

Social Visits and Special Passes:
Migrant Women Exploited in Singapore's Sex & Nightlife
Entertainment Industry

A Research Report by Sallie Yea

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About the Author

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	page 2
About the Author.....	page 3
List of Acronyms & Terms.....	page 5
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	page 7
Chapter 2 – Participants’ Background & Migration Motivations....	page 19
Chapter 3 - Recruitment & Movement to Singapore.....	page 27
Chapter 4 - Exploitation in Singapore.....	page 38
Chapter 5 - Summary & Recommendations.....	page 50
Appendix One – Background Information for Participants.....	page 66
Appendix Two – Sample of Trafficking Cases Documented.....	page 78

List of Acronyms & Terms

Bar Fine – A transacted encounter which would take place outside the pub where a woman is deployed and where the customer would normally pay the pub owner for the woman's time. Bar fines may or may not involve sexual labour.

ECPAT – End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking

FMM – Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

HOME – Humanitarian Organisation for Migrant Economics

ICA – Immigration and Customs Authority

ILO – International Labour Organisation

Mami – female pimp or broker (Indonesian term)

MOM – Ministry of Manpower

Papi – male pimp or broker (Indonesian term)

PAV – Performing Artists Visa

SNEI – Sex and Nightlife Entertainment Industry

SPF – Singapore Police Force

SVP – Social Visit Pass

TWC2 – Transient Workers Count Too

Utang – debt (Filipino term)

“Regardless of one’s moral compass, the future of research on sex trafficking cannot become credible without a solid empirical foundation”. Sheldon Zhang (2009)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background & Aims

In 2009-10 the first comprehensive study of human trafficking was conducted for Singapore. Released by ECPAT International in June 2011 and conducted under the auspices of The Body Shop's (TBS) global campaign against child sex trafficking, the study focused on minors and young people trafficked into Singapore's commercial sex sector. The report has provided a sorely needed introduction to the contentious issue of human trafficking in Singapore by providing evidence to suggest that, in the sex and nightlife entertainment industry (SNEI) at least, the problem of trafficking is significant. Yet, despite the important contribution of this initial report, there is still a substantial gap in our understanding of trafficking and related forms of exploitation more broadly within the SNEI, as well as trafficking within other sectors in, or operating through Singapore. This report is an attempt to extend the findings of the ECPAT/TBS study by focusing on trafficking and related forms of exploitation amongst adult migrant women in Singapore's SNEI, focusing primarily on the experiences of Filipinas and Indonesians as case studies.

The major motivations for the writing of this report are three-fold. *First*, it is felt that the issue of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Singapore is one that affects adult women in the SNEI, as well as (female) minors. It is therefore important that government policy and non-governmental organisation (NGO) programs emerging in the present milieu of heightened interest in human trafficking are responsive to migrant women (as well as to men and transgender populations) in this industry as a whole. One of the unfortunate – and unintended – outcomes of the ECPAT Report has been a disproportionate focus by anti-trafficking stakeholders, especially the government, on female minors as victims. This report is certainly not

driven by the desire to expand the parameters of victimhood to adult women in the SNEI, since Singapore is currently not well-placed to support victims of trafficking according to a victim-centred approach. An infrastructure of anti-trafficking that involves victim support (protection) measures is still being developed, Singapore has not yet signed or ratified the UN Trafficking Protocol which came into force internationally in 2003, and there is continuing evidence that raids and violent removals of women from SNEI venues constitute one of the government's main responses to trafficking. It does seem there is some need to at least better understand the situations of adult women in the SNEI in Singapore as both overlapping with, but in many ways also discreet from female minors in the sector. Similar studies with male and transgender migrant sexual labourers are also sorely needed in this regard.

Second, and following the above point, despite the welcome responses from the Singaporean government to the problem of human trafficking that have crystallised over the past two years¹, it is felt that the government efforts would benefit from more detailed and extensive research on trafficking and other forms of exploitation in Singapore's SNEI. The current state of knowledge on trafficking in Singapore is remarkably paltry compared to all its ASEAN regional neighbours, most of which are significant source countries for trafficking to Singapore. Policy-relevant research could inform more appropriate responses that ensure the human rights of both trafficked persons and non-trafficked migrant labourers are supported and enhanced, rather than compromised by trafficking interventions. This lack of understanding is clearly seen when one considers the questions of who counts as a victim of trafficking in the SNEI and of proportionally how many of Singapore's migrant sex workers are victims. Both the government and broader community (including NGOs, academics and the general public) appear preoccupied with these questions. Posing questions about trafficking in the SNEI in Singapore in this way can however create an artificial divide between "good" victims and "bad" migrant sex

¹ In 2010 Singapore was downgraded in the United States annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report from Tier Two to Tier Two watch list. The downgrading and the subsequent release of the ECPAT/ TBS Report has resulted in some welcome actions to respond to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Singapore.

workers and bespeaks of both a narrow understanding of the harms facing migrant women in Singapore's SNEI - whether voluntary or coerced - and of the complexities of trafficking, coercion, and constrained choice propelling many women to Singapore for work in this sector. It is for this reason that this report does not focus solely on women who have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) to single them out as a privileged group of exploited victims when many other women who face similar harms in the SNEI are disqualified as victims because they are not quite "trafficked enough" (see Yea, forthcoming), or definitionally fall outside the ambit of "sex trafficking" altogether with very few support services and interventions aimed at empowering them, or even respecting their migration and work choices. Human trafficking is both a transnational crime and a human rights issue, simultaneously; yet we continue to witness significant harms to migrant women in Singapore that occur at the hands of both traffickers/ exploiters *and* authorities ostensibly charged with their protection. This report was written in the context of concern about this prevailing trend.

Third, this report aims to redress the unhelpful tendency of the anti-trafficking community in Singapore to pigeonhole the experiences of all trafficking victims in the SNEI as "sex trafficked" and the more recent tendency to locate labour trafficking that is a phenomenon only of relevance to migrant workmen (primarily in the construction sector), migrant fishermen (Yea 2013) or foreign domestic workers (FDWs) (HOME 2013). Certainly there is growing evidence that labour trafficking is a significant concern for Singapore but the discourses around labour and sex trafficking are developing in such a way as to exclude the possibility that a migrant sexual labourer may be labour trafficked or experience *labour* exploitation rather than, or in addition to commercial *sexual* exploitation. Those perpetuating these divisions tend, not surprisingly, to have least interaction with migrant labourers in the SNEI in Singapore.

In sum, it is hoped that in this report readers will come away with a greater appreciation of some of the *complexities* associated with migrant women's positions and problems in

Singapore's SNEI: women may experience labour violations as well as, or instead of sexual exploitation; women may operate under notions of constrained choice that render any classification of them as trafficked or not trafficked partial at best; women's problems and concerns in the SNEI may in some ways parallel, but in other ways be distinct from those of female minors, and; anti-trafficking interventions or framings of the issue do not necessarily address these complexities and may inadvertently perpetuate the harms and insecurities women face.

From the aims outlined above this report will:

1. Document in detail the situations of migrant women of two nationalities in Singapore's SNEI whose experiences may comprise significant elements of *trafficking or related harms*;
2. From the documentation process, identify key concerns relating to the status and situations of both trafficked and otherwise vulnerable women in Singapore's SNEI, recognising that similar harms may confront both trafficked and non-trafficked migrant sexual labourers;
3. Utilise the information gained from the analysis (1. & 2.) to make broad recommendations for actions in relation to migrant women in Singapore that are applicable to support workers and NGOs, foreign consulates in Singapore and the Singaporean government itself.

The remainder of the Introduction to this report provides some background about human trafficking and migrants in Singapore's SNEI, a brief discussion of the ways particular terms are used in this report, and a short overview of the methodology and limitations of the study.

1.2 Human Trafficking & Migrants in Singapore's Sex and Nightlife Entertainment Industry

Apart from the ECPAT report (2010), information relating to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Singapore is piecemeal and generally anecdotal. Broader research on migrant women in the sex and entertainment industry is also limited (for an exception see Lainez 2011). In part the explanation for this can be found in issues of access to these populations for the purposes of research. In trafficking research trafficked persons themselves are widely considered to be “hidden populations” (Lazcko 2005). Lack of knowledge about human trafficking amongst both the media and NGOs in Singapore can compound problems relating to research by projecting constructions of victims that may conform to international stereotypes. Some of the NGOs consulted during the course of this research generally did not have an entirely accurate understanding of how human trafficking relates to migrant workers they may encounter during the course of their respective support work efforts in Singapore. No migrant worker NGO in Singapore, for example, recorded case information in a way that identified a client as a potential victim of trafficking until last year. Of particular concern here is the fact that representatives from migrant worker NGOs in Singapore often lament that it is of little use to utilise human trafficking as a way of advocating for redress of particular migrant worker cases given the lack of supporting legal and social infrastructure. There is certainly scope for interventions around identification and an appropriate infrastructure of support if this is the prevailing view amongst migrant worker NGOs².

Similarly, media accounts of human trafficking in Singapore are generally highly sensational, lack rigour in defining how trafficking relates to particular cases that appear in their

² Singaporean NGOs consulted for this research included TWC2, HOME, Project X, and Health Serve.

stories, and often employing dubious ethics in the reporting process³. It is therefore little wonder that until 2011 the Singaporean government found it relatively easy to refute claims emerging from civil society that human trafficking is a significant problem in the country.

The use of the terms social visits and special passes in the title of this report speaks to the two major concerns relating to migrant women in Singapore's sex and nightlife entertainment sector. A Social Visit Pass is a visa status equivalent to a tourist visa. It remains the major visa category by which the majority of trafficked and exploited women enter Singapore. A Special Pass is also a visa status in Singapore and is normally conferred on migrant workers who are held in Singapore for the purposes of an investigation or case resolution (in the medium to long term) or who are held until they can raise funds to finance the cost of their return to their home country (in the short term). Trafficked women who enter Singapore on social visit passes and are subsequently found working in the sex or entertainment industry are normally treated as immigration offenders (for example, by illegally working on a visa category that does not permit work). This visa category also inadvertently confers significant human rights abuses to women who are trafficked (for example, by forcing them to service inordinately high numbers of clients in a short period of time, see Chapter 3, below, and also Yea 2012).

Special passes produce different vulnerabilities for migrant women in the SNEI since women are to remain in Singapore for the term specified on their pass but without attendant social support or work rights. This kind of treatment reinforces existing (financial, health, sexual) vulnerabilities of women by often leaving them with no option but to return to sex work – or continuing sex work under degrading conditions - in order to survive for the duration of their stay in Singapore. I believe this constitutes a major ongoing violation of trafficked women's rights and obligations under international conventions, such as the United Nations Protocol to

³ The predominant image of women as 'vice girls' is achieved through a combination of story captions describing the women as 'plying their trade'. Photos of scantily clad women hiding their faces from the camera when picked up in vice raids reinforce the view that these women are criminals who need to be shamed.

Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000). In addition to the harms commonly identified for women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation elsewhere I see these visa regimes in Singapore as constituting an additional concern that I also wish to highlight in this report.

1.3 Terminology Slip Ups

In this report I use the definition of human trafficking laid out in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (hereafter, the Protocol), since this is the definition the Singapore government currently adopts. According to this definition trafficking involves three linked stages; recruitment, movement, and exploitation:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power, a position of vulnerability, 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. Exploitation shall include the exploitation of the sex service, other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The above definition has been rightly criticised for its vagueness in certain parts, resulting in a number of grey areas. Of particular concern is the failure of the Protocol to define exploitation. Exploitation, for the purpose of this report involves a persistent social relationship in which certain persons are being mistreated or unfairly used for the benefit of others. In this understanding people are viewed by exploiters as a resource, where there is little or no concern for their welfare (ILO 2004). Because trafficking normally operates via a chain of connected

actors who move and place people into situations of exploitation, attention often centers on those who move trafficked persons, rather than those who exploit them at their destination. Progressive perspectives on human trafficking in Southeast Asia would suggest that the prevailing focus on movement should be tempered by according equal or greater recognition to exploitation (UNIAP, no date).

In the early 2000s a series of indicators was developed by the ILO to help various authorities and support organisations to identify trafficked persons. Whilst these indicators are extremely useful, they were developed for a European context where the modus operandi of human trafficking can provide marked departures from that in the Asian region. Further, the indicators raise the question of to what degree a person needs to fulfil the criteria set out in the indicators in order to be defined as “trafficked”. Whilst this report is not the place to repeat these debates at length, it should be noted that Singaporean authorities and support organisations have met with practical difficulties in understanding how to identify a person who is trafficked, both in the SNEI and within other sectors where migrant workers comprise a significant proportion of the labour force.

1.4 Methodology, Methods & Limitations of the Study

This is a qualitative study, drawing on a range of qualitative methods to sample trafficked women in Singapore’s sex and nightlife entertainment industry, selected in accordance with considerations arising from questions over access to the population of migrant women in Singapore’s SNEI for the two nationalities studied. The research involved at least one in-depth, semi-structured interview with all participants by Sallie Yea (in some cases with the assistance of an Indonesian research assistant) or by the Indonesian assistant. Follow-up interviews were conducted if possible (though see limitations, below). The interview process involved

participants answering questions that established background information (bio-data), after which participants were asked to tell their story in their own words structured according to several themes (including recruitment and movement to Singapore, experiences upon deployment in Singapore, exit and circumstances post-exit). Using prompts from the researcher, participants were asked to delve into particular aspects of their experiences in further detail and to reflect on their emotional state, physical health and legal/ migration status at various points in their sojourn. This method is loosely based on open-ended and narrative interview techniques.

Locating prospective participants was a major challenge in the research and the strategy we adopted varied according to the two different nationalities included as case studies. Filipinas were contacted through three main avenues: through the Philippines Embassy Assistance to Nationals in Distress Desk, outreach work by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), and through the support work of one volunteer for the NGO Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2). Indonesian participants were also met through the outreach work of FMM, through the Batam Island based shelter of the NGO HOME, and through the Batam Island-based sex worker outreach NGO, YMKK.

If human trafficking and related forms of exploitation is plagued by definitional challenges, then researching human trafficking is also an extremely challenging task, as many researchers have previously noted (for example, Brennan 2005). Foremost amongst the limitations to data collection in research with hidden migrant populations is their lack of accessibility for research purposes. Access is limited not only by physical limitations whilst such populations remain in situations of exploitation, but also after a person leaves an exploitative situation. In these latter cases researchers can encounter problems of lack of trust by prospective participants, even where they are able to be located for the purposes of research, often leading to a failure on the part of participants to disclose important information about their situations. A further problem concerns the often limited time to access vulnerable migrants for the purposes

of interviews. This problem was particularly evident in the Singaporean context where many women whom I encountered during the course of fieldwork were in volatile situations in which they were either contained within shelters or government-run dormitories (and hence could only be accessed for short periods of time), or were facing issues concerning their visa status (which played out in various ways, such as women needing to be deported before their legal visa expired, or women's visas already having expired and their being unlawful in Singapore, or women being placed on Special Passes and facing tenuous economic and accommodation situations).

These circumstances resulted in a number of limitations in the fieldwork:

- Women could often not be contacted for follow up interviews after an initial encounter;
- Some women became distressed during the interview process and so more sensitive topics were sometimes not explored in as great detail in order to limit the distress this may cause to participants;
- The research was conducted with an extremely limited budget of SGD 4000 provided through the generosity of two benefactors to FMM, which imposed major constraints on the fieldwork (in particular we were not able to trace women in their home countries, except for some participants who returned to Batam Island, Indonesia, after having been met in Singapore).

Despite these limitations I and my Indonesian assistant interviewed eighty-seven (87) women/girls who we identified as having been trafficked out of 106 women interviewed in total⁴. As with the ECPAT Report (2010) a case study approach was utilised in which information was gathered primarily for women from the two nationalities: the Philippines and Indonesia. It is important to

⁴ The total number of participants was one hundred and six (106) which included 17 women whose experiences I did not believe fell within the purview of trafficking but whose experiences are also considered here in line with the aims of the report outlined earlier in this chapter.

note that the proportion of women in this study who fell within the definition of trafficking cannot be taken as representative of the SNEI in Singapore as a whole. The methodological limitations discussed above meant that this study adopted a convenience sampling approach, rather than random sampling, and many of the women (especially Filipina participants) were met and interviewed after leaving distressing situations in the SNEI.

2. Participants' Backgrounds & Migration

Motivations

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a brief description of the participants from the two case study nationalities. Understanding participants' profiles can assist in efforts to prevent trafficking and protect victims in several ways, including enhancing victim identification efforts (victim protection), and targeting developmental interventions designed to reduce poverty and address gender inequality in ways that support the needs of populations identified as vulnerable to trafficking (prevention of trafficking).

The need to disaggregate the population of SNEI labourers in Singapore by nationality is emphasised in the report. Moving people into exploitative labouring situations, either through trafficking or other means, operates through discrete *modus operandi* in different countries (and often in different regions or states within one country). In addition women from different national contexts experience varying regimes governing gender role and expectations (with attendant variations in cultural and religious norms). Finally, there are significant structural economic and migration variations amongst the various countries from which migrant sexual labourers in Singapore are drawn. General treatment of trafficked women's situations often reduces these types of complexities in favour of a series of accepted general scenarios which may or may not be wholly applicable to various (sub)national groups and individuals.

2.2 Participants Background

Filipinas - Fifty-six (56) Filipinas participated in this study, out of which fifty (50) were identified as having been trafficked according to the UN Protocol's definition provided in Chapter 1. Appendix One (Table One) provides background information on all participants. From that Table the following key characteristics of Filipina participants may be discerned:

- No participants were minors (under 18 years of age) at the time they were trafficked to Singapore, although several may be defined as 'young people' (18-21 years of age);
- The majority of participants were from the capital island of Luzon (46) with a smaller number from either the Visayas or Mindanao regions to the south (10);
- The majority of participants (30+) had at least one dependent child and were the sole breadwinners for their children;
- This included thirty (30) participants who were single mothers (either separated or never married);
- The majority of participants (55/ 56) had graduated from high school and six (6) were college graduates including participants who attained vocational qualifications in hotel and resort management, computer science, agricultural science;
- Twelve (12) participants had dropped out of college for various reasons, including lack of money, becoming pregnant, getting married or disillusionment about job prospects (2 participants were still enrolled in college at the time of participation but had taken deferment).

Ch's (20 years) and An's (34 years) experiences of single motherhood and/ or as the main breadwinners for their families were common amongst Filipina participants and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, were closely tied to their decisions to 'try for Singapore'.

I was unemployed in the Philippines, even though I graduated high school. Then I had a baby. I wasn't married to my boyfriend when I became pregnant and when I was three months pregnant he left me to go to the United States. He has never sent money for the baby. I just lived with my brother in Laguna and my father helped support me and the baby, but I am embarrassed to accept his money. My baby is one year old next week and I wanted to give her a special birthday. (Ch, 20 years)

I'm separated from my husband. I have three kids and they are all in primary school with my oldest going to high school next year. It's not my first time abroad. I was in Saudi Arabia for a year and then I went back to the Philippines because one of my kids has epilepsy. My mother is taking care of my kids while I am away, but it's hard for her. The medicine is PP 150 per day and my ex-husband never gives money for the medicine or anything else for my kids. (An, 34 years)

In addition to the information provided in Table One, additional background information for Filipina participants' employment status prior to coming to Singapore revealed that:

- Thirteen (13) participants had migrated to Japan or South Korea previously as entertainers, entering these destinations on entertainers (performing artists) visas;
- Twenty-nine (29) participants were employed as either factory workers, sales ladies in department stores, waitresses or other low-skilled and poorly remunerated work prior to migrating to Singapore;
- The remaining participants were either unemployed (15) or dependent on their husband's earnings (8) prior to migrating to Singapore (with the exception of those who had taken college deferral).

Significantly, through the interviews it became clear that most Filipina participants were not intending to migrate and their decisions to go to Singapore for short-term employment were *induced* by other actors, including friends, neighbours and relatives who acted as recruiters or who recommended contacts to the participants who then acted as recruiters/ migration brokers. This was true for both those women who were employed and those who were unemployed prior to migration (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of the incidence of inducement).

Indonesians

Of the fifty (50) Indonesian participants, thirty-seven (37) were considered to have been trafficked. This includes twenty-eight (28) who were trafficked to Singapore and nine (9) who were trafficked internally within Indonesia and then travelled to Singapore for sex work under voluntary conditions at a later point⁵. Appendix One (Table Two) provides background information for Indonesian participants. From Table Two it may be surmised that:

- Five (5) participants were minors at the time they entered Singapore, whilst the remainder (45) had reached the age of majority;
- The majority of participants (27) were from various regional areas of Java, whilst five (5) were from the capital city, Jakarta. Other participants were drawn from various provinces in Indonesia, including Sumatera (5), Medan (5) and Kalimantan (1) amongst others;
- The majority of participants (38) were single with no children, seven (7) were either divorced or separated, whilst the remaining five (5) were single mothers;

⁵ Whilst later chapters only discuss the experiences of those Indonesian women trafficked, both internally and to Singapore, this chapter provides details of all participants, regardless of whether they qualified as trafficked persons.

- Twenty-three (23) participants had graduated high school, whilst another eighteen (18) enrolled but failed to complete high school. Five (5) graduated from primary school only and did not seek to enrol in high school. One (1) participant had no formal schooling;
- None of the participants had been or were currently studying at college.

A key characteristic of Indonesian participants was that the majority were internal labour migrants to Batam Island. Some women worked in the SNEI in Batam prior to coming to Singapore, although as noted above many of these were previously trafficked internally within Indonesia and subsequently began to undertake sex work voluntarily at a later point. For the purposes of this report I consider women internally trafficked prior to their sojourning in Singapore as trafficked, since their prior trafficking experience was the key vulnerability that compelled them to travel to Singapore.

Di's (19 years) and Pt's (19 years) backgrounds were common amongst Indonesian participants:

When I had school holidays my family and I vacationed at Tembiahan in Pekanbaru. There I met a friend and I went with him to Batam where he promised I could get a job. In Batam he took me to several places of entertainment [KTV bars and nightclubs] and my life before was lost. I wasn't happy or free anymore. Because of this I worked as a dancer in a Pub in the back of STC Mall, Sekupang. I worked there for three months. After that I met a guy called Ri and he offered me work in Singapore and I decided to go with him. I wasn't sure what the work was – only that I would earn more money than on Batam (Di, 19 years)

Before I came to Batam I was unemployed in my hometown. Then my friend offered me work in Batam. She said I will work in a restaurant, but when we arrived apparently my work is in a discotheque. I worked there as a waitress, but if there is a guest who booked me [take out of the

discotheque for sexual services or company] I needed to go with him. I'm only seventeen years old when I start to work in Batam like that. Then when I'm 19 my friend invited me to go to Singapore for the same work. I decided to go because my money in Batam isn't enough for my daily living. (Pt, 19 years)

Others, Like Vi (23 years) were employed in the service or manufacturing sectors in Batam prior to being approached by recruiters for employment opportunities in Singapore:

I finished high school and I wanted to be a flight attendant but my dad wouldn't allow it. So I decided to look for work in Batam, coz I heard there are many opportunities to make money there. I found a job as a cashier in a shop and I earned around SGD 150 a month. Then my friend Si offered me a job in Singapore earning SGD 2000 a month. So I left my cashier job to come to Singapore, but then when I'm here [Singapore] I found out it is not a restaurant job but prostitution that I am going to do. (Vi, 23 years)

A few Indonesian participants did not work at all – either in the sex and entertainment sector or other types of jobs – in Batam before being move to Singapore for commercial sexual labour, but were variously working or seeking work elsewhere in Indonesia. For these women Batam was merely a staging point for entry to Singapore as the forged document industry there is extremely sophisticated. As Yn and Ir respectively stated,

After I finished school I didn't work. I just helped my parents in my hometown. I tried to get a job in Medan and I met with someone that I didn't know before. That guy offered me a job to be a waitress in Tanjung Pinang [Bintan Island], but after we arrive in Tanjung Pinang they took

a picture of me and said they will make a passport for me. I don't know why they are making a passport for me. I never decided to work in Singapore. My plan only was Medan. (Yn, 20 years)

In my hometown I worked at a clothes and cosmetics shop. At that time my friend came back from Singapore and she asked me to work with her in Singapore doing the same job as I was doing. We went to Batam first and then we went to Singapore. (Ir, 19 years)

For these women, returning to Batam or elsewhere in Indonesia means that they must face the prospect of searching for a job once again. Following up with Vi, for example, I learned that she has been back in Indonesia for five months and has still not managed to find another job.

One other key characteristic that distinguishes Indonesian participants from their Filipina counterparts is worth drawing out here; namely the relatively low number of participants who were single mothers. The majority of Indonesian participants were single with no children, but many bore the responsibility of supporting their natal families (rather than their own children) through remittances. This was the case for La (20 years) and Nd (26 years):

After graduating from my school, my parents asked me to work in Jakarta as a housemaid, so I worked there for one year and then went back to my hometown. My parents asked me to go to Jakarta to work again, but I refused it and they always kept asking me to go because of the financial condition of my family. I have three younger sisters and my parents to support. Finally I went to Batam as a housemaid. But I earn more money as a waitress, so I do that job for one year. Then my friend introduced me to his friend, who turned out to be a pimp, and then my friend sold me to the pimp. (La, 20 years)

At the age of twenty-four years I worked in Jakarta Regional Cengkareng, Bekasi, for a textile company. But the salary is very small and I met a friend who offered me work in Batam at a house [as a housemaid]. But when I got here it is a massage parlour in an entertainment area. I have no choice to do this because I have two kids to support and I am the first of four brothers and sisters so I also have responsibility for them. (Nd, 26 years)

2.5 Summary

The foregoing overview of participant's characteristics and circumstances reveals particular patterns specific to particular national groups. However between different nationalities it was more difficult to discern commonalities in women's profiles. For example, virtually all Filipinas had at least a high school education, whilst just under half the Indonesian participants had equivalent level of education. Similarly, whilst the majority of Filipinas were single mothers with dependent children, most Indonesian participants did not have children but were internal migrants who had responsibilities to remit money to support their natal families and only in a few cases to support their own children. From these differences it is clear that any responses designed to prevent trafficking of women to Singapore should at a minimum be nationality specific and not reproduce universal victim profiles which do accommodate targeted interventions and allow for these nuances to remain visible.

3. Recruitment & Movement to Singapore

3.1 Introduction

Women and girls are often depicted in the media, both in Singapore and more widely, as entering trafficking situations as a result of being physically abducted, sold by relatives or sent away with recruiters by relatives for what they believe to be other forms of paid employment. The common pattern for recruitment of women to be deployed unwittingly in Singapore's SNEI however, departs markedly from this characterisation. The vast majority of women in this study had made a decision to migrate either internally (as for many Indonesian participants) or abroad (as for all Filipina participants and a few Indonesian participants) for work but were falsely or deceptively recruited. Concerning recruitment, women generally fell into one of four different groups:

1. Those who have no previous experience working as erotic dancers, hostesses, or sex workers and think they are migrating for other work, such as being a waitress, housemaid or salesperson;
2. those who have previous experience working in the nightlife entertainment sector as professional singers and dancers (performing artists) and think they are going abroad for work in this profession⁶;
3. those who have worked previously as erotic dancers and/ or sex workers, who may have a good idea that they will be performing prostitution-related work but are nonetheless still deceived about the conditions of both the work and other aspects of their migration, and;

⁶ In Singapore this related primarily to Filipinas and Bangladeshi women at the time this report was revised in Jan. anuary 2014.

4. women who have migrated previously to work as entertainers or performing artists in other countries, including Japan, and understand that their work and working conditions will be similar to those of previous migration experiences, including being a hostess.

To reiterate, in this report I consider both those who were deceived about the *type* of work (did not know they were entering prostitution) *and* those who knew they were entering prostitution but were deceived about important *conditions* of that work as trafficked. This is in line with the definition laid out in the UN Protocol, stated above. Recruitment strategies will often vary slightly according to which of these groups a woman falls under and from which source country she is migrating, but common to all four groups is the high level of *deception* involved in the way women are recruited. This Chapter focuses on the way deception is used to induce women to migrate either internally (especially relevant for Indonesian participants) and to Singapore (relevant for both nationalities) for employment, thus recognising the important roles that recruiters, brokers and agents (some of whom qualify as traffickers) play in this process.

3.2 The Philippines

For the Filipina women who participated in this research, none had been engaged in prostitution previously in the Philippines or elsewhere. Thirteen (13) of the participants stated that they were professionally trained singers or cabaret dancers, while the remainder, as stated above, were students, unemployed or unskilled/ low skilled workers in other sectors before coming to Singapore for work.

The variations in recruitment for the four different groups of women listed above relate largely to the level of knowledge they have about the nature of their work duties in Singapore prior to migration. For women who are professional entertainers (singers or dancers), they normally expect that their jobs as professional entertainers in Singapore will require them to

perform each evening according to conditions agreed in their contracts. Sh (30 years), for example, was working in a club as a singer in a band in Manila and then migrated to Japan as an entertainer six times before coming to Singapore:

My neighbour is my agent and she asked if I wanted to work in Singapore. She said, “The work is almost the same as in Japan”. She wanted PHP 5000 fee. I said “no” to her five years ago, but two years ago my I gave birth to my son so she called and asked me again. I said “okay” if there was no fee. We only had a verbal agreement and she told me my work permit would be processed in Singapore. I know the job of entertainer, but I don’t know there is going to be prostitution when I come here. (Sh, 30 years).

For those who are not professional entertainers, they are normally given a job description which includes entertaining customers by taking their order for drinks and sitting or dancing with them and chatting to them, or serving drinks. This description conforms closely to hostessing work, as in Vi’s experience:

I have no work and my husband’s work is only casual. We have four kids to support so I am always worried about money. One day I went to my friend’s house in Bulacan and we talk. She says that in Singapore the money is easy and every night all you have to do is serve drinks only. She said for PHP 50,000 I can get a ticket and arrange my visa as an entertainer. I tell my husband and I borrow money from my friend to pay the recruiter’s fee, which is PHP 18,000. She said I could earn enough money to pay back the PHP 18,000 in one month (Vi, 37 years).

Before deceptive explanations about work to be performed and working and living conditions in Singapore can be made recruiters must make initial contact with prospective migrants. Unlike other destinations for migrant entertainers (such as South Korea, Japan, and the Middle East) migrant brokering for Singapore is far less organised and operates through more informal mechanisms. Social networks, including friends, relatives and workmates, often play an important role, either acting directly as brokers or putting women in contact with recruiters (as in Vi's case). Others, like Rh (25 years) and Ap (23 years) are approached directly by recruiters who are not known to them:

I was working in Manila in SM [Shoe Mart, a Department Store]. In one week I could only earn about PHP 800. But that would be the most coz it's casual work only. I was taking a nursing course so couldn't work full time. But I need to work coz I've got two kids and I'm not married. I meet this girl in SM – she's my customer. She offer me to work in Singapore, but I don't know this is my job [prostitution]. I said I would think about it and after one week I think its okay, so I give her my passport and a week later she meets me in MOA [Mall of Asia, in Manila] and gives me my passport back and tells me everything is arranged. I gave her PHP 3000 commission. (Rh, 25 years)

Me and 'Mo' were walking around in a mall in Pampanga and this guy hands us a flyer that says 'Want to work as a waitress in Singapore?' So we called the contact number on the flyer and met the agent in SM Mall in Pampanga. The agent is a woman. She asked for PHP 5000 each, which was supposed to be for our air tickets. Before coming here [Singapore] I was working in an electronics factory. I didn't have a plan to go abroad for work actually as I've got two young kids. (Ap, 23 years)

As hinted in the previous Chapter, such migration brokering is clearly induced. In Rh's and Ap's cases there was *no intention* to migrate on their parts. Instead of actively seeking out a migration agent to facilitate their work abroad they were *approached* and *convinced* to go abroad by the promise of easy work and a good salary. They could agree because the fee was seemingly quite low (PHP 3000 or PHP 5000) and the time between recruitment and migration very short (one or two weeks). In the Philippines the State's migration apparatus is extensive and often the process of organising labour migration abroad can take several months to complete, therefore making a one or two week departure time appear extremely attractive.

The second common method of recruitment for the Philippines is for a person directly known to the woman to suggest for her to go to Singapore. This could include friends, relatives or talent managers (the latter being agencies that train women to be professional entertainers and assist them in passing their Artist Record Book examinations in exchange for a fee). One participant in this study, Lb (27 years) said that she heard from a friend about working in Singapore:

My friend came to visit me in Palawan. She said I should go to Singapore to be a waitress. I'm a single mum with three kids and so I think I need to accept that offer. My friend is from school and we were close so I never think she lie to me. She travelled with me to Singapore and I just give her the money for the air ticket. When we get to Singapore she says to me, "You have to see customers [for sex] otherwise if you don't want to work there is no money. You can't survive".
(Lb, 27 years)

Indeed, such narratives of Singapore as an easy place to make a lot of money, as a place that is (comparatively) easy to go to, and as a place where the work to be performed is very clearly expressed as serving drinks, chatting to and dancing with customers, or waitressing are circulated widely amongst women who are induced to migrate to Singapore to work. Filipinas enter

Singapore either through direct flights from the Philippines (especially Manila and Subic), or through land via the Malaysian border point at Johor Bahru.

3.3 Indonesia

The mode of recruitment in Indonesia presents several similarities to that of the Philippines, where women are recruited either expecting to work in the sex industry or for other jobs in Singapore. Because of the financial limitations stated in the Introduction to this report we were unable to conduct fieldwork in multiple sending areas in Indonesia, and decided to focus on Batam Island for practical reasons and because anecdotal evidence suggested that large numbers of women were recruited for work in Singapore's SNEI from Batam Island.

Recruitment processes for Indonesian women fall into three broad categories; recruitment for sex work of women already in the sex and entertainment industry in Batam Island, but who are deceived about other conditions of work in Singapore (De, 20 years, below); recruitment for women who believe they will be migrating for legitimate employment in Singapore in other sectors (such as retail and or service industry) in either Batam Island or elsewhere in Indonesia (as in Sh, 24 years, below), and; third, a smaller number of women who believe they are being brought to Singapore for other purposes (such as short holiday or shopping trip). Trafficked women appear in all three categories, but primarily the second. As also stressed in Chapter 2, many women who were recruited for sex work in Singapore had been internally trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to Batam previously (as in Id, 25 years, and Ss, 19 years, below):

After I quit school I helped my parents in my hometown and then I went to Batam with a friend to try to get a job. I worked in a cafe and I also started to do freelance sex to earn extra money. I have to help my siblings because they are all still in school and I don't want my sister to quit

school like me. I want for them to all study at college. My friend asked me to go to Singapore and she told me that we can earn more money doing sex work than in Batam. She tells about the travel costs and documents and so I know I have to repay a debt. She introduce me to papi who is the one who arranges the travel and documents and he is the one I repay the debt to. The passport costs a lot because my identity is changed to make me five years older. I go to Singapore with my friend and the employee of papi, who is our pimp. When I get to Singapore the work is as I expect, but I am surprised because the working hours are very long and I cannot go out of the hotel room except to find a guest [client]. The Singapore agent delivers food to my room. Also, my pimp took my passport. Also I discover that I cannot refuse any guest, even if he hurts me. I have some experiences of this in Singapore; the guest is rough and wants to hurt me before doing sex. My pimp and also the Singapore agent don't help me when this happen. This isn't the way it was in Batam because I am freelance there. If I have enough money I will stop this work and go back to my parents; I don't like the work in Singapore. (De, 20 years)

Before I worked as a domestic helper in Malaysia for three years, and after that I apply to go to Singapore as a domestic as well. So I went to my labour agency in Jakarta to arrange. After that they bring me to Batam and from there to Singapore as a domestic. But after two months my agent called me to have a medical check-up and it was discovered that I have a lung disease, so the employer sends me back to Batam for the treatment. It takes a long time – four months or more – so I decide to run and just work in Batam in another job. I work in a restaurant first and then I work in a casino. I made a friend in the casino who worked in Batam before and she said there is the same casino work in Singapore. She said she could introduce me to the mami who owns the entertainment place in Singapore. After that she introduced me to mami and mami said I can work in Orchard Towers in the Banana Pub. She arranged all the things for me for a fee of SGD 2000, which I was to pay off from my salary. (Sh, 24 years)

I was married but got divorced and then I lived with my parents in my hometown. At that time my friend asked me to work in Batam with her as a waitress, so I can earn money to help my parents and to forget about my ex-husband. We both worked as waitresses at a restaurant in Nagoya area. After a few months I was asked by another friend to go to Singapore for the same job [waitress]. I decided to go because the money was better and the cost of living on Batam is very high and I have a responsibility to my parents in my hometown. But when I get to Singapore the work is as a prostitute in Geylang. I am there for one month and then when I go back to Batam I work at a bar, doing like I did in Singapore. (Id, 25 years)

I'm a rebel kid in my family and I ran away from home after my parents got angry with me. I went to Jakarta and I worked at a shop. After a few months I contacted my parents and told them I was working in Jakarta. Until now they think I'm there because I don't want to tell them what happened to me... In Jakarta I met a woman who offered me work in Batam as a waitress in a cafe. I followed her to Batam but actually she sold me to a KTV bar. I just surrender because I really have no idea about Batam. After I finished my 'contract' of six months I just stopped working as a prostitute but my friend enticed me to come to Singapore to do sex work there. I agree and she handled all my documents for me. They increased my age in the passport, so it cost a lot. (Ss, 19 years)

Unlike Filipinas, who must pay a large cost for the flight to Singapore, the major expense for Indonesian women is the preparation of documents, many of which are false (for example, fake passports; or real passports but where the identity (photo) of the owner has been changed). Indonesian women are brought to Singapore almost always by ferry from Batam, though anecdotally I heard of some women who flew to Singapore directly from Jakarta (none who participated in their research however). Indonesian women must also 'rent money' in Batam to

meet Singaporean ICA requirements of entry to Singapore, which further adds to their costs (since they must pay interest on their rented money). In all cases, whether trafficked or not, Indonesian participants came with someone who acted as their pimp or agent and often were handed over to a Singaporean pimp or agent upon arrival in the sex district where they were to be deployed. For some the Indonesian pimp or agent remained with them and they were not 'handed over' to another party. I wish to highlight the significance of this involvement of a third party in Singapore for both trafficked and non-trafficked sex workers because effectively it means that both groups of women lose their autonomy in decisions around how and under what conditions they perform sexual labour and they lose their freedom of movement and association. Only when voluntary migrant sex workers from Indonesia pay off their migration debt – which can be anywhere between SGD 2000 – 5000 – are they 'free' from the control of a third party in Singapore. As Indonesian participants stated, paying off such debts could often take up to four trips to Singapore to achieve.

Issues of debt related to facilitating their movement to Singapore thus figured prominently in women's narratives and these are further discussed in Chapter 4 as they impacted strongly and negatively on women's financial and sexual exploitation. Like some of the Filipinas who were recruited by friends, all Indonesian participants were either recruited directly by a friend or workmate, or introduced by a friend to a recruiter or pimp. NGO informants for this study related to me that these 'friends' would invariably receive a commission, though participants themselves often were unaware of this.

3.4 Migration Status in Singapore

Of the participants who were trafficked to Singapore all entered on a SVP visa, which allows the holder to remain in Singapore for a period of up to one month, renewable for a second month. Whilst most participants did not apply to change their visa status once in Singapore, several

women's (all Filipinas) employers applied for a PAV on their behalf. I also heard anecdotally of women who entered Singapore on student visas (including many PRC women), but did not encounter any of these women through the research as PRCs were not included as a case study for this research. Only a few women overstayed their visas and became unlawful non-citizens in Singapore, but of these no woman actively or deliberately chose to overstay. In other words, their employer or agent did not disclose that their visa had expired. Although there are obviously problems associated with all visa types and statuses where the holder is trafficked or facing some other type of exploitative working arrangement, there are particular issues with each status (SVP and PAV) that are important to draw out when the holder is trafficked:

Social Visit Pass – puts pressure on the holder to perform sexual services intensively during the sojourn since the period of stay is limited to two months maximum (and one month or less if a visa extension is not granted by ICA). Even where women are not trafficked this pressure is equally present (see Yea 2012). In both cases it can have negative health and welfare implications for migrant sex workers, trafficked or not. In particular, migrant women in Singapore's SNEI on this visa related that they must see hundreds of clients during their sojourns just to be able to pay off migration debts and earn some income from their trip. On the other hand, the positive side of this visa status is that - unless a woman's visa expires whilst she is remaining in Singapore (see Unlawful Non-Citizens, below) - she can exit Singapore relatively quickly. This positive is clearly more important for women in exploitative labouring situations.

Performing Artist Visa – allows women to remain in Singapore for a longer period and therefore reduces the intense pressure for them to provide sexual services quickly, but places women in situations where they are forced to remain in exploitative work arrangements for longer periods (at least six months). On the other hand, a sojourn in Singapore with a legal work permit should allow women redress under Singapore's labour laws for a range of offences by their employers, including wrongful deployment, debt bondage, fraud, prostituting another,

unlawful confinement and so on. It also theoretically allows women the possibility (though at present certainly not the guarantee) of compensation. As I wish to emphasise in this report, however, labour problems of entertainers on legitimate work visas who face exploitation in their workplaces have not been addressed under a labour rights framework, only a sexual exploitation framework; even where there are clear dimensions to this exploitation that extend beyond this framing.

Unlawful Non-Citizens – this migration status places women in situations of particularly heightened vulnerability since they are ‘working’ illegally and/ or circumventing Singapore’s migration and employment regulations. If women are in this situation and attempt to leave an exploitative work arrangement - either through their own efforts by running away or where they are detected by authorities - they will be unable to exit Singapore easily and may be liable to a fine or other punitive action for overstaying their visa.

4 Exploitation in Singapore

4.1 Introduction

Foreign women in Singapore's SNEI experience a range of exploitative practices during their sojourns. These are in addition to abuses of their vulnerability whilst still in their home countries which, as suggested in the previous Chapter, primarily takes the form of fraudulently extorted payments for migrating. In this Chapter I document exploitation during and after women's deployment in the SNEI according to three types: financial, sexual and labour. Before examining each of these in turn, it is first necessary to briefly provide an introduction to the two main types of sites (venues) where trafficked Filipina and Indonesian women are deployed in Singapore's SNEI, since practices vary somewhat between these two sites. I wish to also suggest in this chapter that issues relating to mobility (freedom of movement, visa status and so on) comprise an important, but largely neglected issue in understanding experiences of exploitation and that concerns over freedom are critically related to all other problems discussed here. For example, as commonly cited for trafficked women, those who are under surveillance or monitored in their working and living spaces cannot easily leave or alter those situations. Less commonly understood are situations where trafficked women have been detected by authorities and placed on a Special Pass, rendering them unable to leave Singapore and without financial and social support. These restrictions on their mobility in Singapore after exiting exploitative labouring situations also, I believe, confer heightened vulnerabilities on both trafficked women and non-trafficked migrant sex workers.

4.2 Sites of Deployment of Migrant Sexual Labourers

There are four principal sites in which migrant (and local) women are deployed in Singapore's sex and entertainment industry. These are:

- Bars, pubs and nightclubs
- On the street in and outside known commercial sex districts
- In commercial sex district based brothels (both regulated and unregulated)
- In forest based brothels.

Filipinas comprise the mainstay of women deployed in bars and nightclubs, though there are increasing numbers of South Asian, especially Bangladeshi and Vietnamese women also being deployed in these clubs. Indonesian women are found primarily in street-based prostitution along with women from a range of other nationalities including Vietnamese women, mainland Chinese women and South Asian women. There are virtually no women from the two nationalities that comprise the case studies for this report in forest-based brothels, where Thai women formed the mainstay of sexual service providers⁷. In commercial sex districts there were some women in brothels, but the numbers of participants in this study deployed in these establishments was extremely small. Notably, in all four sites trafficked and non-trafficked women were present, often within the same venue/ space. This naturally has implications for delivery of services (health, outreach and so on) and presents challenges for victim identification on the part of both authorities and non-governmental support workers.

The majority of migrant women in all sites entered Singapore on SVPs, although in bars and nightclubs Performing Artists Visas (PAVs) are increasingly being used to deploy women for hostessing and as providers of sexual labour. Unlike a SVP, which has a maximum one month (renewable for one additional month) stay, a PAV allows the holder to remain in Singapore for a

⁷ In fact the research initially began with the inclusion of a Thai component, since this would allow three of the main venues within the sex/ entertainment sector to be covered by the research. Although some interviews were initially conducted the contact organisation committed to facilitate introduction to these women fell through and budget constraints militated against the option of source country based research after Thai women returned home.

period of six months, renewable for a further six months, and to work legally at the venue and for the category of work approved by MOM.

4.3 Financial Exploitation

The majority of participants stated that financial problems were a key dimension of their experience of exploitation in Singapore, and this applied to both trafficked and willing sexual labourers. Women working in bars and clubs usually agreed to a salary amount payable per month, but either did not receive all or part of their salary each month or, for some participants, for their entire contract. This was generally because, like other migrant workers performing low valued work in Singapore, they had to first pay off a debt for their migration. Coupled with this, costs of living in Singapore (food, accommodation, utilities, transport) were normally added to the debt. For many women the initial amount they owed was further inflated through a system of arbitrary penalties if they ‘did something wrong’. This was the case for Ri (28 years, Filipina) and My (17 years, Indonesian) respectively:

I came to Singapore on a performing artist’s visa. I pay PHP 6000 to the recruiter in the Philippines and she told me that is for my ticket and escort once I arrive in Singapore. So I come to Singapore and I found out when I arrive that I shouldn’t have paid that PHP 6000 because I have another debt to my boss in Singapore. My debt to my boss is SGD 1500. I have to entertain customers and go on bar fines to pay the debt. If I do something wrong he [boss] gives me a penalty, so it is impossible to clear the debt. Also he didn’t tell me that I have to provide my food, taxi to work and like that. This is added to my debt so of course I can’t ever pay it off. (Ri, 28 years, Filipina)

When I am still in my hometown there are two guys and one girl and they said their boss asked them to find women and girls in the village to work in another country. They will handle all the costs and guarantee the job.... They offered me work in a cafe in Batam, but in fact we just stay one night in Batam and then they took me to Tanjung Pinang. From my hometown they took me by bus to Telaga Punggung harbour and then by boat to Tanjung Pinang. After the second day there they made me a passport so I can work in Malaysia or Singapore. I don't know how much it costs for me to come to Singapore because my boss pays all the costs. In the beginning I don't know I have a debt. I know it only when I'm in Tanjung Pinang on the sixth day. They said my debt is for all my costs of transport and the documents. They said at first that I could repay this debt by serving drinks as a waitress in a pub, but then they asked me to service the guests as a sex worker. They said if I don't do that they will abandon me on an island. I don't earn any money. Mami takes all the money that I've earned and she said she keeps it in the bank for me. She said after one year, when I pay my debt she will give me whatever is left. (My, 17 years, Indonesian)

Every participant, whether deployed in entertainment venues or on the street stated that they were told they would have to first pay off a debt before they could receive income from their sexual labour, and this was utilised as the key mechanism to deny women salary in both the short and longer term. As alluded to above, some women knew about their debt, whilst for others the debt was either not revealed to them until they reached Singapore or was inflated once they were in Singapore. Thus, debt can be both a facilitator of migration, sometimes embedded in complex social relations at home (see Lainez 2012) and simultaneously a facet of migration that can yoke women to exploitative workplaces and ensure that profits for their labouring accruing primarily to a third party intent on maintaining them in situations of disempowerment and financial deprivation for as long as possible, whilst simultaneously extracting enormous

profits from their labouring. Again, this applies equally to trafficked and willing migrant sexual labourers. Further, debts accrued in a woman's home country – often in similarly exploitative labouring situations – can be a motivation propelling women to Singapore in the first place. Rn's (24 years, Indonesian) experience speaks to many of my participants' concerns about existing and new debts in this regard:

I am a sex worker already in Batam, but my daily living is so high that I'm always in debt to my friends, so I agreed to come to Singapore. The mami who arranged my visit to Singapore agreed to help handle all my documents, passport, and travel costs to Singapore. For all these necessities I didn't pay anything but my salary will be cut to settle the debt which is SGD 1200. The mami said that I can work for one month in Singapore, settle all my debt and make a lot of money on top. When I get to Singapore I must have a lot of guests just to clear my debt. The condition is ninety-five guests short time to clear the debt. I can't really make any extra money at all and actually I did not clear my debt in this first trip to Singapore, which means I need to go back again. (Rn, 24 years)

Importantly, debt bondage – a key indicator of human trafficking – was used as a means to coerce both trafficked and non-trafficked women in all types of prostitution/ entertainment venues in Singapore into performing sexual labour and/ or performing it under conditions not previously agreed to, since women could only be ostensibly 'free' to earn money or leave their employer/ agent once their debt was cleared, as Rn's narrative above suggests (see also section 4.6, below).

Many participants deployed by pimps/ maintainers in street-based prostitution - especially Indonesian women - were, like those in entertainment establishments, told the debts they had to

serve were related to costs associated with organising their migration, as in Rn's case. These debts had to be cleared before they were to be given any money from the sexual services they provided whilst in Singapore. A smaller number of participants deployed in these sites explained that they had not expected to work in the sex industry at all in Singapore and were sold for sex under conditions where there was no promise of remuneration for their services by their pimp.

4.4 Health Issues & Sexual Exploitation

As suggested above (section 4.3), debt bondage was a key inducement for women to perform commercial sexual labour under exploitative and often degrading conditions. This worked in two ways. First, some participants who had agreed to undertake sex work in Singapore were forced to do so under conditions they did not expect or agree to previously. Second, and more commonly, participants were forced to perform sexual labour instead of other work they had agreed to. As Jo stated:

My recruiter, 'Li', told me I would earn commissions for drink sales in a pub in Singapore. Li didn't ask me to pay any fee, because I paid all my costs to come myself. But when I got here [Singapore] I was told by my boss that I have to go out and look for customers for sex because I have to pay an *utang*. The amount is SGD 2500. The first night a Pinoy [Filipino] wanted to buy me on a bar fine but I refuse to go. When we got back to the house after work our minder left us alone, so I ran away. That is after just one night. (Jo, 24 years, Filipina)

My (17 years, Indonesian) whose account of fraudulent recruitment and debt bondage was introduced above, was also clearly in this situation. She further expounded,

If I wasn't tricked I would never have become a sex worker. It is worse for me because I am really forced to do the bad things like oral and anal sex. I was asked to service three men at the same time, but I refuse it and I ran away from the inn.

Thus, sexual exploitation was not uniformly expressed amongst participants and some participants did not experience sexual exploitation at all (usually because they ran away before this could occur), with the nature of their exploitation in the SNEI confined largely to financial aspects. I wish to underscore this point since it is often assumed that sexual exploitation in trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation is uniformly expressed as repeated and prolonged forced prostitution with no opportunity to leave that situation. This was certainly the case for some participants, primarily some Indonesian women. However I found that the majority of participants, especially those deployed in entertainment venues, were expected to perform various gradations of sexual labour, including erotic dancing, oral sex and being fondled. Others, like My and Er experienced more repeated forced intercourse and the requirement to perform other sexual acts.

Health concerns are strongly tied to experiences of sexual labouring, and participants cited three key concerns relating to health. First, some participants stated that they were not able to negotiate condom use with clients, even where their boss or pimp provided them with condoms, as in Er's case:

I have many bad experiences with customers. Many of my customers want me to imitate the sex in the movies on TV [pornography]. When I say I don't want to do that they hit and kick me. I

always ask my customer to use a condom, but they nearly all refuse. The customer demands that I do sex without the condom because they paid for me, so they can do whatever they like. Mami scolds me if I say something to the customer about the condom. (Er, 17 years, Indonesian)

Every time I want to pee it is always pain(ful) and after having sex sometimes I see the blood come out of my vagina, even though it is not my menstruation. (My, 17 years, Indonesian)

Although it is difficult to generalise, from the information gathered from my participants it appears that Indonesian women had more difficulty negotiating safe sex than Filipina participants. This could be due to several factors: Filipinas generally were more competent English speakers and so could negotiate to a greater extent with customers; Filipinas were deployed in venues where intercourse was not the main or only form of sexual labour; Filipinas clientel were often better educated and more likely to be aware of STIs than Indonesian women's clients on the street in Geylang. HOME (2012) recently conducted an excellent study of sex workers health in Batam Island, with one of their key findings relating to condom use amongst clients. According to information collected from 152 sex workers, 85 per cent were inconsistent in the use of condoms when having sex with customers. Further, of the 60 per cent of respondents who had Singaporean customers, only a quarter always used a condom for sex. The study also found that many sex workers did not receive regular health checks and that information relating to STIs was not implemented for the vast majority of respondents (90 per cent). Thus, sexual health vulnerabilities in prior experiences of sex work in Batam appear to be transferred to Singapore for Indonesian migrant sex workers. Further, from Er and My's disclosures, even where they try to ensure safe sexual practices they are powerless to enforce condom use if customers refuse.

Following this then, the second health concern therefore relates to work related violence. Some participants, such as My and Er, stated that many of their clients were violent and abusive before and during intercourse, and/ or they were physically or sexually abused by their boss or pimp/ maintainer. It was not only Indonesian participants who experienced work related violence, as Ri's admission reveals:

In my case I'm beaten two times by my boss. The first time we have a lot of customers so my boss is happy and he starts to drink whiskey. He gets drunk and tries to tell me some story, but I don't get it. So I asked him if I could go home because I'm really tired and it's late. He said "no" and then he slapped me and pushed me against the wall. He asked the bartender for scissors and then he cut my bra, panties and dress. So I'm standing there naked and he makes me stand at the door till 9 a.m. He slapped me again the next day with the bottom of his sandals. Then he said to me if I do something wrong I always get a slap with his sandals and he said, "A person should be lucky to get slapped from my sandals because they are expensive". Then he laughed. After that I thought I'm really wrong to come here in Singapore. (Ri, 28 years, Filipina)

I was offered a job in Singapore by a man who came to my workplace in Bandung. The job is supposed to be a waitress in a pub.... I never do sex work before I came to Singapore. In Singapore I have to look for clients on the street in Geylang. I have a lot of bad experiences of clients humiliating me. One time there were two guests at once, so I had to service two guests at the same time. Many times I got a guest who cums [ejaculates] in my mouth. The guests are mainly from Singapore. (Sy, 21 years, Indonesian)

Finally, all participants without exception were denied decent food and living conditions by their employers or pimps/ maintainers which lead to poor health which participants expressed in terms of feelings of lethargy, depression and fatigue.

4.5 Labour Exploitation

Although the UN Trafficking Protocol distinguishes between trafficking for labour exploitation and trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, in practice elements of exploitation inherent in women's experiences in this study were intertwined, mirroring findings of ethnographies with migrant sexual labourers in other contexts (Parrenas 2011, Yea 2014). Women deployed for exploitative sexual labour, especially in entertainment venues were also expected to perform other duties in their workplaces, which included cleaning and cooking. Apart from additional duties women were also expected to work longer hours than were agreed to, with the majority of participants working for upwards of 16 hours per day, seven days a week.

Mi's (26 years, Filipina) account of her situation in a bar in Singapore encapsulates the multiple sites through which women deployed in bars can experience exploitative labouring experiences. Part of Mi's narrative is reproduced here:

After a few days I reported to Dt [Filipino agent] and I gave her PHP 10,000 to process my papers for an entertainer in Singapore... She told me my work permit would be processed once I was in Singapore. It takes three months and I have to exit to JB [Johor Bahru] for more than one month, so no salary then. Every time a girl runs away from that pub all the other girls have to pay a SGD 200 penalty each. Si [boss] says, "It's alright for the girls to run away because I collect all the penalties". Our situation is this: no food allowance, no transportation to work; no fixed salary, we know already we need to pay rent and it will be deducted, no day off even though we

are supposed to have one every Sunday. We have penalties which include if a girl runs away, or if we get tips from customers, or sometimes if we don't make enough drink commission he takes away our cell phones. We have a quota for drink sales; if we don't get customers to buy us fifteen drinks a night to fulfil our quota we have to stand in the doorway until 11 a.m. the next day and also pay a penalty. If we eat in the pub Si says to us, "Don't eat, you'll get fat". He deducts a penalty for that too.

In fact the pub that Mi was deployed in has been the subject of numerous complaints to the SPF by the Philippines Embassy for various trafficking and labour related offences, and at least fourteen women have run away from that pub since 2011. Despite this, to this day the pub remains in business.

What Mi's case illustrates is that exploitation in the SNEI can, for some women at least, relates principally to *labour* issues and *financial* exploitation rather than to *sexual* exploitation. I cannot overstate the importance of this point; Mi and her compatriots barely mentioned sexual exploitation as a significant concern in their work in the pub. They were preoccupied with issues relating to lack of salary, arbitrary deductions and penalties, humiliation in the workplace, and problems with securing their promised PAV. One of Mi's workmates experienced unwanted advances from the Indian-Singaporean pub boss, and was punished when she refused his advances, but this was the only time any of the women from this pub mentioned problems relating to sex.

4.6 Vulnerabilities and Visas

Once women leave an exploitative working situation in the SNEI they are usually placed on a Special Pass. Women who are trafficked are normally required to remain in Singapore as

witnesses or to assist with police investigations. This response emerges from the primacy of prosecutions of traffickers as the key response of the Singapore government to TIP. If women were previously holding a PAV they may be offered a change of employer so they may continue working during the investigation (personal communication, representative from HOME, January 2014). This is significant because it enables women to continue to work towards the key goal of their migration to Singapore in the first instance; namely to remit money to support family or pay debts. However, for women who are sex trafficked and entered Singapore on a SVP this option of changing employer is not open and women must remain in a shelter or government-run dormitory for the duration of the police investigation. Although they may be able to engage in some kind of skills training or handicraft work, they cannot meet the income expectations that motivated them to come to Singapore initially. Nor can any woman – whether a SVP or PAV holder – choose not to be an identified victim under this framework. Amongst participants in my study this situation creates enormous anxieties for women; they cannot meet their family's financial needs, they may not be able to repay debts (thus sometimes placing their family at risk from debtors), their freedom of movement and association is curtailed (in shelters, dormitories), they may not be able to afford regular communication with family at home, and they face the uncertainty of not knowing for how many months or years they may be required to remain in such a situation.

For women who are caught in vice raids or compliance checks on SNEI venues and are not identified as trafficked, the visa impositions that follow are equally as challenging. In these cases when women are placed on a Special Pass they are either released by authorities and given the option of finding money to pay for their deportation (which nearly always involves returning to sex work), or they are detained for the purposes of investigations (where they face much the same situations as trafficked women formally on SVPs), or they are charged with vice related activities and jailed in one of Singapore's women's prisons. What was unclear to me during this

research – and even today - is how exactly police make determinations of victim or offender status. Is it possible, for example, that some migrant sexual labourers whose migration presents strong elements of trafficking are overlooked in efforts to sort victims from non-victims, especially if police are not provided with adequate training? When discussing the characteristics of trafficked persons with one women’s prison officer, for example, she reflected that, “The situation you are describing seems to apply to many of the women we have in the prison” (personal communication, prison officer, March 2012). As Ham et al (2013) have noted, victim identification can be an arbitrary process, and is often informed by pre-existing stereotypes of women, especially women from developing countries. Is it also not the case that some women may present some elements of trafficking but perhaps not quite be ‘trafficked enough’ to fit government parameters of victimhood? What options for redress are open to these women apart from the punitive visa regimes imposed by the Special Pass?

5 Conclusions, Key Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions and Key Findings

The foregoing report has attempted to outline some of the major characteristics of a system of exploitative labouring for migrant women in Singapore's SNEI. The majority of participants were interviewed in 2010/11, with a smaller number of participants from 2012. Despite intermittent media exposure of trafficking in this context, as well as some limited evidence presented by some NGOs in Singapore, such as HOME, and in migrant source countries, the exploitation of migrant women in Singapore's SNEI remains poorly understood. This includes both where trafficking is present and also where women may be willing sex workers. The agencies and individual recruiters who recruit women in their home countries, the maintainers, pimps and agents that manage the women once they arrive in Singapore, the club and brothel owners and the related businesses that thrive on this economy remain largely intact and continue to extract enormous and ill-gotten profits from exploiting migrant women's sexual labour. Ongoing, unpublished research by the author suggests that this is as true today as it was when this study was undertaken two years ago. Further, women in economically and socially vulnerable situations in Indonesia and the Philippines continue to migrate to Singapore for tenuous and poorly understood work opportunities in the context of economic marginalisation and gendered discrimination in their home countries, and deceit about the nature and/ or conditions of work in Singapore.

Following from the foregoing analysis there are five key findings of this study:

1. Exploitation of migrant women in Singapore's SNEI relates to sexual *and* financial and labour exploitation. These three aspects are not uniformly expressed across the industry with some women primarily facing financial and labour exploitation, others primarily

facing commercial sexual exploitation, and others facing a combination of all these aspects.

2. Both trafficked and willing migrant sex workers in Singapore experience a range of abusive and exploitative practices in the SNEI. In many cases these two groups can face very similar situations, with the only real difference being that some women knew the job prior to migrating (willing) and others were deceived about the job (deceived and coerced).
3. Even where migrant sex workers do not fall under the purview of trafficking, they may nonetheless face degrees of deception relating to other aspects of their work, such as the conditions under which sex work is to be performed and the remuneration they can expect.
4. Health problems faced by migrant sexual labourers in Singapore are not uniformly expressed, with some women facing high risk of STIs and abuse if they attempt to negotiate condom use, other women primarily experiencing physical abuse by bosses and/ or customers, and yet other women experiencing verbal abuse and humiliation. Inadequate food and rest compound health problems women may face. Further, although it was clear that the majority of participants in this study experienced high levels of anxiety, stress and depression, it was difficult to draw any conclusions about psychological health and this would require further in-depth study.
5. Finally, the visa regimes under which women enter Singapore (especially the SVP) and under which they exist post-exit from the SNEI (especially the Special Pass) can exacerbate women's vulnerabilities and expose them to further risks in the SNEI. Trafficking interventions aimed at achieving prosecutions can inadvertently heighten women's levels of anxiety about their situations because of restrictive conditions attached to the visa category of Special Pass.

What these key findings collectively suggest is that there is a *complexity* to exploitation of migrant women in the SNEI and *diversity of experiences* that may be lost in discourses of trafficking which impose clear parameters around victims and other migrant sex workers and around traffickers.

As Weitzer and Ditmore (2010: 329) have elsewhere suggested,

Even where no force or fraud is used, it would be a mistake to assume that facilitators are necessarily benign agents. Some trafficked individuals do not understand the terms of the contract or fully appreciate the impact of debt bondage or how difficult it can be to pay off the debt. Some facilitators alter the terms of the agreement after transit or renege on specific promises. In this scenario, the woman's initial consent is compromised by subsequent, unexpected job requirements. Other workers have little prior awareness of the specific working conditions or risks involved in sex work in the new locale. For those who sold sex in their home country, working conditions in the destination country may be far worse in terms of health, safety, accommodation, and the sexual services required of them. Others enter the sex industry reluctantly, out of an obligation to support their families or because of tacit pressure from their families...

Thus, binary constructions of "good victims" and "bad prostitutes" need to be interrogated and dismantled at a policy, programmatic and popular level (see Jo Doezema 2000). Women's individual motivations, levels or knowledge about their work and conditions, and experiences vary enormously, as the narratives of the women in this study illustrate. Further research with migrant sexual labourers in Singapore from other national, cultural and familial backgrounds will inevitably only deepen these complexities.

In this context the question remains, what actions can be taken to halt the sexual and economic exploitation of migrant sexual labourers in Singapore? As simple as this question appears, suggestions made here are multifarious and complex. The remainder of this chapter puts forward recommendations that fall predominantly within a gender empowerment

framework. Such an approach claims that the choices of women who are the subjects of exploitation in the SNEI should be supported and facilitated to the fullest extent possible, that actions taken on their behalf always involve them as central participants and decision-makers and that knowledge and information should be communicated to them in ways that allow them to make such informed decisions and choices about their lives and futures. Central to such an approach is an aversion to the language of ‘the powerless victim’ while simultaneously recognising that many of these women may be victims of a crime.

5.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

Many of the recommendations put forward in the recent ECPAT report on child sex trafficking in Singapore also hold true for adult women in the SNEI. Here I wish to instead focus on specific suggestions concerning trafficked *adult* women in Singapore.

Vulnerabilities: Redressed or Heightened?

I begin these suggestions with a general claim about the lack of clarity as to whether trafficked women’s rights are enhanced and their vulnerabilities reduced and in what specific ways when they come under the purview of Singapore’s TIP Taskforce. Although sorely needed, no study has been conducted on the impact of the government’s anti-trafficking measures on victims themselves, despite the TIP Taskforce allocating considerable funds to conduct research on trafficking issues in Singapore. In the current milieu victims are given no choice but to remain in Singapore until case investigation or legal proceedings are completed. For migrant sexual labourers there are often limited opportunities to work during this period, as discussed in Chapter Four. To redress the heavy reliance on victim involvement in investigations and prosecutions, especially as witnesses, it would be prudent for the Taskforce to explore two options: first, to explore ways to investigate cases in ways that do not rely so heavily on victim involvement, and; second, to allow victims the opportunity to either return to their home

country and/ or work during such investigations. Currently the option of changing employer is only open to some women who entered Singapore on PAVs. This should be extended to women who entered on SVPs as well.

The Referrals Vortex

Despite the formation of a government Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Taskforce dedicated to developing and implementing anti-trafficking measures in Singapore, and the release of the National Plan of Action to combat human trafficking in Singapore in 2012, some responses to trafficking in the SNEI can act to compromise, rather than enhance the rights and security of women who come under their purview. The referral process for NGOs to direct possible trafficking cases to the TIP Taskforce, in particular, is fraught. Whilst the referral process for labour trafficking cases names specific people within the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM's) section of the TIP Taskforce to contact with possible cases and follow ups, referrals for sex trafficking contain no names and only a number to call. This is extremely problematic because it means that service providers and outreach workers are asked to effectively 'hand over' potentially trafficked persons to a dedicated sex trafficking response team in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) that remains faceless and nameless. When trafficked persons exit exploitative situations with the assistance of outreach workers and civil society organisations, they put enormous trust in those individuals. It is antithetical to the interests of a trafficked person and those supporting them to relinquish responsibility to depersonalised institutions in this way. For this reason many support and outreach workers remain reluctant to refer possible cases of sex trafficking to the MHA team.

Regulating PAVs

Where women enter Singapore on PAVs, it is essential to encourage transparent recruitment mechanisms, model contracts, checks on placements and distribution of emergency and support

contact information. In this regard it is important that the Singaporean and source country governments develop more rigorous verification of venues where performing artist visa holders are deployed and agencies that facilitate the deployment of PAV holders. This would include legal and financial responsibility for violated contracts and a ban on re-licensing of agencies and individuals where there have been past violations associated with human trafficking and other exploitative labour practices.

Moving On

Studies of the needs of women trafficked in other contexts have found that women generally do not desire to be kept for long periods in shelters, pathologised as victims, be subject to interventions based on predetermined stereotypes of victimology in trafficking, and denied opportunities to move on with their lives in ways that restore their agency and dignity (Lisborg 2013, Lisborg and Plambesh 2009, Yea 2014). Some of the actions that may enhance the ability of women to move on from exploitative labour migrations in the SNEI include:

- Support in filing civil claims for back payment and compensation (reduce financial vulnerability)
- The creation of an appropriate and dedicated training/ job scheme by which victims are able to earn a decent wage whilst remaining in Singapore for purposes stated above (reduce financial vulnerability and anxiety about meeting financial responsibilities)
- Specialised psychological counselling where required (but without the presumption that women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation will always and necessarily be psychologically damaged) (see Lisborg and Plambesh 2009 for further discussion of this)
- Specialised health services where required

- Assistance with the recovery of documents and the return of documents to women
- Decent accommodation options whilst in Singapore which do not replicate the conditions women experienced during deployment in SNEI venues (for example, ensuring victims have freedom of movement and access to a cell phone or email)
- Ensuring that the above are delivered through appropriate linguistic and cultural mediums
- Provision of a period of reflection for victims, where they are provided with information to make informed choices relating to their situation and options (such as the implications of returning to their home country, or of assisting police as witnesses)

These considerations would be met in addition to enhancing financial and social assistance for women who remain in Singapore on Special Passes for the purposes of police investigations discussed above.

Improved legal assistance

Women should be provided with information relating to legal options for redress that are available in Singapore and in their home country. Where NGOs provide this role adequate financial support should be made available to NGOs for this purpose. For example, in the case of PAV holders, if their migration was organised through a POEA (Philippines Overseas Employment Administration) registered agency, they may be able to claim loss salary and other expenses once they return to the Philippines.

Creation of funds for victims

Funds to enable women to return to their home country would reduce their risk of being forced to re-enter the sex industry temporarily to earn money for the purchase of passage back home (as in current practices). Such funds could be created through confiscating profits from brothel and club owners, and from international organisations (such as the IOM and UN Women), the Singaporean government, donor agencies, or through relevant source country Embassies.

Anti-Trafficking Legislation

The recently announced private member's bill on Human Trafficking by MP Christopher de Souza (November 2013) presents an opportunity to better support victims of trafficking in Singapore through victim-centred approaches and a gender empowerment framework. It is essential that revised and newly adopted legislation address both punitive actions against traffickers *and* support victims through both material supports (the opportunity to undertake civil claims, avail opportunities for alternative livelihoods, appropriate short term accommodation, the ability to maintain contact with family back in their home country and so on) and non-material supports (treatment with respect and dignity, participation in decisions around their immediate futures, be provided with a period of reflection where they may consider options available to them, and so on). It is important that a supportive environment be created for victims so they are encouraged to cooperate with law enforcement in the prosecutions, but also as an end in and of itself.

Raids as a Mode of Detection

Scathing critiques of the use of raids and similar tactics (such as police posing as customers in prostitution and entertainment venues) in prostitution districts as a mode of detecting trafficked persons have been put forward repeatedly over the past few years (in particular see Agustin 2007). These are important to reiterate here, since the major mode of detection in Singapore continues to be raids on prostitution venues and districts. The role of raids can be scrutinized on

three grounds. First, identifying victims of trafficking through raids and similar practices is often counter-productive to securing the cooperation of those women detected through these activities. One study in the United States of law enforcement views of the effectiveness of raids found that they were almost universally ineffective as an anti-trafficking tool because they undermined trafficked persons trust in authorities and reinforced pre-existing fears amongst trafficked persons (Ditmore 2009, see also Ditmore and Thukral 2012).

Second, it is debatable whether authorities are able to correctly distinguish victims of trafficking from other migrant sexual labourers through the course of raids and on what basis these classifications are made. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Four, one women's prison officer in Singapore reflected that there are many convicted migrant sex workers who appear to more closely fit the characterization of trafficked women. Due to fear and other factors women are often reluctant to disclose details of their situations to authorities, especially in dramatic and violent events such as raids (Brennan 2005). Looking for facial or bodily signs on women does not necessarily redress these dilemmas of identification since both consenting and coerced sexual labourers are likely to express fear in raids and many of consenting sexual labourers may also meet indicators of trafficking, such as having documents removed or withheld, being in debt bondage situations, and having freedom of movement and association curtailed (see Brunovskis and Surtees 2012). As suggested earlier in the report, many voluntary or intentional migrant sex workers will only have their freedom restored in Singapore once they have repaid migration and other associated debts.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, raids and similar tactics are deplorable from a human rights perspective (see Project X, no date on this in Singapore). Whilst women who are in coercive situations in the SNEI no doubt desire to be removed from such situations, raid may not be the most appropriate way of achieving this and is likely to result in massive deportation or criminalization of migrant sex workers, both trafficked and consenting. There now exists an extensive academic and NGO literature documenting the ways anti-trafficking and anti-vice

responses to the SNEI in different national contexts can compromise, rather than enhance the rights of trafficked sexual labourers and willing migrant sex workers (GAATW 2007, Agustin 2007, Parrenas 2011). It would serve anti-trafficking stakeholders well to familiarise themselves with this literature.

Re-thinking Traffickers

In Singapore traffickers emerge in the public imagination as shadowy figures linked to transnational organized crime. These stereotypes flourish in a context where information about the profiles of traffickers investigated and prosecuted remains piecemeal. Information from other contexts reveals that those facilitating migration across borders for the purposes of exploiting a vulnerable person are often small-scale operators with no transnational crime connections. In addition, intending migrants often utilize their social networks to realize their migration; whether through borrowing money from informal creditors (see Lainez 2013). As Weitzer and Ditmore (2010: 330) have elsewhere suggested, “[I]t is clear that traffickers do not necessarily fit the “folk devil” stereotype popularized by the antitrafficking movement. Some facilitators are relatives, friends, or associates who recruit workers and assist with migration, and these individuals have a qualitatively different relationship with workers than do predators who use force or deception to lure victims into the trade”. What this suggests is that, as with migrant sexual labourers, there may be a complexity to the profiles of traffickers and facilitators of migration to Singapore that are currently not well-understood. There is an urgent need to better understand the diverse locations and intentions of these facilitators so that prosecutions make inroads into disrupting the activities of individuals intent on the exploitation of migrant women, rather than benign actors who may not be aware of exploitative outcomes when they assist in realizing women’s migrant aspirations.

Those who are not trafficked enough

Most of the above suggestions are oriented to women who are identified as trafficked in the SNEI. However, the data collected for this study suggests that there are many other women who are not trafficked, or not ‘trafficked enough’ to qualify as victims under current modes of identification, but who nonetheless experience vulnerabilities and exploitative practices in their work. By not ‘trafficked enough’, I mean that women may consent to undertake sexual labour whilst in Singapore, but may still be deceived about other conditions attached to that work (see Chapter Two), and/ or who may face sexual and physical health problems. These practices can occur at the hands of both employers/ pimps/ maintainers and authorities charged with regulating the SNEI in Singapore, such as the vice squad. Important questions remain about how these women can be better supported in Singapore, especially given that even sex worker outreach projects have difficulties in accessing these populations (personal communication, representative of Project X, August 2013). Privileging the violence against women classified as trafficked without attending to the vulnerabilities that confront other migrant sex workers in Singapore has the effect of reinforcing conservative views about the evils of prostitution and legitimizing punitive outcomes for those who fall outside the parameters of being completely duped about their work in the SNEI in Singapore. Thus, not only must response to these women change but also broader attitudes that undergird current responses to them.

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Appendix One – Background Information for Participants

Table One – Filipina Participants

Name	Age (when entered Singapore)	Place of Origin	Marital Status*	Children	Education
1. Je**	35	Cavite City	Separated	3	High School graduate
2. Sh	30	Pasay City	De facto	2	High School graduate
3. Mi	26	Bulacan	Single Mother	2 (1 died)	High School graduate
4. Jo	24	Pampanga	Separated	2	High School graduate
5. Em	25	Pampanga	Married	1	High School graduate
6. Di	22	Pampanga	Single parent	1	High School graduate
7. Ri	28	Pasig City	Single	-	High School graduate
8. Vi	27	San Jose City	Single Mother	1	College dropout (no jobs)

9. An	34	Nueve Ejela	Separated	3	College dropout (dislike course)
10. Li	27	Palawan	Separated	3	College dropout (became pregnant)
11. Ch	20	Laguna	Single Mother	1	High School graduate
12. Ap	23	Bataan	Single Mother	2	College graduate
13. Mo	27	Zambales	Single Mother	1	College graduate
14. No	30	Bulacan	Married	2	High School graduate
15. Gr	30	Bulacan	Married	2	College dropout (became pregnant)
16. Vi	37	Bulacan	Married	4	High School graduate
17. Ve	28	Manila	Single Mother	3	College dropout (no reason given)

18. Ji	25	Manila	Single Mother	1	College dropout (financial reason)
19. Vn	28	Manila	Single	3 adopted	College dropout (financial reason)
20. Jm	28	Manila	De facto	1	College dropout (financial reason)
21. La	26	Calocan City	De facto	1 adopted	High School dropout
22. Jf	34	Quezon City	Married	3	High School graduate
23. Ab	23	Manila	Single Mother	1	No information
24. Tr	24	Bulacan	Married	2	High School graduate
25. Rh	25	Rizal	Single Mother	2	High School graduate
26. Ar	25	Quezon City	Separated	3	High School graduate
27. La	24	Gapan	Single	2	High School

			Mother		graduate
28. Sa	27	Bulacan	De facto	3	College graduate
29. Jc	19	Sabang Palay	Single Mother	1	College dropout (financial reason)
30. Wi	19	Batangas	Single	-	High School graduate
31. Jl	18	Batangas	Single	-	High School graduate
32. Ro	24	Quezon City	Separated	1	High School graduate
33. Ge	30	Quezon City	Separated	1	High School graduate
34. Lz	18	Laguna	Single	-	High School graduate
35. Ja	22	Laguna	Separated	1 (died)	High School graduate
36. Sh	31	Calocoan	Married	4	High School graduate
37. Vn	24	Bagio City	No information	No information	High School graduate
38. Gc					
39. Mb					

40.					
41. Al	28	Calocoan	Separated	3	College dropout (financial reasons)
42. Jn	26	Luzon	Separated	2	College dropout (got married)
43. Ft	24	Manila	De facto	1	High School graduate
44. Mn	31	Batangas	Separated	3	College graduate
45. Kt	21	Nueve Visia	Single	-	College undergraduate
46. Mr	21	Davao	Single	-	College Undergraduate
47. Rz	30	Davao	Married	4	High School graduate
48. Ru	25	Manila	De facto	1	High School graduate
49. No	28	Davao	De facto	3	High School graduate
50. Kr	24	Davao	Single Mother	1	College dropout (no reason)

51. Jn*	23	Bulacan	De facto	1	High School graduate
52. Gl*	26	Caralyn Valley	Single Mother	2	High School graduate
53. Jm*	26	Manila	Single	-	High School graduate
54. Li*	22	Manila	Separated	2	High School graduate
55. Ao	27	Manila	Single Mother	1	College graduate
56. Js*	25	Cagayan Valley	De facto	2	College graduate

*Single Mother refers to women who have children out of wedlock, including those in de facto relationships and subsequently separate from their partner/ boyfriend. Separated refers to those women who are legally married but have discontinued their relationships with their husband. Divorce is not permitted under Philippine law.

**Indicates participants who were not trafficked (6 in total), but experienced other vulnerabilities in their migration/ work experiences in Singapore.

Table Two – Indonesian Participants

Name	Age (when entered Singapore)	Place of Origin	Marital Status*	Children	Education
1. Er	16	Unknown	Single	1	No formal school
2. Ky	23	Rawa Kuning, Jakarta	Divorced	1	High School Graduate
3. Ay**	25	Belitung, Sumatera Selatan	Divorced	2	High School Graduate
4. Sh	24	Semarang, Jawa Tengah	Single	-	High School Graduate
5. Dn	22	Jakarta	Single	-	Vocational High School
6. Yn	18	Perbaungan, Sumatera Utara	Single	-	High School Graduate
7. Jn***	20	Bandung	Single	-	Primary School Graduate
8. Mr**	24	Nusa Tenggara Tengah	Single	-	High School Graduate

		(Kupang)			
9. Nr	24	Medan, Sumatera Utara	Single	-	High School Graduate
10. Fb	29	Jakarta	Single Mother	1	High School Graduate
11. Nn	22	Central Java	Single	-	No information
12. Pt***	19	Semarang	Single	-	High School Graduate
13. Dw***	23	Jakarta	Single	-	High School Graduate
14. Rn	17	Probolinggo, Jawa Timur	Single	-	High School Graduate
15. In***	21	West Java	Single	-	Primary School Graduate
16. Di***	19	South Kalimantan	Single	-	High School dropout
17. Li**	21	Biltar, East Java	Single	-	High School Graduate
18. St***	22	Semarang	Single	-	High School dropout
19. Da**	23	Indramayu, West Java	Single	-	High School dropout

20. Mi**	23	Subang, Jawa Barat	Single	-	High School Graduate
21. Js**	19	Lampun, Sumatera	Single	-	High School Graduate
22. De**	20	Jawa Timur	Single	-	High School Graduate
23. Wl**	23	Majalengka	Single	-	High School dropout
24. Id	25	Indramayu, Jawa Barat	Divorced	-	High School dropout
25. Au**	22	Jawa Tengah	Single Mother	1	High School dropout
26. My	22	Jawa Barat	Single Mother	2	High School dropout
27. Mt	16	Grobogan, Semarang	Single	-	High School dropout
28. Af	26	Jawa Timur	Single	-	High School Graduate
29. Nn**	23	Malang, Jawa Timur	Single	-	High School dropout
30. Wd	23	Jawa Barat	Single	-	High School dropout
31. Rn**	25	Surabaya, Jawa Timur	Single	-	High School Graduate
32. En	21	West Java	Divorced	-	High School

					dropout
33. Li	21	Medan	Single	-	High School dropout
34. Ag	22	Medan	Single	-	High School Graduate
35. My	17	Pandegelang, Banten	Single	-	High School dropout
36. St	17	Padalarang, West Java	Single	-	High School graduate
37. Sy	21	Cirebon, West Java	Single	-	Primary School graduate
38. Ik	20	Indramayu, West Java	Single	-	High School dropout
39. Hn**	22	Pamembang, South Sumatra	Single	-	High School Graduate
40. Ir	20	West Java	Single	-	Primary School Graduate
41. Rt***	21	Medan	Single	-	High School dropout
42. Ss***	19	West Java	Single	-	Graduate Primary School

43. Pw**	20	West Java	Single Mother	1	High School dropout
44. Nd***	26	Surabaya, East Java	Single Mother	2	High School dropout
45. La	20	Indramayu, West Java	Single	-	Graduate Primary School
46. Ag	23	East Java	Divorced	-	High School dropout
47. Ml	25	Medan	Divorced	1	High School Graduate
48. Pi	22	Bandung	Single	-	High School Graduate
49. Li	21	East Java	Single	-	High School dropout
50. Vi	23	Jakarta	Separated	1	High School Graduate

*Single Mother refers to women who have children out of wedlock, including those de facto relationships and subsequently separate from their partner/ boyfriend. Separated refers to those women who are legally married but have discontinued their relationships with their husband.

**Indicates participants who were not trafficked (13 in total), but experienced other vulnerabilities in their migration/ work experiences in Singapore.

***Indicates participants who were not trafficked to Singapore (as in **) but who were believed by the researcher to have been internally trafficked to Batam Island, after which they became voluntary sex workers.

Appendix Two – Sample of Trafficking Cases Documented in the Research

Filipinas

CASE	Date	Location/Referral	Age on Arrival	Type of Expl'n	Summary of trafficking conduct
3	of Interview				
Mi	10 Feb 2009 (present with a 2 nd woman)	Philippines Embassy	26	Sexual	<p>A friend introduced Mi to a recruiter near her house. Mi gave PP 8000 to the recruiter, which she loaned from her grandmother. Her friend had returned from Singapore with PP 40,000, which was an incentive for Mi to apply. Mi met the recruiter in an internet cafe and asked Mi for an additional PP2500 to process papers. The recruiter told Mi her work permit as an entertainer would be processed in Singapore, after arrival. The agent promised Mi she would receive a fixed salary and costs would be covered (food, accommodation, transport and so on). This seemed reasonable as Mi had worked in Japan previously as an entertainer.</p> <p>Upon arrival to Singapore on July 16 2008 two women fetched Mi from the airport. They took her to a house where she ate, bathed and then they told her to get ready for work. Mi was driven to the pub where she was deployed.</p>

					<p>Mi's boss failed to apply for a work permit on her behalf and she was forced to exit twice to Malaysia; the second time she stayed there for one month. Finally her boss secured her permit and she re-entered Singapore. She did not receive any salary to this point, since her boss feared she would run away in Malaysia if she was paid her salary.</p> <p>Mi's working conditions included no day off in a month, no salary, deductions for food and accommodation, and penalties if a nightly 'drink quota' was not met. She and her co-workers were routinely denied food for fear they would become fat and unattractive to customers. She would have to work even if she was sick, including if she had a fever. Mi's boss was violent and abusive towards the women employed in the pub and Mi was scared. She believed that if she ran away when she was on a work permit she would be sent to jail. In one incident Mi's boss severely beat a workmate and Mi and three of her workmates decided to run away with the help of Mi's boyfriend.</p> <p>After one night they women presented at the Philippines Embassy for assistance.</p>
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CASE	Date of Interview	Location/Referral	Age on Arrival	Country of Origin	Type of Expl'n	Summary of trafficking conduct
4						
Jo	11 February 2009 (present with another 2 women)	Philippines Embassy	24	Philippines	Sexual	<p>Jo was approached by a woman in a supermarket in Pampanga. The woman asked Jo if she would like to work in Singapore as a waitress in a pub. The woman did not ask for a recruiter's fee, but when Jo arrived in Singapore she was presented with a SGD 2500 debt. The woman introduced Jo to another Filipina, who Jo described as her manager.</p> <p>Jo travelled to Singapore with her manager and upon arrival was taken to the pub in Lucky Plaza where she was to be deployed. Before presenting at Immigration in Singapore Jo was given PP30,000 'show money', which she had to return immediately after clearing Immigration.</p> <p>The owner of the pub and told her</p>

					<p>she would have to “go out and look for customers” in order to pay her debt. Customers would normally pay for Jo to be ‘bar fined’. She was also told the cost for food and accommodation would also be borne by her.</p> <p>The first night at the pub a Filipino customer bought Jo’s time for drinks at their table and then wanted to bar fine Jo. She refused and was chastised by the pub owner. When her manager took her back to the house of the pub owner at 2 a.m. she ran away to her the house of an uncle of hers who resided in Singapore. The following day she presented herself at the Philippines Embassy for assistance.</p>
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CASE	Date	Location/Referral	Age on Arrival	Type of Expl'n	Summary of trafficking conduct
An	2 April 2009	Philippines Embassy	34	Sexual	<p>An had a friend in the Philippines who told her that it is very quick to come to Singapore for work as a waitress if she would like to try. Her friend invited her to her house to introduce her to the agent who would make the arrangements. The agent had worked in Singapore previously and told An she would not have to pay any fee.</p> <p>When An arrived in Singapore on 2 December 2009 she was met by an employee of the pub where she was to be deployed. She was driven to a house where she would reside with other women working in the pub and told to shower and prepare for work. When she arrived at the pub that night she said she was shocked at the work and told the boss of the pub that this was not the work she wanted. He replied that she could leave after she repaid a debt of SGD 3500 to him, which was the cost of her migration and deployment. She had no prior knowledge of this debt but had to submit to this arrangement because she was monitored by a 'watcher' who was employed by the pub owner.</p>

				<p>She was also told she must pay SGD 15 per day for the cost of accommodation, which she expected would be free, according to the agent in the Philippines.</p> <p>In one month An had an average of between 5-6 bar fine customers. She said she would try to make sure she cultivated regular customers so she would not have to have intercourse with many different men. She stated that around 90% of the customers in the pub were Singaporean.</p> <p>Because she had to repay this debt she did not receive any money from the sexual labour she was forced to perform. After two months her Social Visit Pass visa was due to expire. Her boss refused to send her and some of the other women to Malaysia to renew their visas because it was too expensive. Instead her boss hid the women and continued to exploit them in the pub.</p> <p>For a further six weeks An was forced to work, until one night the boss left the door unlocked in the house and she ran to the Philippines Embassy.</p> <p>The Philippines Embassy advised An to surrender to ICA because she had overstayed her visa. The ICA officer in charge of her case issued An a Special Pass</p>
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					<p>for 1 week, and then again for a further 2 weeks. The officer decided to issue An a SGD 300 fine for overstaying her visa. She was also told to purchase and present an air ticket as proof of her intention to leave Singapore. An was unable to raise the money for the fine or ticket. The Philippines Embassy pleaded leniency in her case because she was victim of trafficking. An did not want to make a complaint to the police because she would have to remain in Singapore even longer, which she felt would again forestall her ability to earn income to remit to her children back in the Philippines.</p>
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CASE	Date	Location/Referral	Age on Arrival	Type of Expl'n	Summary of trafficking conduct
Ap 12	11 June 2009	Philippines Embassy	23	Sexual	<p>Ap was walking around a mall in Pampanga when she was approached by a man handing out flyers to work in Singapore as a waitress in a restaurant. My friend and I called the phone number on the flyer and met the agent at the same mall. The agent asked for PP 5000 for air ticket and other unspecified costs. She also told Ap and her friend that they would each need to pay SGD 1800 for fee and SGD 15 per day for accommodation. Ap had to borrow the PP 5000 from an informal moneylender in the Philippines, but the agent assured her she could make this money back quickly once in Singapore.</p> <p>Ap and her friend flew to Singapore and were met upon arrival by an agent who took them to stay in a room in a two storey house. In the house they were told by the agent that they needed to see customers for sex. They were locked in the house and only taken out to stand on the street in front of Mustafa to solicit. The agent procured clients on their behalf whilst they were on the street. The agent would tell prospective clients</p>

				<p>that they could have Ap for SGD 50 for two hours and take her to a nearby hotel.</p> <p>Ap recounted that her first customer was a South Asian man and he wanted sex with no condom. Ap was scared and refused, but the man hurt her and grabbed her hand and pushed her. He put saliva on his penis but they never had intercourse. Instead he inserted 3 fingers into Ap's vagina and then he went out of the hotel room. He refused to pay and complained to the agent, who became angry with Ap. She was forced to service one more client before she and her friend ran away.</p> <p>Ap's agent withheld their passports, and threatened to call the Philippines and tell their families what they were doing in Singapore, so she was scared to escape. But after being forced onto clients she decided it was best to run, so they two stole their passport back from the agent. They made their way to Lucky Plaza, as they knew this was a popular hangout for Filipino migrants in Singapore. They met a Filipina who directed them to the Philippines Embassy where they requested assistance.</p>
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					<p>Both Ap and her friend had their passports and their SVP visas were still valid, but the agent had cancelled their return tickets to the Philippines after they ran away, and they had no money to buy new ones.</p> <p>Further, they were concerned about returning to the Philippines with debts incurred from their migration.</p>
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Indonesians

CASE	Date	Locatio	Age	Type	Summary of trafficking conduct
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	Intervi	Referral	Arriva	Expl'n	
	ew		l		
Er	14 August 2010	Shelter Batam Is	16	Sexual	<p>At the age of 10 years old, Er was sold by her stepmother to a man in his 40s who was to be her “husband”. She had never received any formal schooling and did not know how to read or write. She was forced to have sex with her husband before the onset of puberty. In addition he forced her to do all the housework and cooking for him.</p> <p>She ran away after one year and drifted to a nearby city where she met a woman who promised to help her find work in Jakarta. She went with the woman who sold her into prostitution. She was forced to have sex with</p>

				<p>up to 15 men per day and was not allowed to leave the brothel. She never received salary.</p> <p>One of her customers promised her a better job working outside prostitution in another part of Indonesia (Batam Island). When she reached Batam she was sold for a second time into prostitution to a KTV bar in Batam. She was sold to a KTV bar and was forced into prostitution at the age of 16.</p> <p>She was asked by a “friend” of the mammy in the bar to accompany her to Singapore for a shopping trip. After her friend organised her false documentation (which Er believed was real) the pair travelled by ferry to Singapore.</p> <p>Er was taken to a hotel in Geylang where she was sold to customers from the hotel room. The friend advertised her to Singaporean clients as “barang baru” (new goods). She did not receive any money from servicing these clients, and was told the money would be used to pay off a migration debt that she had not known about or agreed to.</p> <p>She managed to run away from the hotel and made her way back to Harbourfront. She bought a ferry ticket back to Batam from money she stole from the friend. Three months after her return to Batam she discovered</p>
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					she was pregnant as a result of her experiences in Singapore. She sought an abortion at a local hospital but was told her pregnancy was too far advanced. She was referred to a local NGO in Batam, where she remains with her newborn daughter to this day.
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