

Case study from the POPPY Project

Ada*, Sierra Leone

When I was 23 I was trafficked by my boyfriend into prostitution.

My parents had thrown me out of the house for converting to Christianity, and going against their religion, so I was living with a friend and supporting myself. My father had beaten me and was abusive verbally too.

I was finding life very hard living with my friend, so when my boyfriend suggested that we move to the UK and get married, I was very excited. I thought it was a good chance to start a new life.

He paid for everything and we travelled together straight to London. I carried my own papers and travel documents. I was happy. I thought I was leaving the past behind me and starting again.

Three men picked us up from the airport. I thought they were my boyfriend's friends. They took us to a house and while we were there, my boyfriend left. I did not see him go but after he had gone one of the men raped me.

They took me to a brothel and made me work there for six months. There were five other women there. I had to have sex with two or three men a day and I was kept locked in at all times. I was exhausted as I had to see customers at whatever time they came to the brothel, so I was often woken up in the middle of the night. The men had guns and I was threatened a lot with physical violence, so I was afraid to say no. I was also too afraid to ask the customers for help because the men told me they would find out and kill me.

Usually the customers wanted safe sex, but sometimes they wouldn't let me use a condom. They paid more when they wanted this.

I saw a lot of bad things while I was at the brothel. I saw the other women being beaten and raped. I was raped too.

I escaped at New Year, when the men held a New Year's Eve party and I managed to run out of the back door.

I find it very hard to trust people now and I do not like myself. I can't believe my boyfriend did this to me.

*This is not her real name.

ENDS

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