

## **Libraries for Sex Workers in Bangladesh: A new Approach for Changing Lives\***

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**Abstract:** *In Bangladesh Sex Workers (SWs) and their children are one of the most vulnerable and socially marginalised groups. There are very few organizations in Bangladesh who are serving for them to change their lives. Many GOs/NGOs are working just for harm reduction only. Concern Worldwide (one of the Irish-based International Organizations) has recently implemented a project namely “Jibon Paribortone Library” means “Library for Changing Lives” to support 1,000 sex workers through dedicated brothels-based libraries provided them with the opportunity to make their own choices for a better future. The study realizes that as of today in Bangladesh the marginalised communities do not have access to a traditional library. This damages educational outcomes for many (Yunus, 2009). The study tries to extricate the clue why as a citizen of Bangladesh sex workers are much neglected? It also thinks that the marginalized people are one of the integral parts of our society and they have a positive role as a potential economic force of the country, so why not they would be taken into account as a citizen of Bangladesh for our economic development? The study will suggest some solutions to change their professions by showing them the way of involving with different IGAs (Income Generating Activities). The main aim of the study is to explain how a brothel-based digital library creates awareness and changes the attitude of the marginalised people and improves the quality of life of the sex workers and their children in a sustainable way through training and learning. The author was appointed as Library Consultant of the project. The study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. It was an amazing experience that based on the demand of the Sex workers; the author had to collect and prepare the digital resources and different audio-visual aids and organise live skills training. After that he had to try for involving sex-workers with different IGAs (Income Generating Activities) by maintaining liaison with other organizations, community people, civil society people, policy makers and so on. He also had to work hard on changing public attitude as well. To motivate sex workers for achieving social skills on different micro-professions (like garments work, tailoring, sewing hand fabrics, maid-labour, making clay stuffs, parlouring, making hand sweater, beautician, hair cutting, cooperatives, etc.) short video documentaries have been made and presented on different IGAs. As a result of skill training through digital libraries, 200 SWs fully changed their profession to*

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*tailoring, beauty parlour and bag making and 300 SWs have increased their sources of income from other trades. Thus brothel-based digital libraries have turned into integral part in the lives of the sex workers. The basic aim of the paper is to share the ideas on how a considerable number of sex-workers have been involved with different IGAs, how their children have been admitted in government and public schools during the last couple of years by the help of the brothel-based digital library services.*

**Keywords:** Brothel-based Libraries; Community Digital Libraries; Marginalized People; Disadvantaged People; Sex Workers

### **Background of the Study**

There are more than 150,000 sex workers in Bangladesh based either in brothels scattered throughout the country, or “floating” in major urban centres (BBS, 2009). Culturally conservative societal attitudes result in extremely negative perceptions regarding sex work. Sex workers are caught in a vicious cycle, rejected by their families and society, subjected to various forms of violence and exploitation, and subject to arrest and indefinite detention in government-run Vagrant Homes. They and their children are denied access to basic services such as health care and education, and are often denied the right to a proper burial, to wear shoes in public, or to use certain shops. They generally have limited control over their own finances and live in conditions of poverty, with much of their earnings handed over to landlords, brothel cashiers, local criminals (*mastaans*), pimps, or partners (*babus*). Most brothels are built on government-owned land. Floating sex workers are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, and often have no fixed place to live. The study has excluded the floating sex-workers and surveyed and intervened the project only on those sex-workers who lives in licensed brothel. Brothels in Bangladesh, which are usually located in urban slums, are large complexes of small rooms, where up to 1,000 SWs and their children live and work. This concept creates the opportunity to establish brothel based community digital libraries from where they will get information about their basic rights and their children would be encouraged to go to school. The project sought to empower sex workers and their children to learn and exercise their basic rights and gain access to services, in order to improve their quality of life in a sustainable way. As a result of skill training through brothel-based digital libraries the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Improved Access to Services,
- Increased awareness among sex workers regarding their basic rights and expanded life choices
- Sex worker organisations developed and strengthened
- Increased Community Participation and Societal Understanding

### **Description of the Study**

Traditional approach always brings as usual result in the context of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh which is not satisfactory. Keeping it in mind, CWW (CONCERN

WORLDWIDE) thought to introduce a brothel-based community digital library approach by breaking the tradition. In poverty alleviation, they have more than 40 years' experiences. It was a 2-year project (March 2007-February 2009) to address the needs of sex-workers of the country. The study has discussed two brothels on 1, 000 beneficiaries which located at Dhaka and Faridpur district. The libraries were established in both locations by the project. Both were two-storied building on abandoned property of the Government used as vagrant homes for the sex-workers. In each homes, there was one recreational room (hall room- a large room located at the ground floor isolated from the living room) where at the day time, most of the children's of the sex-workers met for watching TV. Children, women and sometimes customers were used to visiting the library for pleasure if they get any chance to come. But sex-workers were always scared about their Sardarni (the female leader of the Sex-workers who control their schedule and force to sale sex with customers) as she always forces them to sale sex with customer. It has been observed that except sleeping time, most of the children preferred to stay in the recreation room for a long time. They were very much interested in watching Hindi movie, action film, Bengali action movie, etc., rather than others games and going to school. The project decided to utilize the hall room as a library. This paper will share how the library acted as a training centre, by providing internal growth activities and also as a learning institute by providing legal support, creating awareness of their rights, educating about sexually transmitted diseases and allowing them to access resources and obtain legal support. Thus brothel-based digital libraries have turned into integral part in the lives of the sex workers in Bangladesh.

### **Literature Review**

Commission on AIDS in the Pacific (2009), in their report structured around three main themes. The first theme examines the driving factors which cause vulnerability, social exclusion and involvement in sex work. The second theme looks at how processes of exclusion affect the lives of sex workers and considers the different levels of social exclusion experienced by certain groups of sex workers. Finally, the third theme explores the barriers which prevent greater social inclusion and the stabilization of sex workers' lives. In a critical Review Paper published from Boston University, OVC-CARE Project, the project consultant Jennifer Beard revealed that Injection drug users and female sex workers are often categorized as two of the populations most at risk for becoming infected with HIV in countries with concentrated epidemics. UNFPA (2011) in its report on Building partnerships on HIV and sex work said that in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, adult sex work is not illegal if it is conducted privately, by single workers and voluntarily. In India the Supreme Court has acknowledged that sex workers have the right to choose to work in the sex trade and it is legal to engage in sex work in private. However, soliciting in public is illegal, and trafficking and public order offences are enforced against sex workers. In Sri Lanka there is no specific offence for sex work, but the Vagrants Ordinance criminalizes soliciting in public and brothels are illegal. In

Pakistan all extra-marital sex is illegal. In all South Asian countries, sex workers are more frequently prosecuted than clients of sex workers or others involved in the sex industry. Human Rights Watch (2003), has written a research report entitled “Ravaging the Vulnerable: Abuses Against Persons at High Risk of HIV Infection in Bangladesh, describes that laws, policies and practices restrict the access of sex workers to identity documents, which in turn restrict property and inheritance rights, freedom of movement and access to education, health care, housing and banking. Amanda Jayasuriya published one feature entitled “Libraries: will they fade into oblivion?” in the International Daily Mirror (06 October 2016 issue). In his feature he cited Nasiruudin’s research article “Beyond providing information: Transforming lives”. He claimed that the universal image of the library had been simply narrowed down to the task of providing information. Dr. Nasiruddin focused on developing the lives of the library users in the environment. By initiating a project known as ‘Library project: Libraries for changing lives’ the team envisioned promoting better occupations for the thousands of homeless Bangladeshis who sleep daily on the pavements. The main target of the ‘socially marginalized sector’ included the abundant community of sex-workers in Bangladesh. Here the sex-workers who were initially reluctant to communicate, later shared their stories of abuse. A large majority of them recounted their introduction to the field and how they continued only for their survival and never due to any preference of the job. Once the sex-workers got more comfortable to the surroundings, the project launched programmes which helped these sex-workers to realise their internal potentials.

### **Hypothesis**

Sex workers in Bangladesh are trapped in a vicious cycle, rejected by their families and society, denied access to basic services and subjected to varied forms of discrimination and stigmatisation while their children are treated as social outcasts. Before launching the library project, the study assessed relevant early projects data of some NGOs which were operated for changing lives of the sex workers in brothel. But it found no major changes because traditional approach always brings as usual result in changing the lives of the marginalized people. The study realised that they have a very potential role in country’s economy and keeping them far behind from the mainstreaming, it is really tough to achieve sustainable economic development. During the period of developing concept note for changing lives of the sex workers, the research team have observed that except sleeping time, most of the sex workers children preferred to stay in the recreation room (hall room) for a long time. They were very much interested in watching Hindi movie, action film, Bengali action movie, etc., rather than others games and going to school. It was the main cause to utilize the hall room as a library from where they will get the necessary learning and training on selective dissemination of information services for changing their attitude, aptitude and even behavioral changes to cope with the society. Keeping it in mind, the study thought to introduce a brothel-based community digital library approach by breaking the tradition.

## Steps Towards Digital Library

### Explore the Internal Potentiality

With a view to change the lives of the sex-workers through the brothel-based community digital library, it was the challenge to the author to introduce the research methodology by which sex-workers internal potentiality can be explored because it was the first task for the author to achieve project objective. The author formed different groups based on their age and organized workshop where they felt very comfortable to speak about themselves. At the beginning of the project, it was needed to introduce the project with the sex-workers. The study has applied appreciative inquiry method (AI) for hearing their voice in the form of a story and consulted several times with project personnel's, community people, and sex-workers about the service pattern which helped them to change their lives. In their story, they explained about their identity, level of education, reasons for existing situation, personal liking, unlinking, interest of works, skills, dream, ambition, future plan, etc. Most of the sex-workers expressed that getting education for their children is very important. As they have already spent their life within brothels and kept themselves scatted from the society, so in their life they have no any ambition, but they felt that education for their children can change the lives of their next generation. They also expressed that if they get any alternative works in the society, they would not stay in brothel for a second. Just for surviving per sex-worker need US\$ 5 per day on an average and they can earn it as each day they must have intercourse with four or five different men, for the price of around 100 taka, or US\$ 1.5, a time. And for most of the girls here, there is no monetary gain whatsoever: because most of the inmates (and it is, in many ways, like a prison) at Faridpur brothel or bonded sex workers, sold by their families to a *Sordarni* in return for two or three years in which she, the brothel mastans, can pocket all their earnings. Asha (one of the sex-workers in Faridpur brothel) means hope but she isn't very hopeful for her own future. "I don't think I'll ever get married or have children," she says. "No one will marry me. If they did they'd only keep me for two or three days, and then they'd sell me back." She is more streetwise than some of the other girls here, many of whom share a tragic dream that one day a knight in shining armour will arrive, to carry them off; then they will marry him, have his babies and love him forever. (Some of the girls here have thought they had found their knight; the many babies, conceived by girls who allowed men they thought would marry them in order to have condom-free sex, bear witness to that). "We wish to live from hand-to-mouth and want to change the profession and want to live like other people in the society", said another sex-worker Junu. When asked about the future plan, most of them did not have any. The exceptions were who have children. They are very much interested to send their children for schooling like others. Based on the story, the author has analyzed their dream with a view to explore their potentiality. By applying AI (appreciative Inquiry) method and consultation techniques, their needs have been assessed that helped to explore the sex-workers internal potentiality which will lead them for changing lives. From AI & Consultation techniques, their needs have been assessed that helped to prepare the beneficiary profile. Table 1 & 2 reflects the data based on their age and early activities for getting money.

**Table-1: Percentage distribution of the enlisted members in the library by gender and age group**

Age group	Dhaka Brothel (N=250)	Faridpur Brothel (N1=250)	Not responded	Overall (N=500)	%
15-25 yrs old	200	240	60	440	88%
26-35 yrs old	150	180	70	330	66%
36-45 yrs old	70	100	120	170	34%
46-55 yrs old	68	80	200	148	29.5%
55+ yrs old	30	60	200	90	18%

**Choice of Micro Professions**

Based on the statement of the sex-workers, plans have been developed in search of alternative livelihoods. Special emphasis has been given on best-suited live-skills training and selective dissemination of information (SDI) services for changing behavior and attitude. Service standards to involve all the sex-workers were also the priority task to the author. For attracting teenage sex-workers on different professions, some motivating lessons have been shared through videos and other AVMs (audio-visual materials) like TV, radio, illustrative materials, national text books, graphics, charts, cartoons, posters, playing equipment, etc. These have boosted up them. The most of the teenage sex-workers have preferred 17 small professions and felt confident to involve themselves for chaining lives. But they eagerly desired practical training and necessary micro-credit to start the business/works from the project. These professions were as follows: garments works, tailoring, sewing hand fabrics, working as a cleaner in city corporation, working in day care centre, sales representative, cooking food, making handcrafts, maid-labour, making clay stuffs, parlouring, making hand sweater, hair cutting, cooperatives, product promoter and maid servant. To stimulate the children, some educational videos namely Sisimpur (one of the popular Bengali cartoon for children) and schooling of river erosion affected children and pavement dwellers children, etc. were presented. These also inspired the children to go to school. They become interested to visit the library frequently for gathering knowledge. Thus, the need-based live-skills training and learning resources have been developed and some were gathered prepared for the project with a view to build the capacity on the aforesaid micro-professions and create interest among their children to go to school.

**Table-2: Percentage distribution of the enlisted members in library by their choice of future profession for earning money**

Choice of profession for earning money	Dhaka rothel (N=200)	Faridpur Brothel (N1=300)	Overall (N=500)	%
Garments workers	180	230	410	82
sewing hand fabrics	70	90	160	32
tailoring	150	200	350	70
working as a cleaner in city	120	50	170	34

Choice of profession for earning money	Dhaka rothel (N=200)	Faridpur Brothel (N1=300)	Overall (N=500)	%
corporation				
working in day care centre	20	10	30	6
sales representative	0	0	0	0
cooking food	130	180	310	62
making handcrafts	60	75	135	27
maid-labour	60	100	160	32
making clay stuffs	0	0	0	0
parlouring,	110	170	280	56
making hand sweater	0	0	0	0
hair cutting	25	50	75	15
cooperatives	0	0	0	0
product promoter and	0	0	0	0
maid servant	30	80	110	22

### Develop Digital Collections

It was full of audio-visual materials which prime motto is to create awareness among the sex-workers for changing lives through counselling and encouraging them for involving with different IGAs. All the audio and video documentaries have been prepared by the research team incorporating suggestions and opinions of the psychologist, doctors, religious leaders, elites of the civil society, community experts, legal experts and so on about the basic rights and encourage them for changing professions. The service pattern of this library was different than traditional one. Based on the demand of the target population, its collection was also different and extra ordinary. Most of the services provided here through AVMs. Some are through pictorial learning materials using illustrative reading materials for easy understanding of the beneficiaries. Service provided through AVMs are very effective than books and other printed materials. Keeping this in mind, the author was interested to start mind-mapping on writing script and preparing short video documentaries for involving them with different IGAs (Income Generating Activities). The language used as subtitles in these documentaries was in Bengali (Mother Language). Therefore, it was possible even for illiterate sex-workers to understand the videos very easily. The videos were edited by Sound and Vision (a professional Videographer) as there was a service contract with them. The finance and the technical support of making short documentaries were provided by the project whereas the research team (the author) were mainly responsible to research on digital resource development. Thus, the brothel based community library became accessible and attractive to all sex-workers and their children as well with its digital collections. Realizing their level of education, the author have adopted suitable approach to get the sex-workers connected with the digital library that included formal training through workshop, group meeting,

practical demonstration of IGAs, short tour (just bring them out from the brothel for introducing and coping with the community and the community people), cultural events, religious festival, picnic, spot visit, inspirational activities like indoor games competition, e.g., ludu, daba, keram, playing cards, etc., outdoor competition for their children, e.g., football match, cricket match etc. For example- On 17 March 2008, during the St. Patrick's Day (Irish National Day) Concern Worldwide (CWW) with its brothel based Community Digital Library project in Bangladesh organised a charity cricket match between the sex-workers children and the Irish Cricket Team where the Irish players presented cricket equipment to them as a gesture of solidarity during a visit to Bangladesh. The presentation of the equipment to the children of sex-workers is a fitting gesture that reflects the importance of equal opportunity in life-the right of all children. These children are heavily discriminated against in Bangladesh but CWW helps them access education and other social services through its library project. As library consultant, the author was the organiser of this event which covered by most of the national and international electronic and prints Medias (<http://www.cricketeurope4.net/>).

The video documentary of this event was a good collection which preserves in the library as a digital reference resources. It is still encouraging sex-workers and their children to go ahead coping with the present society. It stimulates the children for going school. Frequently, library has been showing this video through its multimedia projector.

Besides the inspirational activities, author has developed different training e-Resources in local language and through CD-ROMs, the services were displayed. Some training modules have been revised for providing life skills training complemented by psychosocial support in reviewing existing life skills modules and adapted these to the specific context and needs of the sex-workers. Project people have also been trained up in these revised modules. These modules focused on enabling children to be self-responsible in ways that result in positive relationships with respect for others. The library project has helped children to develop positive assertiveness skills to protect themselves from drugs, violence, harassment, and other threats. Another module has been developed specifically on HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) as sex-workers were generally more exposed to the risk of becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. As another form of psychosocial support, the library project has piloted legal-aid assistance for those sex-workers who wanted to pursue their rights through the courts. This focused primarily on women's rights associated with crimes that have been committed against them, such as rape and physical abuse. Here, it is needed to mention that due to aforesaid reasons, these collections were not look like the traditional ones.

### **Provide Proactive Information Services**

During Focus Group Discussion (FGD with the teenage sex-workers (age level=10-18), the study was experienced with a new horror which a drug is called Oradexon; a drug identical to one used to fatten cattle. This was being used routinely in brothels throughout Bangladesh, by Surarnai's desperate to make the girls in their employ seem older and more attractive to clients. The pimps supplied the drug, which was very cheaply available but it is

extremely dangerous for healthy young women. Taken by these girls, it impairs the kidneys, increases the blood pressure and interferes with normal hormone production. It also causes widespread edema, or swelling, throughout the body. There are also severe problems with coming off the drug, because it's highly addictive. So if the girls stop taking it, they need a lot of help – they get bad stomach aches, they are sick, they get headaches. Concern Worldwide (CWW) with its library project started campaign against the drug. The project thought that stopping the supply chain would simply be too difficult. They launched campaign to educate the girls about the importance of condoms to stop HIV infection and importance of avoiding this drug for their sound health. To create awareness among the sex-workers, library project launched two basic anticipatory information services namely “sastho-e sampad (health is wealth) and “Jiboner Janno Tathho (information for life)” which contain information related to health and hygiene, population control, respect others, religious knowledge, social norms and values, dignity of labor, roles and responsibilities of a citizen, work in group, value of education, childcare, hand-wash, saving environment from pollution, cleanliness and other social issues.

### **Transformation of Lives**

The brothel based community digital library has created “can do” attitude among the sex-workers as poverty and society made them inferior from their childhood to mix and work with the community. But after watching some life skills videos, most of them were attracted on it and confidently acknowledged that they can do small trades. “How to be a small trader” was one of the short documentaries that covered practical demonstration of different micro-professional’s experts on small trading. “Give us the opportunity, we will do it”, said by most of the sex-workers after watching this video. The author then processed person to person best-suited training based on their interest and skills and engaged technical persons for practical demonstration. Project supplied needs-based learning resources and other logistics. Finally, they received vocational training for a short period. The duration of the training was varied upon 3 days/1 week/15 days depending on the learning capacity of the sex-workers. But the training session was a continuous process. After training, the capacity of the sex-workers has been assessed by the project M&E (monitoring & evaluation) team. Only the eligible sex-workers were selected for receiving non-refundable micro-credit from the project by which they could involve themselves with IGAs. Initially, the project people helped them to choose the working location. For example, one sex-worker has been trained up on women hair-cutting, the project helped her to involve with any beauty parlor shop where she could work on a contract basis. The contract, identity, and other security have been ensured by the project so that there was no any scope for the sex-workers to be untrustworthy to anyone in the society. Some videos were educational but funny to attract the children to go to school. The key messages of these videos were everything is free in school including books, pens, khata (writing material), dries milk playing instruments and so on. They could not believe that all are free for them. Thus they become interested to go to school. Due to illiteracy, most of the sex-workers preferred visual materials instead of printed sources. Keeping it in mind, the author have designed different digital posters which conveyed messages about their rights, health and safety measures, food and nutrition issues, behavior change issues etc. For example, one wall poster for “No more drug” demonstrated

issues on why it is harmful for health, another poster on “telling your client to use condom” revealed that sex-workers have the right to protect their health from HIV/AIDS and other STD (Sexually Transmitted diseases).

## **Project Achievement**

### **Improved Access to Services**

The author had to prepare inventory of health service providing agencies (government, NGOs, and others) near the brothel. Furthermore, the project people continuously updated the list. During final evaluation of the project, it has been found that 95% of the beneficiaries in two centres received medical services (consultancy, check-up, medicine, counseling, and others). These arrangements assisted them in accessing health services. Stakeholders in two research locations (Dhaka and Faridpur) unanimously agreed that sex workers' access to services has increased significantly as a result of project interventions. Access to immunisation, routine health care, family planning services, STD/STI testing and treatment, and HIV/AIDS prevention has been secured in all project locations through linkages with local health clinics and NGO health service providers. Primary School enrolment rate of sex workers children have been increased by 37.5% which never thought before launching the library project. Increased enrolment rates were achieved by raising sex workers' awareness of the importance of educating their children. Access to legal aid also increased significantly through project interventions. CWW's library project have motivated two local Sex workers organizations namely Durjoy and Dream who have taken a strong public stance against under-age sex workers, and over the project period, 106 girls were removed from sex work and started small trades returning to their families and 20 girls have transferred to a government shelter home.

### **Increased Awareness Among Sex Workers Regarding their Basic Rights and Expanded Life Choices**

Significant numbers of sex workers in both locations were provided with training on human rights, child rights, legal rights, gender, health and HIV/AIDS awareness, life skills and behavior change, and psycho-social counseling. Some concerns were raised about the quality and appropriateness of the training materials and training methods used. However, despite these shortcomings, sex workers who participated in the library project and took the training demonstrated an increased awareness of their rights and entitlements, and felt more empowered to demand their rights. The project also provided 558 sex workers with skills training in sewing, candle making, shopping bag making, block boutique, driving, and computers, garments works, tailoring, cleaning, part-time worker in day care centre, sales representative, making handcrafts, making clay stuffs, parlouring, making hand sweater, hair cutting, cooperatives, product promoter etc. Of those who participated in training, 17% are fully involved in alternative livelihoods, and 30% are using the training to supplement their income from sex work.

### **Rapport Building**

The library and implementing authority jointly arranged meeting with the community's people to raise their awareness and requested them to extend their support for bringing

positive changes in the lives of the sex-workers. This collectively helped achieve the project objectives.

### **Sex Worker Organisations Developed and Strengthened**

During the course of the project, training was also provided to two local SWOs (Sex workers Organizations) executive committee members on advocacy and leadership. Through the library training all are now able to perform basic self-help activities for their members such as supporting children's education; intervening in cases of harassment, abuse and exploitation by police, mastans (local terror), babus (the pimps) and others.

Dramatic changes have been taken place in their lives as long as they engaged with IGAs. They are now much conscious about their rights and entitlements than before. Now, sex-workers are recognized as citizens of Bangladesh, fully entitled to the rights that other citizens receive. Following milestones have also been achieved by the brothel-based digital community library project:

- (1) Laws and policies are now established for protecting the rights of the sex workers;
- (2) They have legal recourse when treated unfairly;
- (3) They are getting shelter, work, and other supportive environment;
- (4) They are now aware about STD (sexually transmitted disease) prevention and treatment, risk to HIV & AIDS;
- (5) Group work skills have been cultivated.

The project has followed a multi-dimensional approach in its activities to deliver better training and information services so that the beneficiaries can have a better quality of human life and library has turned into integral part in their lives.

### **Challenges for Adopting Innovative Library Approach**

- Produce the innovative training modules and prepare the activity plan in new context
- Liability of newness
- No specific research on it
- Limited resources
- Make them aware about library services
- Social and religious influences
- Time constraint

### **Future Directions**

The study achieved reputation to work with socially disadvantaged people through an innovative approach of a community digital library. It was highly regarded by all stakeholders. It is the first study in Bangladesh working with sex workers which has

adopted a holistic, need-based approach in its work with sex workers. While some other studies have been found on capacity building support to SWOs (Sex workers organizations), most of the NGOs are implementing discrete sectoral programmes (primarily relating to HIV/AIDS). Significant progress has been made through this study, however, many challenges remain. Like all people, sex workers also have dreams. These people were born innocent like you or me but have lost their innocence almost before their childhood. Brothel-based community digital library has shown them the way of new life. But adopting an innovative library approach for poverty alleviation is a very challenging task as people do not prefer to go for a new approach beyond the traditional one (Ogunsola, 2011). Based on sex workers demand, the most realistic approach has been adopted for changing their lives. The paper has outlined the success and its lessons learnt would be a milestone for poverty alleviation strategy as well in Bangladesh, if government and NGOs (Non Government Organizations) apply this idea for the sustainable development of other socially disadvantaged people.

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