%
Secondary level (5 th to 10 th Std.)	: 17%
Higher Secondary level	: 1%
Graduate level	: 1%
Information not available	: 18%

50% of the women were found to be illiterate. Only 19% of the women had reached secondary level or above. From this, it becomes evident that there are no educational qualifications required for this work.

A few of the women contacted during the study had undergone some training or acquired a skill in tailoring, embroidery, or nursing. The reasons cited for the poor educational status was the poor financial situation of their families along with the discriminatory practices by the families with regard to the education of female children.

Only 2% of the women surveyed were educated beyond the higher secondary level. This indicates that educated women had positive job opportunities available for them to choose from. More than 60% of the women were negatively affected by their low education status with lack of opportunities in the job market.

Thus, exploitative options become more 'available' to those coming from poor educational or economic backgrounds. But such options may sometimes get portrayed as a right to livelihood issue in the absence of better options. A social ladder may thus get created whereby those who have been denied access to educational or employment opportunities are permanently relegated to exploitative sectors.

c. Period of stay in the city

One month to one year	: 32%
One years to five years	: 19%
Five years to ten years	: 3%
More than ten years	: 18%
No information available	: 28%

The experience of their stay in Mumbai would be better understood in their own words:

"I was told by the middleman that my family has been given some money as a loan. For this, I will have to stay in Mumbai until the money is repaid."

"I was deceived by the dalal and brought to Mumbai. Now I have given up all hopes of returning back to the village."

As per the Indian Constitution, every citizen has the freedom to travel and settle in any part of the country, and choose his occupation or employment. But this freedom loses its meaning when single women are forced to migrate under duress due to lack of options in one's native place.

The study shows that there is no appropriate evidence indicating that the women have come to the city as a matter of free choice, in search of a job. They were accompanied by some male or female agent, who brought them to Mumbai in exchange for some monetary gain, and not out of a sense of altruism.

d. Marital and familial status

Married	: 68%
Unmarried	: 21%
Information not available	: 11%

In another revealing picture, 47% of the married women were deserted, divorced, separated or widowed. The break-up of their situation was as follows:

Deserted	: 33%
Divorced	: 8%
Widows	: 6%

In conclusion, the family situation of these women appeared quite disturbed.

71% of the women had children who were undergoing primary or secondary education. The women were extremely concerned about the education, health and day-to-day needs of their children. Many of them made requests to the researchers to help them with regard to the present and future needs of their children.

Alongside the issue of employment, the question of shelter emerged as a major need of these women. They had no permanent shelter in the city and in the absence of a steady income source, they would be forced to leave the rental accommodation they were currently residing in.

Women from outside Mumbai came from large families. Their problems ranged from education of their younger siblings or unemployment of the parent, illness in the family, lack of source of income, unproductive land, and indebtedness. In order to help their families deal with these problems, the women had to send home some part of their earnings every month.

There are examples of the family or relatives having sold a woman to 'dalals' to deal with the financial problems mentioned above.

Though many women were found to be working in the bars due to their family responsibilities, yet some of the families were not aware of their nature of work.

Families aware of their work in bars	: 21%
Families unaware of their work in bars	: 47%
Refused to part with information	: 32%

Some of the local women from Mumbai stayed separately from their families. Their families did not know about their work in the bars. These women have informed their families that they do zariwork, or work in companies, hospitals, etc.

A few women stay with their families and work in the bars. In the families of such women, there is some handicapped family member or an unemployed husband or old parents as well as children. But here, the family members know about the nature of work done by these women. The family's expenses are totally dependent on the earnings of these women.

It was obvious from the discussion with a few women that the middleman (male) who had brought them to Mumbai with the hope of giving them jobs, were now staying with them as 'husbands'. Most of the men do not have any regular source of income, and are dependant on the earnings of the women.

Few of the women have got married to customers or male waiters. In a majority of these cases, these husbands were already legally married to some other woman and therefore, their relationship had no legal sanctity.

Majority of the women had no social or financial supports. In a situation where their families are also not in any position to provide them a secure future, they had no choice but to depend on these 'middlemen' and customers for support.

e. Income

The women working as either dancers or waiters informed that they were not paid any salary, but were dependant on tips given by customers in the bar, which varies from day-to-day and from one woman to another. This money is often shared with the bar owner as per a fixed ratio ranging from 30 to 60 percent.

In some places, they need to pay a specific fee to the bar owner for being allowed to dance in the bar. In these bars, the entire money goes to the woman.

The amount earned by the women is thus not fixed. As per the women interviewed, this amount varies from Rs.50/- to Rs. 500/- per day.

From this amount, they have to bear their expenses on house rent, food, make-up and dresses, travel, commissions to be given to the middlemen and bar owners. Women have to also face penal action or arrest by the police from time to time and sometimes pay them bribes to avoid such action.

f. Expenditure pattern

The expenses of the women can be broadly classified into work-related expenses and personal or family-related expenses.

(i) Work-related expenses:

The work-related expenses of women working in dance bars take away a high percentage of their income. These include expenses on travel, clothes, make-up and medical expenses.

Most women work in bars which are situated far away from their places of residence. Therefore, they have to spend a lot on their travel from their residence to the bar and back. Since they have to return home very late in the night, they need to hire a taxi or an auto-rickshaw. These taxis and auto-rickshaws charge them higher fares, usually two to three times the normal fare, as they are aware about the nature of the work the women do and take advantage of their situation.

~~The women have to wear attractive clothes to draw the attention of their customers. They also have to change their dress more than once during a night. Therefore, their expenditure on clothes is very high. It was given to understand that in some bars, the sellers come to the bar to sell their clothes as the women lead isolated lives and fear exposure in public. These sellers again charge them twice or thrice the selling price of the dresses than what they would have paid for the same items in shops.~~

Due to the physical and emotional stress faced in working in these bars, and tendency to eat 'outside' food, they often fall sick. As a result, they regularly spend money on doctors' fees and medicines. They prefer to go to private practitioners rather than go to municipal or government hospitals.

(ii) Personal expenses:

▪ Shelter

The data shows that 89% of the women stay in rented houses. 25% of their earnings are spent on house rent, light and water bills. Since the house owners are aware about the work done by these women, they charge twice or thrice the normal rents from them.

▪ Food

Due to the nature and timings of their work, the women work during the night and rest during the day. Hence, they prefer to order food from eateries and restaurants, rather than cook food at home. This is obviously more expensive than cooking food at home.

The women who cook food at home have reported paying more to the grocer for purchase of essentials. Due to the poor social contacts with the outside world, they tend to buy things from shop-keepers without any complaint or opposition.

▪ Children and family

Since the responsibility of the family is on these women, they have to bear the expenses of their children and parents. They often send money home. This money is mainly spent on the daily expenses of the family, children's education, health or any emergencies.

▪ Loans

Many a time, the women have to take loans to manage both their work-related and family expenses. It was informed by many women that in such situations, they have to take the help of people within their sector such as a customer, boyfriend, bar owner, 'middleman', peer or a 'mana-hua' brother, uncle or aunt. 85% of the women said that they took loans from the bar owners. To repay this amount, the woman has to put in more hours of work in the bar and this increases their dependence on this sector.

▪ Savings

Majority of the women informed that due to the above mentioned reasons, they were unable to save any money. It was observed that most of the earnings of the women were spent on the demands of the profession. Due to the high level of work-related and family expenses, there is little left of their earnings. As a result, it was seen that majority of them were in debt. Further, since the debt has been taken from persons related to the same sector, their dependence on this work further increases.

Reactions of the women about the ban on dance bars

The women got to know about the government's decision to ban dance bars through the bar owners, friends and media reports.

When women were asked the question – what after the ban was imposed, almost all women felt that the government should come forward and address the issue of alternative employment.

Following are some of their reactions to the ban:

“Since the government feels that dancing in bars is immoral and has taken a decision to ban them, there is an urgent need for a source of livelihood for us”

“If the bars close down, then living in rented houses will no longer be possible for us. Since there is no other alternative available, we will become shelterless and will be on the streets. Therefore, the present option of working in bars remains the only hope”.

“This work is bad. People in the society do not look upon this work as respectable. We are also looked down upon. But the question is, whom do we ask for work?”.

“Since we do not have any experience of other work, we do not have/feel the confidence to working elsewhere”.

“Due to lack of educational qualifications, we do not have any faith of getting some other job. Therefore, the bars should not be banned”.

“If the bars close down, then the question of livelihood/employment will arise leading to starvation”.

“The education of the children will remain incomplete”.

“How will we meet the needs of our old parents, medical expenses, food and day-to-day expenses of our children?”

“There is no guarantee that we will be able to return back home respectfully and lead a happy life thereafter”.

“There is a desire to get out of this profession, but then the question arises - what do we do after that?”.

The percentage break-up of their reactions are:

Bars should be closed down	: 33%
Bars should not be closed down	: 25%
No reactions	: 42%

The question of immediate shelter and alternative income source is uppermost in the minds of the women. As mentioned earlier, 89% of the women live in rented houses. The question of immediate shelter is real for these women. As long as they were working in the bars, the issue of payment of rent was taken care of through the earnings made by working in the bars. Many women had continued working in bars as this was a major source for provision of shelter in a city like Mumbai.

From the reactions of the women, it can be said that majority of them are not satisfy with working in the bars. They would rather take up another job if alternate sources of income are presented before them.

Responses to alternative sources of income

This question evoked very emotional and heated responses from the women. The emotions were a mixture of anxiety, despondence, anger and helplessness. However, women did respond differently to the question, even though their responses were made in a negative frame of mind.

Following are the range of responses of women to the issue of alternative sources of income after the ban is imposed:

Some of the women felt that since the government had decided to ban dance bars, it should provide employment options for them.

Women from the villages who were brought to Mumbai with the lure of a job or false promises, said that they would like to go back to their villages but were worried about their acceptance back home and the issue of income source in their areas.

Women who were engaged in zari-work, rolling beedis, nursing, running a grocery shop, domestic work, farming, etc. before coming to work in the bars, said they would try to go back to their earlier work.

Women who did not have any specific marketable skills said they would have to explore whatever options that come before them.

When asked the question – whether they would participate in any plans for immediate relief or scheme to deal with their situation, 93% of the women showed their mental preparedness for the same.

During the course of the study, it was found that 98% of the women were not aware of the government schemes for women.

But 92% of the women expressed their readiness to take benefit of the various government schemes for the stabilization of their family's situation. Some of them expressed a hope that the government would come forward to help them find alternative sources.

Only 22% of the women felt they could undergo some vocational training to help them find an alternate source of income. They were doubtful about how much time would they be able to spare for undergoing such vocational training, and whether they would be able to face the competition in the job market.

On the other hand, women who were aware of the importance of such vocational training, expressed an urgent need to undergo or for provision of such trainings.

III. FINDINGS

Given the constraints of the short duration and the timing of the data collection process, an attempt has been made to keenly analyse the observations and facts emerging from the study. The study was conducted after the decision of the ban was taken, in the months of April and May, 2005. During the course of the study, we were able to contact around one hundred girls/women. Though the actual number of interview schedules filled was seventy-two, it is important to note that there were many informal discussions held with the respondents. Gaps in information were bolstered by further discussions with key informants either within Prayas or known to Prayas. The findings and suggestions of the study are based on the information gathered through the interview schedules, informal discussions with the girls/women and observations made by the key informants.

Following are the observations and findings based on the study conducted by Prayas:

1. The economic condition of the families from which the women respondents came was found to be very weak. The proportion of married women was found to be more, out of which most women were found to be deserted by their husbands, divorced/separated/widowed i.e. single women with family responsibilities, specially children. The main reason of their continuance as dancers or waiters in bars is to fend for themselves and their family responsibilities. This implies that the socio-economic support base of these women is extremely weak.
2. The percentage of women between eighteen to thirty years in dance bars was found to eighty seven percent. The percentage of minors was found to be six percent. However, the steady flow of large number of minor girls rescued from beer bars found in the government-run Special Rehabilitation Home at Deonar, indicates that the actual percentage of minors found in dance bars could be much higher than what the study shows.
3. The study did not find any evidence that professional training was an essential requisite for becoming dancers in dance bars. This is further proved by the fact that the percentage of women respondents coming from unskilled and poor educational or illiterate backgrounds was very high. It would be fallacious to assume that these women, coming from poor and marginalized sections of society and who may have chosen to work in dance bars, are making a positive choice. It would be safe to conclude that these women are working in this sector out of a lack of positive or better options rather than as acts of free and positive choice.
4. Most women respondents were found to be lacking safe and reasonable shelter options, leading to an increasing need to earn more to arrange for their shelter in whatever way possible and consequently, an increasing dependence on this sector.
5. Very few women were found to be living in their 'own' houses. Eighty-nine percent of them were living in rental accommodation with other such women on 'sharing' basis. They are compelled to live separately from their families and this isolates them from the familial support and environment.
6. Most women respondents were found to be living in a state of mental and emotional insecurity and a feeling of being 'alone'. They were living under constant fear of exposure about the nature of their income source, especially vis-à-vis their

neighbours. As a result, there was a conscious attempt on the part of the women to keep their 'real' or original identity a closely guarded secret. Their only source of support came from their peers in this sector, further isolating them from social processes. This made it difficult for these women to get out of this occupation, even if they desired to get out, and thus a vicious cycle had got formed in their lives.

7. It was found that working in dance bars was not socially acceptable. This was the reason why most women did not reveal the place or nature of their 'work' to their families, specially in the initial stages. It was also found that many families, specially those coming from very poor or marginalised situations, may have indirectly encouraged these women to take to dancing or waiting in dance bars, through 'middlemen', to take care of the overall economic situation of the family. This was evidenced by the observation that there seemed to have been exchange of money between the family and the 'middlemen' in the process of 'recruitment'.
8. Most women respondents were found to have been 'brought' to 'work' in dance bars through 'middlemen'. The role of these 'middlemen' was found to be not without suspicion. Since the 'middlemen' play the role of 'job-providers', the women were found to be living under their obligation. These 'middlemen' were found to be playing a deciding role on issues such as selection of the bar where the woman will 'work' and her 'work' timings. These 'middlemen' were found to have a share in the earnings made by the women.
9. It can be said that the basic elements of human trafficking are present in this entire process i.e. luring persons in vulnerable situations to choose income options about which prior knowledge was not available, trying to influence or control the process whereby continuing in the sector becomes the only option and commercial exploitation of persons living in vulnerable situation and coming from poor and marginalized sections. This is violative of Article 23 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits all forms of human trafficking and *begar* and other similar forms of forced labour. The processes involved also fit in the definition of human trafficking as defined by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, 2000.
10. The earnings of the women respondents was found to be 'shared' or taken away or used up by a variety of sources/persons such as on exorbitant rents charged by landlords*, more than normal fares charged by auto-rickshaw or taxi drivers, expenses on their make-up and dresses, food ordered from restaurants rather than home-cooked food, medical expenses from private practitioners rather than the public health system, and most importantly, the share given to bar owners and 'middlemen'. This leads to the conclusion that while, on the face of it, the earning level of the women may seem to be high, the equally high level of expenses, based on their economic exploitation from almost all sources, annuls this advantage.

* (There are certain areas where women from dance bars find rental accommodation. The landlords of these houses are aware of the nature of work being done by these women and take advantage of their situation by charging exorbitant rents from them)

11. The environment of the dance bars was found to have negative impact on their physical and mental health as well as increases their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. The bars are situated in narrow alleys and corners, they are usually 'closed' and stuffy places, there is air-conditioning mixed with the heavy amount of passive smoking, the long working hours where they have to keep dancing or standing – all this lead to a negative impact on their health status.
12. It was found that the women respondents did not find any dignity in this work. This is borne out by the fact that 47% of women did not reveal their 'work' to family members and 'outsiders'. They are often exposed to the sexual overtures of 'overenthusiastic' customers, and are aware of their vulnerability to get exploited. This is in fact violative of Article 51A (e) of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits the continuance of practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
13. It was found that the women respondents did not have any knowledge about the existence of government schemes for training or employment for weaker sections such as women, children, senior citizens, SC/STs, OBCs, etc. As a result, they had not tried to access any of these schemes, even though a majority of these women and their families may, in fact, be eligible under these government schemes. They came from families whereby they were isolated from community processes such as the implementation of programmes by the gram panchayats, mahila mandals, self-help groups, etc.
14. Ninety-two percent of the women respondents were ready to take the benefit of government schemes for employment, education of their children, shelter, etc. if made accessible to them. Keeping in mind the isolated situation of these women, the government authorities will have to make suitable arrangements to facilitate the process of accessing schemes by these women.
15. Thirty-three percent of the women respondents were, in fact, supportive of the decision to ban dance bars, even through their livelihood presently depended on this option. This was because they found this income option derogatory to their dignity, and leading to social exclusion and making them vulnerable to sexual exploitation. They would prefer to opt out of this sector if the State took suitable steps to help them find sustainable and positive income options.
16. The women respondents were found to be extremely worried about the future, in the wake of the ban, as their families were dependent on their income. They were particularly worried about their shelter, alternate employment (in the light of the fact that they came from poor educational and skill backgrounds), and the health and educational needs of their children.
17. In the post-ban situation, the women respondents were generally despondent and anxious about their future. In a situation where they felt there was little hope, they were of the opinion that they would rather go back to their native places, or to their earlier employment (such as domestic work, agricultural labour, bidi work, zari work, etc.), or try to find some new option for survival.

18. In conclusion, the study has shown that most women did not know the nature of their employment at the time of getting into dance bars for work, and they were brought into this work through 'middlemen'. The basic elements of trafficking were found to be present in the process of entry, though it may not have been in its overt form. Having come here and seeing no other options, they had no choice but to continue in this sector. Most of their earnings were either used up or taken away by work-related or family-related expenses with hardly any scope for savings. They remained socially isolated and dependant on people within the sector – 'middlemen' bar owners, customers, peers, etc. leaving little scope for getting out of this work. In the absence of alternative skills and social supports, their situation in the post-ban situation was very vulnerable. The State and civil society needs come forward to assist this group through existing schemes, creation of income generation avenues and provide temporary shelter to deal with their situation.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The exploitative role of 'middlemen' in the entire process from entry to continuance of women in dance bars indicates that elements of human trafficking are found present here. In this context, **criminal action and proceedings under the existing legal framework (ITPA, JJ Act, IPC and other local and special laws) should be initiated and carried out in a systematic manner against these 'middlemen'** to stop the exploitation of women. Such action should be taken in cooperation and coordination with the police of other states as these 'middlemen' may now become more active in other States where no prohibitive action has been yet taken against such bars.
2. The lack of safe shelter options could lead to physical, sexual or emotional exploitation of women in marginalized or vulnerable situations. The State should **make necessary arrangements for the creation of temporary and safe 'night shelters'** to take care of the immediate need for shelter of any women who may be rendered shelterless in the given situation. This recommendation already finds mention in the State Policy for Women, 2000 for the category of women in distress situations.
3. The women found in beer bars should be seen as victims of an exploitative and vulnerable environment. It must be borne in mind that these are women coming from poverty and difficult situations and are in this work due to lack of suitable options. They should not be seen as offenders deserving criminal action. **Every women found in such premises during raids conducted by the police should be viewed as a victim, with empathy, and offered psycho-social and legal counselling and immediate temporary shelter and social support.** Further, care should be taken by the police to find out if there are women or minor girls during raids that are in need of rescue and post-rescue support.
4. To address the psycho-social and economic needs of women found in dance bars, the State should make attempts to **involve willing and recognized voluntary organisations**, with a special focus on their rehabilitation and creation of livelihood or income-generation options.
5. In keeping with the concept of a Welfare State, the State should make concerted attempts to link these women with the mainstream development goals and processes. This can be done by **linking these women with existing government schemes for women and weaker sections** for their training, livelihood, shelter, health, children's education, etc.
6. Women coming from socially isolated situations such as those who are currently the subjects of this study would not be easily able to access available government schemes on their own. They will have to be helped to access these schemes by way of an active 'reaching-out' process initiated by the State. This 'reaching-out' process should include giving guidance and information about the schemes, help with filling up the forms, and helping with making basic requisite documents such as proof of

residence, income proof, age proof, caste certificate, etc. Wherever all the requisite documents are not present, they may be waived off in view of the socially vulnerable situation of these women. The women may have to be further helped by way of keeping follow-up with the departments concerned till the benefit is reached to the women. In order to achieve this, it is suggested that **Facilitation Centres may be created at the district or taluka/ward levels** for this purpose. The support of willing NGOs may be taken in the creation and running of these Facilitation Centres.

7. The State should immediately start **training and income generation centres for the women**, in collaboration with existing agencies such as the Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal, willing NGOs working for women and bodies such as the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Indian Merchants Chamber (Ladies Wing), FICCI, etc.
8. **Any voluntary organisation coming forward to help the women by way of training, income generation or temporary shelter should be given all possible support by the State by way of physical infrastructure and financial support.**

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1) Name (optional):

2) Age:

3) Education:

4) Locality of residence:

5) Native place:

6) Residing in a rented house/own house? If rented, how much rent do you pay monthly?

7) Caste:

8) Marital status:

9) Family Composition:

Residing with the respondent in Mumbai:		
Relation /Age	Education/Occupation	Income

Residing in the native place:		
Relation/Age	Education/Occupation	Income

10) What documents do you possess (in Mumbai and in her native place)-
caste/birth/ration card/voting card/educational documents/any other

11) Residing in Mumbai since how many years:

12) Have you been involved in any other work before this?

13) Which area is the bar located?

14) What work are you involved in (dancer/waitress/any other)?

15) Does your family know about your work?

16) What are your earnings – daily/monthly?

17) What are your monthly expenses

Food/rations	
House rent	
Electricity/maintenance charges	
Medical expenses	
Money sent home	
Children's expenses	
Legal Aid	
Loan repayment, if any	
Travel to and fro to the workplace	
Any habits	
Other Expenses	

18) What are your savings –

Cash-bank accounts/fixed deposits/chit funds/other investments

Kind-jewellery/property

19) What are your present responsibilities?

20) What will you do if the ban is implemented? What are your plans?

21) Who would you go for support (for e.g. NGOs, neighbours, friends, community, bar owners, Mahila Mandals, customer, political parties, etc.) for the following –

Financial help/loans -

Shelter -

Rations

Health –

Education of children –

Job –

Emotional support –

22) If the ban is implemented what kind of supports do you need?

23) Do you wish to undergo any educational or vocational training?

24) What kind of support would your family require?

25) Are you aware of any government schemes for women in distress?

- 26) Have you tried to make use of any government schemes in the past? Yes/No. (specify which scheme)
- 27) If yes, then what was the outcome of your efforts?
- 28) Is she interested in making use of the government schemes in future?
- 29) Where are the bars located in Mumbai?
- 30) Can you refer us to any other girls?
- 31) How much responsibility can you take to improve your situation?
- 32) Do you think that the Government should take some responsibility? In which areas?
- 33) Any other information? _____

**Some Important Schemes of
Central/State Government**

Shelter :

No.	Name of the Scheme	Contact
1.	Night Shelters for Women	DWCD
2.	Economic Assistance for Housing to Women in Distress	DWCD
3.	Rural Housing Scheme	Dept. of Rural Development
4.	Walmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana	MHADA
5.	Housing Scheme for Low Income Group	MHADA
6.	Indira Awas Yojana	Dept. of Rural Development
7.	Shishu Gruh Scheme	DWCD

Training :

No.	Name of the Scheme	Contact
1.	Savitribai Phule Multipurpose Centre	DWCD
2.	Subsidy for Vocational Training for Mahila Mandal/NGOs	DWCD
3.	Vocational Training for Women	Dept. of Higher & Technical Education
4.	Economic Assistance for Vocational Training to Girls from Poor Class.	DWCD

Employment and Self Employment :

No.	Name of the Scheme	Contact
1.	Kamdhenu Scheme	DWCD
2.	Sampurna Gramin Rojgar Yojana	Dept. of Rural Development
3.	Prime Minister Gramodaya Scheme	DWCD
4.	Mahila Uddyam Nidhi	MSFC
5.	Swarna Jayanti Gram Swayamrojgar Yojana	Dept. of Rural Development
6.	Swarna Jayanti Shahari Swayamrojgar Yojana	Dept. of Rural Development

Children's Education :

No.	Name of the Scheme	Contact
1.	Rajiv Gandhi Vidyarthi Suraksha Yojana	Dept. of Education
2.	Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme for Free Travel	Dept. of Education
3.	Savitribai Phule Kalyan Yojna	Dept. of family welfare & health
4.	Free Education 1 st to 12 th Std.	Dept. of Education
5.	Govt. Hostels for Students	Dept. of social justice
6.	Scholarship Scheme	Dept. of social justice

Children's Health :

No.	Name of the Scheme	Contact
1.	Integrated child welfare scheme	DWCD
2.	Navsanjeevan scheme	DWCD
3.	Crèche/Balwadi for Children of Poor Women	DWCD
4.	Scheme for Providing Artificial Limps for Handicapped Children	DWCD
5.	National Fund for Children	DWCD