

## Home at Last...

Every year, approximately 50,000 girls and women are trafficked to India across Bangladesh's western border. In India, they are forced to labour, sold into prostitution, or trafficked out to be exploited and abused in another country. Despite a common understanding of the problem, efforts to eradicate trafficking and repatriate victims of modern slavery are failing thousands of women and girls. When survivors return to Bangladesh, they remain susceptible to re-trafficking. They are often excluded by their communities or burdened with a social stigma that hinders recovery and reintegration efforts. These challenges, combined with a lack of employment and educational opportunities, leave survivors vulnerable to further exploitation.

Ruhi was rescued from commercial sexual exploitation in the year 2015 by CCB along with Justice and Care (Now Vihaan). The day she was rescued Ruhi was so scared that she kept shivering and could not speak a word. Initially Ruhi was very scared and would not tell the social workers that she belongs from Bangladesh but after a lot of effort she shared her story. Her father left Ruhi and her mother when she was very young. Later on her mother remarried and had a son from the second husband. There was constant conflict in the family as her step father was alcoholic and abusive. He repeatedly tried to abuse Ruhi but her mother refused to take a stand.

In this situation, Ruhi met Sheetal who was her neighbour and she offered her job in a garment factory with good pay. She agreed and one night she escaped without telling her family with Sheetal. She was made to cross the border illegally and brought to Bangalore via Kolkata. It is only when Ruhi came to Bangalore she got to know that she was brought to be forced into flesh trade. Ruhi's mother filed an FIR under the human trafficking Act but Sheetal forced her to call and tell her mother that she is married in India and is not willing to contact her family.

Ruhi was in a government shelter home for two years and then was shifted to Bangalore as the accused kept visiting the shelter home and tried all means to take her custody. The strong network with CWC and the regular follow ups made a huge difference in Ruhi's case. Ruhi went through NIOS classes. But she couldn't appear for exams as she had no personal documents.

In the later years in Bangalore she developed a desire to go back to her native country Bangladesh. After constant effort, the Judge passed the order in favour of Ruhi to be repatriated to Bangladesh. So with the support of BDHC, FRRO, IB office, Shelter home, BSF Ruhi was repatriated back to Bangladesh by the Vihaan team on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022. It was wonderful to see her go back to her home country with lots of development both emotionally, personally and socially. We wish to see her grow to the heights by achieving her dreams in life.



Ruhi returned to her home country with the missed feelings of happiness and sadness. She was happy that she is going to meet her family. Sadness is that she had to leave back all those who have come into her life from the time of her rescue. She feels proud that she was able to learn a lot like tailoring, embroidering, beautician and baking. She feels anxious as well thinking of her future back home. She is very grateful to all the staffs of Vihaan and Swakshatra home for all the efforts and supports render to her to be free from the bondages.