

## Survivor stories

*Names changed to protect identities*

### Options:

1. **Namazzi:** female, age 16, Uganda, survival
2. **Nafuna:** female, age 17, Uganda, survival
3. **Zarifa:** female, age 16, Kenya, survival
4. **Esmerelda:** female, young adult, The Dominican Republic, raid
5. **Padmini, Anishi and their children:** females; mid-20s, 9 and 11; South Asia, covert
6. **Reyna:** female, age 4, The Philippines, online exploitation

## **NAMAZZI**

**Location:** Uganda

**Rescue type:** Survival

**Age at rescue:** 16

### ***BROKEN PORTION OF STORY***

**Namazzi was abandoned by her parents, sexually exploited in a brothel, pregnant at age 13 and addicted to drugs to deal with the trauma of selling herself to survive.**

As a young child, Namazzi's father abandoned her, and her grandmother took her in. Because of her grandmother's cruelty and abuse, she ran away and ended up in a crime-ridden slum.

When she was 12 years old, Namazzi turned to drugs to cope with her trauma. By age 13, she was entrapped in a brothel, addicted to opiates and pregnant. With no support system, she gave birth alone—without medical care—twice. Her first baby died in childbirth, her second was taken away by the father.

### ***RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY***

At age 16, a Destiny Rescue agent found Namazzi and offered her a way out. After months of declining due to hopelessness, she accepted and joined our residential program. Her journey was difficult between drug addiction withdrawal, extreme shame, guilt and attempted suicide.

Our counselors helped Namazzi develop a healthy view of herself, and everything changed when she accepted Christ and realized she was a child worthy of love. *"I found the Lord. Because... the project changed me, I serve the Lord,"* Namazzi exclaimed.

One night, she had a dream where she heard a voice tell her to change her name to a word meaning "victory." So she did.

"Victory" now praises God enthusiastically in her church choir and counsels other girls. She has plans to open her own boutique.



*You can help rescue children like Victory who are being sexually exploited with no hope of escape.*

**[Read Victory's full story and recent follow-up>>](#)**

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## NAFUNA

**Location:** Uganda

**Rescue type:** Survival

**Age at rescue:** 17

### ***BROKEN PORTION OF STORY***

**Nafuna lost her mother, found work in a bar to survive and soon found herself being sexually exploited by abusers who saw her as nothing more than a product.**

After her mother's death, Nafuna moved to the city when she was 14 years old to find work. The child fell into what she called "the bar lifestyle." The exploitative waitressing work was barely enough to keep her afloat, and the bar owner expected her to sleep with the customers. She enjoyed the music and dancing, but her life was disjointed, directionless and hopeless.

### ***RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY***

**But a relentless rescue agent** called Nafuna again and again, pleading with her to join our program. Finally, the 17-year-old decided to give Destiny Rescue a try. What happened next changed her life.

She expected the residential home to be regimented and judgemental. What she found was **drastically different**. While the regularly scheduled meals, prayer time and Bible study took some getting used to, it wasn't the cold, rigid place she expected. After all she'd survived, she cherished having quality meals and undisturbed sleep.

Even more surprisingly, she didn't feel like she was living in a convent. She wasn't just free *from* exploitation; **she was free to be herself**. She still loved music, but now she was singing hymns and upbeat worship songs. She even joined the program's dance worship team. *"They didn't stop me from dancing,"* she said. *"Instead, I'm dancing differently."*

But it was the people that shocked her the most. Survivors in various stages of their journey toward freedom all lived, ate and laughed together.



This fact alone made a huge impact on her. Nafuna witnessed the change she hoped to experience first-hand in the lives of these other survivors.

Despite coming from situations similar to hers, God's love permeated their actions, filling them with a contented joy that affected everything they did.

It's a change that she's experienced herself since then.

*"She can't speak 10 words without mentioning God,"* David, our operations manager in Uganda, said.

Once her time in the Residential Care facility was up, old "clients" tried to get her to return to bar work. Fearless in her newfound faith, **Nafuna shared the gospel with the men who abused her.**

*"They ran away,"* she said, smiling.

Nafuna now works as a successful hairdresser with plans to expand her business. She even traveled to a different city to teach her trade, investing the money she earned by buying a cow!

Grounded in the One who changed her life, Nafuna's future is full of hope. *"I will never forget God,"* she said during a recent interview. *"His Word will never depart from my life."*

*You can help rescue children like Nafuna who are being sexually exploited with no hope of escape.*

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## ZARIFA

**Location:** Kenya

**Rescue type:** Survival

**Age at rescue:** 16

### ***BROKEN PORTION OF STORY***

**Zarifa was forced to endure sexual exploitation to help feed her family. She dropped out of school, suffered horrible abuse and was pressured into using drugs to numb the pain and fear.**

She desperately wanted to find a way to contribute to help her family. Her older sister began selling herself to help pay for food and school fees for her siblings. Eager to help and influenced by some less-than-ideal peers, Zarifa decided to follow her sister's example.

Soon after venturing into exploitation, one of her customers was extremely rough with young Zarifa, leaving her **traumatized and frightened**. Rather than coming to her rescue, Zarifa's friends pressured her into taking drugs to numb the pain and fear so that she could go back to work.

Zarifa was spiraling quickly. Depression crept in to join her anxiety. There was no discernible goal ahead of her, no light at the end of the tunnel. **"My life was... stolen,"** she said to our interviewers. "My life was just a mess."

### ***RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY***

After her rescue, everything changed.

When asked about the source of her joy, her answer is simple: **"Having God."**

"When I came here, (my life) changed abruptly—in a positive way," Zarifa said.

Shortly after rescue, she accepted Christ into her heart. She's turned from the negative influence of a toxic friend group and made great strides to shrugging off the weight of depression. Even Zarifa is surprised by the change, exclaiming, "I became a leader in the church, which I wasn't expecting!"



God's work in her heart, coupled with the award-winning trauma resilience training, gave her internal freedom that equipped her to move forward in life. But **true rescue must address the vulnerabilities** that led to exploitation in the first place. That's why we equipped her father to begin a small tailoring business, which would supply the family with a vital source of income.

Zarifa no longer needs to depend on abusive men to afford a meal, and that freedom shows. When asked what it felt like to join the program, she responded, **"I felt secure. I felt protected."**

For a child, feeling safe is foundational to a thriving childhood. Now that Zarifa has that, she has room to dream for the future. "I want to be a lecturer. I want to lecture university students to tell them about life," the diligent girl said. "I would like to help others the way you helped us—the way Destiny Rescue has helped."

Rescue doesn't just end exploitation for a child. It gives her the chance to be a kid again. For Zarifa, rescue went beyond just practical needs.

As their time together wound down, our interviewers asked what rescue had done for her, and she responded, **"Rescue gave us food and everything, and happiness also."**

*You can help rescue children like Zarifa who are being sexually exploited with no hope of escape.*

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## ESMERELDA

**Location:** The Dominican Republic

**Rescue type:** Raid

**Age at rescue:** Young adult

### ***BROKEN PORTION OF STORY***

**Esmerelda thought she had taken a dream job in the Dominican Republic—upon landing, she was promptly threatened, abducted and forced into sexual exploitation along with dozens of other victims.**

Upon landing, her “employers” promptly confiscated her passport and abducted the young woman, threatening violence if she resisted. She was taken to a hotel and told she’d accrued a hefty debt for her travel expenses that they covered. To pay off that fake debt used as debt bondage, she was forced into sexual exploitation.

She was professionally photographed and added to a catalog of other victims so that sex buyers could choose the girl they’d like to purchase for an evening. The traffickers shuffled her and the others between clubs and bars, where they offered the captive women for sale. During it all, the criminals used various forms of manipulation to keep the women compliant. “They (the traffickers) had to use a love drug in order for them to stay in such a horrible situation,” Jacob, one of our local agents, said.

### ***RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY***

Despite being constantly under guard any time she wasn’t being sold for sex, Esmerelda managed to get a call out to her family.

When her family heard about her plight, they were horrified. They quickly called the Colombian Embassy in the Dominican Republic to ask for help. The embassy contacted local law enforcement and asked that they open a case to find the trafficked woman.

The local authorities **contacted us**.



Our team acted fast, organizing a raid with the police. While that raid granted Esmerelda her freedom, the traffickers spotted officers and fled before they could be arrested. **What Esmerelda did next changed the whole investigation.**

As she discussed everything she'd endured, one thing became clear; **this was no small-time operation.** Esmerelda described a complex, well-connected syndicate with multiple locations and means of exploitation.

After getting special permission from a judge, we dove deeper. By intercepting phone calls and scoping out locations Esmerelda had given us, we uncovered a **massive operation** operating out of at least *fourteen* different sites, all hiding victims.

When the time came, the police struck all at once, storming each location simultaneously. Officers moved so fast that the traffickers had no time to resist or flee. **Not a single criminal escaped, and 45 Colombian young women were rescued during the operation.**

*You can help rescue victims like Esmerelda who are being sexually exploited with no hope of escape.*

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## **PADMINI, ANISHI AND THEIR CHILDREN**

**Location:** South Asia

**Rescue type:** Covert

**Age at rescue:** Mid-20s, 9 and 11

### ***BROKEN PORTION OF STORY***

***Padmini and Anishi were deceived by a false-job promise in a neighboring country and were horrifically sold to a brothel upon arrival.***

Padmini and Anishi were hoping for a fresh start when the brothel took them.

Both were single mothers from Nepal in their mid-20s. To help find decent jobs to support their children, the two women enlisted the help of a job recruiter to find work for them. They were overjoyed when he told them he'd found well-paying labour jobs for them in a neighbouring country.

### **But it was all a lie.**

The broker wasn't a recruiter at all, but a human trafficker. He **sold Padmini and Anishi** to a brothel. The owner of the brothel quickly dispelled women's hopes for a better life. Trapped in a foreign country and isolated from everyone they knew, they were forced to have sex with the brothel's clientele.

They were never paid, so any escape attempts would be severely hampered by their lack of currency or knowledge of the local language. To make matters worse, the owner told Padmini and Anishi that **he'd sell their children** if they ever attempted to escape.

And so, cut off from family and friends in a foreign land, the two women endured sexual abuse day after day, **for an entire year.**

### ***RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY***

Everything changed when they met Sakhi.

On the outside, Sakhi appeared harmless. The middle-aged woman had gotten permission from the brothel owner to speak with the sex workers inside. But once they started talking, Padmini and Anishi realised that behind her innocuous appearance, **Sakhi was a lioness.**

Sakhi could relate to the women as few could. The Nepali native was a **survivor of child marriage**, joining her physically abusive “husband” when she was **just 9 years old**. And like Padmini and Anishi, she was a single mother. After giving birth to two daughters, her polygamist husband sent her away because she failed to produce sons for him.

But one other piece of information about Sakhi made all the difference: **she was an undercover rescue agent!**

As she spoke to the two women, Sakhi realised that the greatest piece of leverage the brothel owner held over the two victims was their 9 and 11-year-old daughters. While the women desperately wanted to escape, all their plans wilted under the **threat that their dear kids could be sold into sexual slavery.**

So Sakhi made a plan. For the women to attain freedom, Sakhi would *first* need to **rescue their children.**

It’s a foundational aspect of rescue work that our agents know well. In every human trafficking situation, there lies a set of unique vulnerabilities for each victim. While a few are bodily kidnapped and physically held, most traffickers **control their victims through more insidious means.**

Sakhi made arrangements with a shelter home to take the children. Once they were out, she helped Padmini and Anishi find new, safe jobs out of reach of the traffickers who had stolen a year of their lives.

At the time of writing, the children are safe in the shelter home and preparing for their upcoming exams. Padmini and Anishi are **free**. They now work on a farm in a small village.

Despite the risks, Sakhi lives for these moments. “When we tell them that they can now start their life again and that we will help them after, (the survivors) are so happy. The look on a mother’s face when we tell her that her children are now safe and studying is so wonderful.”



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## REYNA

**Location:** The Philippines

**Rescue type:** OSEC (Online Sexual Exploitation of Children)

**Age at rescue:** 4

### **BROKEN PORTION OF STORY**

**Young Reyna was abused by her own mother in front of a webcam for profit.**

The abuse she inflicted on her little girl was horrific in the extreme.

### **RESTORATIVE PORTION OF STORY**

Agent Caleb had been undercover for six months, building a relationship with this online trafficker. And she still **hadn't shown her face**.

Caleb had been working with law enforcement to end Nilda's abuse of her daughter. They scheduled a raid. Caleb's role was to keep the trafficker occupied online while officers made their way to her home.

Under the direction of law enforcement, Caleb spoke to Nilda online from his laptop in a hotel room. Still pretending to be a predatory pedophile, he paid Nilda to exploit her daughter live over the webcam, even though he had no intention of allowing the abuse to actually occur.

After a gut-wrenching delay, police burst in before Nilda could harm her daughter. Nilda cut the feed and Caleb waited impatiently to hear the result of the case.

Suddenly, his screen lit up: he was receiving a call from Nilda. When he answered, he couldn't help but **break into a smile**. Instead of a human trafficker on the other end of the call, he was greeted by several armed members of the strike team, grinning and waving into the webcam. Nilda was in custody and her daughter was finally safe.

*You can help rescue children like Reyna who are being sexually exploited with no hope of escape.*

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