

## Outreach Helps Deliver Happy Return for Trafficked Boy

Sultan, a 10-year old boy living with his parents in Pankhali village located on the bank of Naf river of Teknaf Upazila, Cox's Bazar district, is the youngest of a family of three boys and two girls. They are a fairly typical family, living from hand to mouth, earning too little to bring in three meals a day.

One day last year, Sultan's mother visited the house of Hakim, a more well-to-do relative in Dhaka, to ask if they could find a job for one of her elder sons. Sultan's mother was told that it was not possible to arrange a job for her elder son immediately, but if she allowed her little son Sultan to work in their house, they would try to arrange a job later. Sultan was therefore sent to Dhaka to work in the house.

Just a few days later, Sultan's mother received a phone call from the relative informing her that the boy was missing. Sultan's mother begged him to find her son. But instead of being sympathetic or offering help, she was threatened with trouble if she tried to take any legal action.

Luckily, around that time, ADB's Bangladesh office was conducting in the village school orientation sessions on HIV/AIDS and human trafficking under the ADB-financed [Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II \(RNIMP II\)](#).

One person, attending the session who knew of the plight of Sultan's family, quickly advised them to contact Nari Maitree, one of the implementing NGOs of the HIV/AIDS and Trafficking work under the RNIMP II.

Sultan's family contacted the NGO's resource center, which recorded the case in its trafficking data sheet. Project staff contacted local journalists and the president of the local anti-trafficking committee. They pressured the Hakim family to publish information on the missing child in the local dailies and national newspapers. Then, through the Local Arbitration Authority with the help of the Upazila Executive Officer, the Hakim family was ordered to bring back Sultan within 7 days or otherwise face legal action.

A few days later, the Hakim family informed a local journalist that they had brought back Sultan whom they had found loitering near the power station of Cox's bazaar.

Sultan's family was afraid to file a case against the Hakim family as they were rich and influential. Traffickers in many cases are powerful figures that see themselves as above the law. Millions like Sultan are being victimized by such traffickers who take advantage of their ignorance and poverty.

Nari Maitree is putting emphasis on courtyard meetings to raise awareness about the reasons for trafficking, traffickers' style of conning people, tactics to avoid them, and legal procedures to rescue a trafficked person. While addressing these issues, NGO partners are also stressing the dangers of HIV AIDS and discussing gender issues. Through such actions, many more can be rescued from the clutches of traffickers.

This article was written by Ms. Shaheen Akter Dolly, Executive Director, *Nari Maitree*, and Ms. Rokeya Khatun, Gender and Development Consultant, Bangladesh Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank in May 2008. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the ADB or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent.