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STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOWS: ARAVANIS IN INDIA

VIDEO	AUDIO
	NARRATION
NOORI WITH KIDS	She's known as Aunt Noori, a loving woman to these AIDS orphans, but Noori's life has been marked by years of pain. (8)
	NOORI: (Tamil)
NOORI ON CAMERA	*"In my mind, I know that I'm a woman. But as a transgendered person, I have suffered a lot in society."* (12)
	NARRATION
ARAVANIS ON STREET	Like other transgenders, Noori considers herself female even though she was born with a male body. In southern India, people like her are called 'aravanis'. (11)
RAINING FOREST	Born in a village in southern India, Noori started to display a feminine behaviour at the age of ten. (7)
	NOORI: (Tamil)
NOORI ON CAMERA	*"My neighbours made fun of me, telling my father:*

'Your son is like a girl'. He used to beat me badly." (6)

NARRATION

RAINING FOREST

When Noori was thirteen years old, her parents, upset by her behaviour, stripped her, then poured sugar syrup on her, and left her tied to a tree with an army of ants on her body. A neighbour took pity on her, gave her clothes and told her to leave the village. That was the last time she saw her family. (22)

NOORI WALKING ON STREET

Like many aravanis, Noori was forced to leave home, eventually settling in Chennai, the capital of India's southern state of Tamil Nadu. Life was not easy. (12)

ARAVANIS KISSING
ASHA IN OFFICE

At one time, transgenders were accepted by society, says Asha Bharathi, a leading activist for aravani rights. (8)

ASHA: (English)

ASHA ON CAMERA

"In the ancient days, there were transgenders. I can give you very good proofs from the literature, from the history that we were treated equally in the society. Because of our transgender and sexuality we were not discriminated. The discrimination started only after the British rule." (16)

STREET SCENE

NARRATION

CHURCH
ARAVANIS HOLD BY HAND

Under colonial rule, Indian leaders passed a law prohibiting homosexuality. The law is still in effect in India today*.* Aravanis are often subjected to harassment and discrimination. (13)

ASHA ON CAMERA

ARAVANIS ON STREET

ASHA ON CAMERA

ASHA: (English)

 "Why do we have discrimination? And we are punished for the fault of nature. Why should we be penalized?" (10)

"We are not special creatures come to earth from any other planet. Do we have two horns? We are like you." (9)

ARAVANIS EATING IN HOUSE

ARAVANIS LOOKING AT MIRROR

ARAVANIS HUGING

SEX WORKERS ON BALCONY

PRESS CLIPPINGS

NARRATION

There is no official census on transgenders in India. Some conceal their identities and lead a double life. (10)

Others live openly. Some aravanis, choose castration as a definitive way to become a woman. (7)

Outcast by society, transgenders face lives of poverty and discrimination. To survive, many transgenders turn to commercial sex work. Noori was one of them. In 1987, she became infected with HIV. When she publicly disclosed her health status to a newspaper, she was rejected, once again, this time by her fellow aravanis. (27)

NOORI ON CAMERA

NOORI: (Tamil)

 "They said, '"Why did you go to the media? You're hurting our profession!' They tried to pour gasoline on me and burn me alive." (7)

NARRATION

That was the turning point in Noori's life. Ostracised

ARAVANIS PEER WORKING	by other aravanis, she abandoned sex work to become a peer worker to help those afflicted with HIV/AIDS. (10.5)
STREET SCENES	A country of one billion people, India - in its efforts to halt the spread of the AIDS epidemic - is reaching out to the communities most affected by HIV/AIDS. (10")
SUPRIYA IN OFFICE MEETING PEOPLE	Supriya Sahu is the project director of the Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society. (6")
SUPRIYA ON CAMERA ARAVANIS WORKING	SUPRIYA: (English) **F** *"We need to bring them out together, build their capacity, get them trained in some kind of vocational trade, so that they are economically independent."* (9")
NOORI IN HER CENTER WITH KIDS	NARRATION In 2001, with support from UNAIDS, Noori founded her own organization to provide care, not only to aravanis, but to anyone struggling with HIV. It now provides care to over 1,700 people living with HIV. (17")
UN LOGO	This report was prepared by Patricia Chan for the United Nations.