

Stories of hope

Homes of Hope's Safety Net Project team works with communities to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, particularly the commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children (CSEC) in Fiji.

Homes of Hope has created a model for direct interventions to withdraw and prevent children from commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, and provide them with rehabilitation, education and reintegration support. Vulnerable communities have been empowered to develop strategies to prevent CSEC and trafficking.

**Please note names have been changed to protect their identity.*

SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Sai

Sai is 14 years old and stays in a squatter settlement with her parents and five younger siblings. They live with their extended family of five members in a one bedroom house. The house is overcrowded with no privacy. Sai's father earns \$100 a week and her mother does housework.

Sai dropped out of school in Form 4 and began accompanying her friends to town. She eventually became a sex worker, being pimped by older men in the community. She earns \$40 - \$100 a week and gives some of her earnings to her family.

The Police referred her to the Department of Social Welfare after her parents lodged a report. Social Welfare Officers facilitated a family conference and Sai attended counselling sessions and skills training at a Homes of Hope Outreach Camp. Since then she has returned to formal education, enrolled in Form 5. Follow up visitations and reports from her parents show that she has been doing well in school and is concentrating on her studies.





SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Sala

Sala is a 15 years old sex worker. She lives with her parents, five younger sisters, niece, and two cousins who are also sex workers with their own children. Her dad is a security guard and earns \$80 a week. She left school when she was in Class 8, and followed her older cousins drinking and smoking marijuana before becoming a sex worker. To secure customers she either walks the streets or her cousins pimp her. She works three nights a week earning \$80 to \$160 an hour.

After speaking with Homes of Hope project officers, Sala decided she wanted to return to school. Our project officers worked with the department of Social Welfare to facilitate a family conference whereupon the family agreed to let her go back to school.

The Safety Net Project helped Sala return to formal education and have supported her by providing educational supplies such as school uniforms, school bag, sandals and exercise books. We will continue to follow up with school visitations, closely monitoring her progress and well-being.

SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Moli

Sixteen year old Moli lives with her grandparents and four younger siblings in a squatter settlement. Her parents are separated. She was often absent from school and spent her weekends hanging around with her cousins who are sex workers.

Influenced by her cousins and friends she was subjected to the worst form of child labour – sex trafficking. Her cousins arranged and pimped her to men, and took the payments. Moli only received food, makeup and clothes for work. She attempted to run away, and reported the situation to her grandmother and the police.

With the help of the Safety Net Project team, Moli has returned to formal education and is now enrolled in Form 3. She is currently attending counselling sessions and participates in Homes of Hope's basic life skill training.



SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Devi

Twelve year old Devi was sexually abused at a very young age. Her family neglected her and she moved from house to house for shelter. She left school when she was in Class 6 and was introduced to sex work by her peers. She was pimped by family friends and moved in with one of her best friends who was also a young sex worker. Devi works mostly at night standing on the streets, earning \$80 per hour three days a week.

She was identified by Homes of Hope field officers and referred to Social Welfare Department. Through the Safety Net Project we have helped Devi return to formal education, giving her much needed education supplies such school uniforms, a school bag, sandals and exercise books. She attends counselling sessions and has been referred to medical services. Devi now lives with her step father, mother and 6 siblings.

Monitoring visits are done quarterly to ensure that she does not involve herself in the worst forms of child labour.

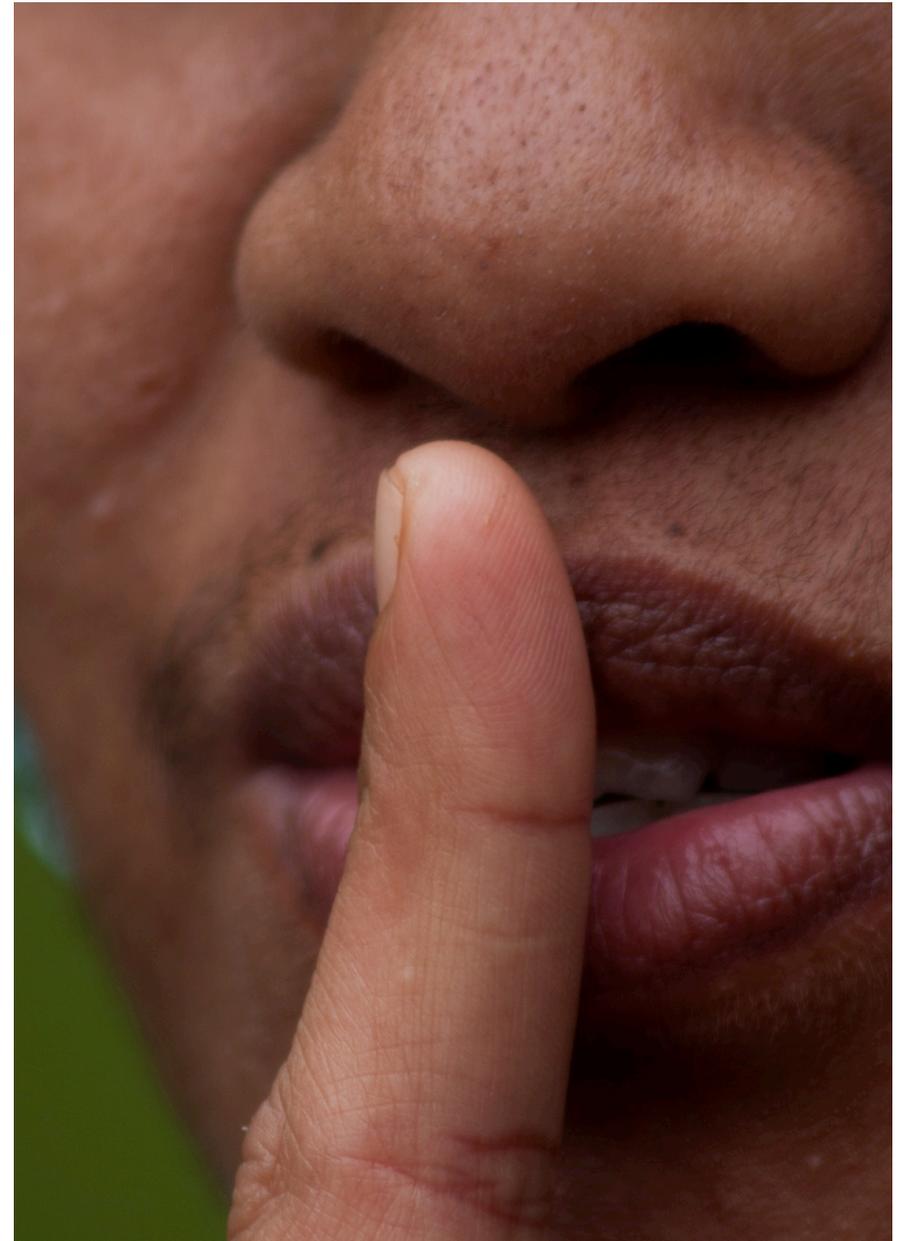


SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Lo

Lo is 15 years old and was identified by Homes of Hope field officers as living with a non-related family in a squatter settlement. Her parents lived in the same community with her five siblings. She is the eldest child and dropped out of school last year because her parents could not afford it. Her mother works as a house girl for two days and earns \$30. Lo got involved in sex work to support her family, working five days a week and earning \$500 from business men.

The Safety Net Project team helped Lo by referring her to counselling sessions, providing medical services and helping her return to formal education. She was supported with educational needs such as uniform, sandals, a school bags, and exercise books. She's now at school and we conduct quarterly monitoring visits checking her progress and wellbeing.



SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

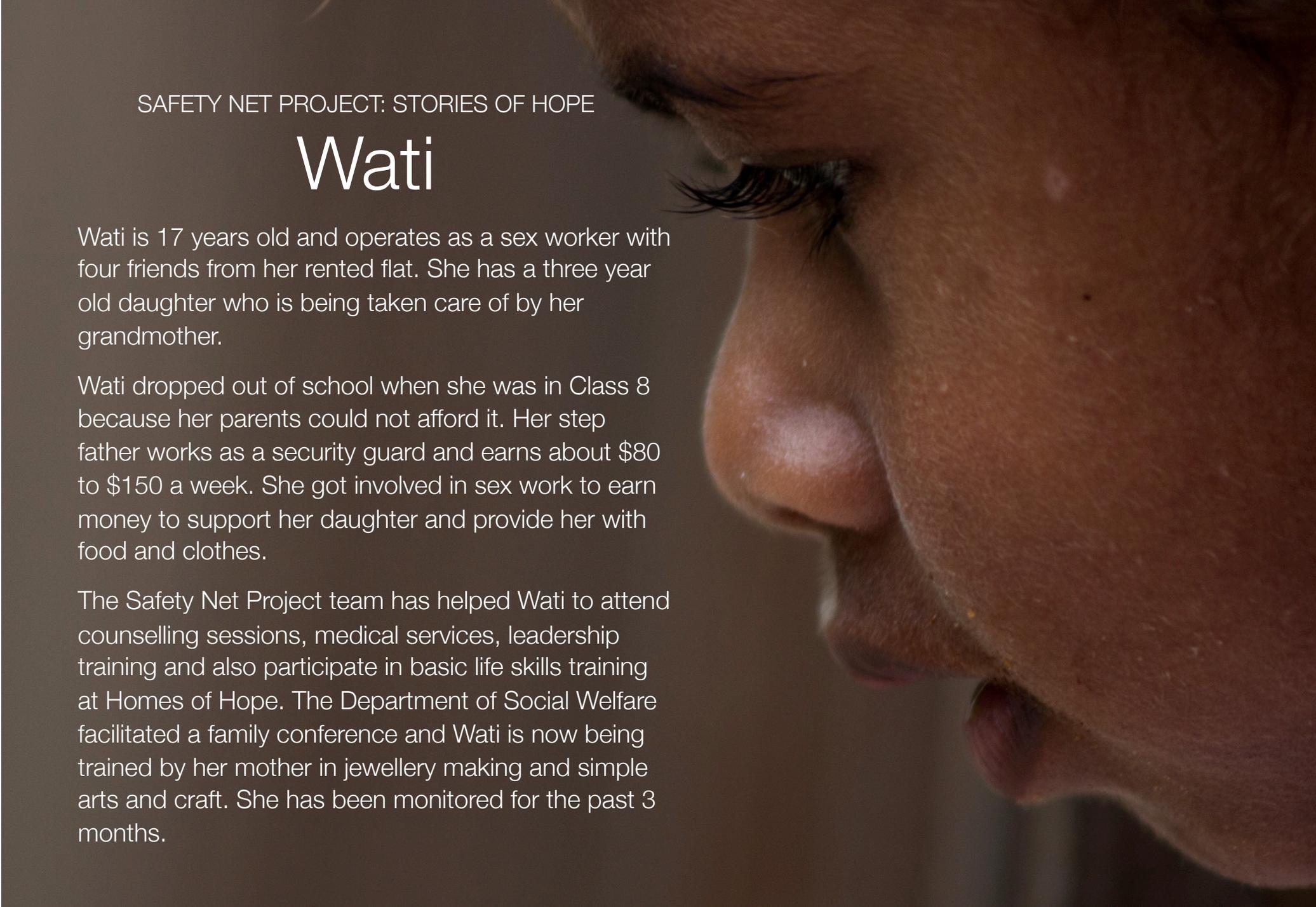
Lata

Lata was adopted as an infant by a colleague of her biological mother. She was sexually and physically abused by her adopted father at the age of five. Only her adopted mother knew about the abuse but they did not report it to police due to threats from the father. At 10 her adopted brother assaulted and sexually abused her and threatened her not to tell anyone.

Lata was scared, living in fear and remained silent. She was moved from one community to another and placed in a relative's home. She dropped out of school in Class 6, because of the stigma and being harassed by the students. She moved from place to place, looking for a safe shelter.

She began accompanying her friends to town and eventually became a sex worker. She works for night clubs and hotels and earns \$200 to \$400 a week which she uses to buy food and clothes. The Safety Net Project team has helped her return to school and provides her with educational needs such as a school uniform, school bag, sandals and exercise books. She has been referred to counselling services and medical services. Currently, she is living with adopted relatives who are very supportive and encouraging of her studies. Monitoring visits are done regularly.



A close-up, profile view of a young woman's face, looking downwards. Her features are softly lit, and her expression is contemplative. The background is dark and out of focus.

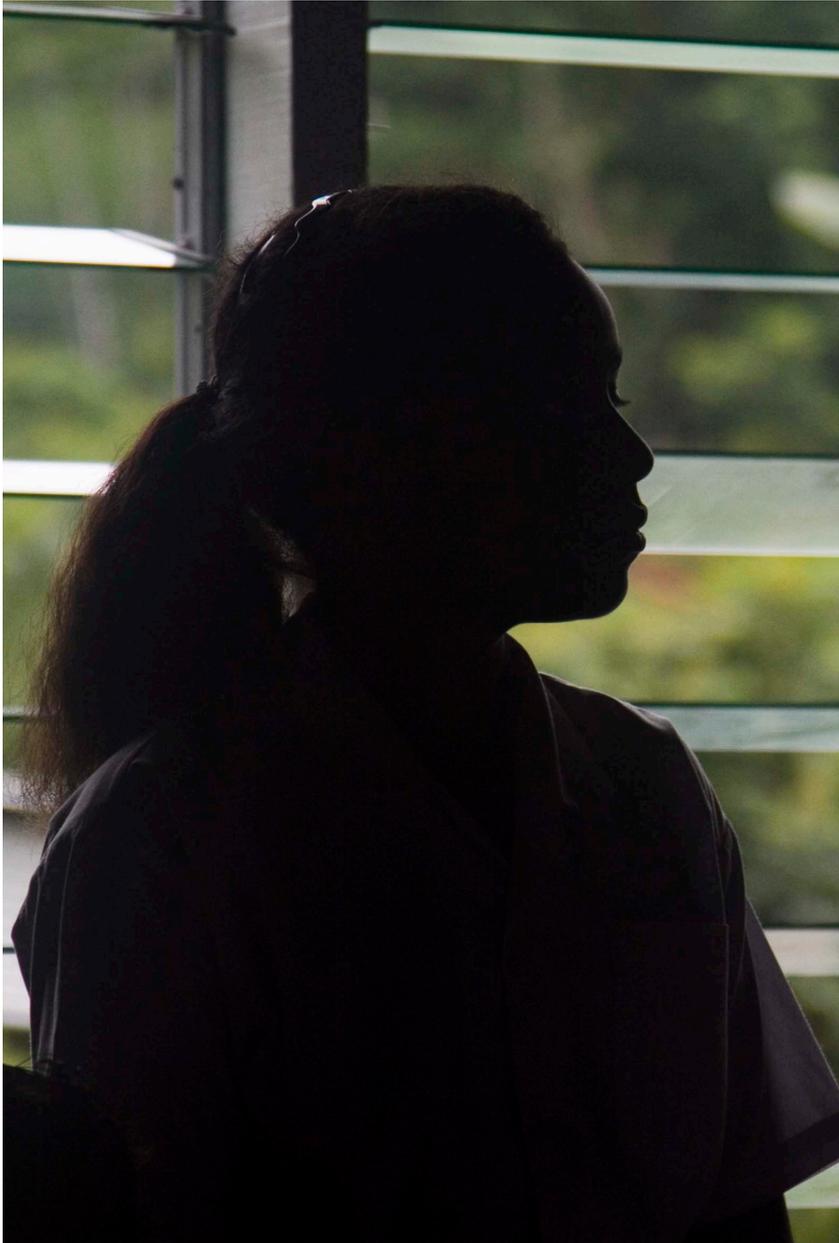
SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Wati

Wati is 17 years old and operates as a sex worker with four friends from her rented flat. She has a three year old daughter who is being taken care of by her grandmother.

Wati dropped out of school when she was in Class 8 because her parents could not afford it. Her step father works as a security guard and earns about \$80 to \$150 a week. She got involved in sex work to earn money to support her daughter and provide her with food and clothes.

The Safety Net Project team has helped Wati to attend counselling sessions, medical services, leadership training and also participate in basic life skills training at Homes of Hope. The Department of Social Welfare facilitated a family conference and Wati is now being trained by her mother in jewellery making and simple arts and craft. She has been monitored for the past 3 months.



SAFETY NET PROJECT: STORIES OF HOPE

Buna

Buna is 17 years old and lives with her parents and three younger brothers. Her father earns \$200 a week. Her mother is unemployed.

Buna likes to hang around with her cousins who are all sex workers living in the same community. She has joined them in the sex trade and works three nights a week. She earns \$150 an hour and she spends the money on school work like assignments, buying clothes, phone credit and extra food on the table for her family.

She passed Form 6 level and has enrolled herself in university studying hospitality and tourism. The Safety Net Project has provided her with counselling, leadership and life skills training and medical services.

Mary

Seventeen year old Mary is a sex worker. After her mother passed away when Mary was two, she was brought up by her grandmother in a squatter settlement. Her life was miserable as her grandmother's only source of income was fishing. She accompanied her grandmother to the mangrove swamps to catch prawns, crabs and fish. Mary dropped out of school in Class 5 because life was hard and no one was supporting her. She moved to her auntie's place but still life got more and more difficult.

Mary ran away from her auntie's home and met with friends who were sex workers. She soon got into sex work and works 3 days a week, earning \$80 -\$100 per night. With the money she earns she buys food, clothes and pays the rent.

She was identified by Homes of Hope field officers and has been supported to receive counselling sessions, medical services, leadership training and life skills. On further follow-ups with Homes of Hope officers, Mary expressed interest in mechanical training. Before meeting with training providers, Mary was able to move on in her life and learn new things from a garage shop nearby.

