



I'm 14 and sold for sex in the shadow of £120m World Cup stadium

From EMILY MILLER in Johannesburg and KATE JACKSON

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FOR millions of football fans across the globe, next year's World Cup will be the time of their lives.

But for Winnie Khumalo, it will bring only more pain to her miserable existence.

Just 14, she is one of around 10,000 child prostitutes working in the shadow of Johannesburg's awesome, Soccer City stadium.



Life of pain ... Winnie, 14, works as a prostitute in South Africa



Map ... Soccer City, South Africa

Last night the final nations qualified for the tournament - with the hope of reaching the final at the amazing arena, which seats 95,000 fans and cost a staggering £120million.

In stark contrast, punters pay Winnie £2.40 for sex with her.

Shockingly, she has been a prostitute since she was 11, and now sleeps with up to 20 men a day.

And she knows just what next year's influx of tens of thousands of World Cup tourists to the city will mean for her - and other poor young girls lured to the city with the hopes of finding a job and a better life.

Speaking in her native Zulu through a translator, Winnie says: "Other girls from villages like mine think the World Cup will give them jobs as waitresses or cleaners. But they will be caught by men who promise them a nice life."

Winnie, who is too scared of her brothel bosses to escape, adds: "I did not choose to do this. I wish I could get out but it's no use."

Her ordeal began when she left her home in a township near Port Shepstone three years ago and travelled the 600 miles to Johannesburg in search of work as a housemaid.

A brothel owner's henchman spotted her on the street, befriended her and lured her to a house, promising to take care of her.

Winnie says: "On my third day in the city the guy I met showed me upstairs and said, 'This is your room'. Then he gave me alcohol and wanted to come to bed with me.

Beer

"I didn't know what was going on but when he was on top of me it hurt so much. Then he brought another man to my room and when I protested, he hit me. So I started drinking more beer."



Promise of new life ... South Africa World Cup

Our investigators find Winnie after entering the brothel in the dark streets of Hillbrow, an inner-city district so dangerous that even the police fear to patrol there.

She is wearing a clingy silver dress that is meant to be sexy, but it is draped on the body of an adolescent.

She says poignantly: "Men like me because I am young and do what they ask. When I began this work my chest was flat - my breasts have grown since then.

"Now I'm getting a bit older they probably won't be so interested for much longer."

Winnie's warning to other young girls was this week echoed by organisations in South Africa who believe the World Cup will put children in host cities such as Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town in danger of being sexually exploited.

World Cup head of security Linda Mti says she is working with intelligence agencies to identify "unsavoury elements".

The Department of Social Development has announced that a Child Protection Action Plan will be operational by March.

All Winnie can hope is that these measures will prevent others falling into the same dismal life as hers.

She shares her room with three other girls, taking turns to service men behind the bars of her door on a ten-cell corridor filled with the stale stench of crack cocaine.



Her legs are scarred from rough sex and beatings and she operates with a knife under her pillow.

She says: "I am less frightened these days, but when a man puts a gun to my head I want to scream.

World class ... Joburg's Soccer City stadium

"That happens quite often, especially when they want to do it without a condom. At times like that, I decide I will run away. It's like I have a flash of light or something. It makes me want to go back to school, I want to have a good life. But if I go out into the street, the boss follows me and brings me back. He has people everywhere. I'm scared to break his rules."

To get through her daily ordeal, Winnie drinks, morning and night. She says: "They tried to make me do drugs but I always say no. My brain is the last power I'll give up."

"I beg the police and the teachers in schools to tell girls what this place is really like."

Statistics released by the South African Professional Society On The Abuse of Children indicate around 530 child rapes occur every day across the country, though fewer than 60 are reported to police. Officials believe children are the victims in 45 per cent of all rape cases nationwide.

Domestic crimes contribute to the alarming figures, but child prostitution is responsible for a large proportion. Many victims are trafficked and the vast majority become infected with HIV.

For teenagers such as Winnie things can seem desperate yet there is a glimmer of hope - just a mile down the road, charity workers at the New Life Centre offer vulnerable sex workers a second chance.

They visit the 100-odd brothels operating above bars in the rundown district, giving health advice and urging young girls to break free.

Manager Khopotso Nakin says wealthy gang lords are grooming underage girls as upmarket hookers aimed at fans including the 25,000 England supporters set to descend on South Africa.

She says: "They persuade beautiful young girls that the World Cup will mean new jobs and a bright future. They put several at a time into homes they have bought here in the city."

"Victims come from Thailand, Eastern Europe and even China. They never see the light again. Many men who are offered their beautiful bodies will not realise how young they are."

"They appear clean and willing, but actually they are locked in squalid rooms most of the time."

"I hope very much that one day Winnie comes to us, but it is incredibly hard for someone like her to break the cycle and have the courage that she will escape unharmed."



Pimp

Another prostitute, 25-year-old Nolukhanyo Vasi, was infected with HIV as a teenager after her aunt sold her to a pimp at the age of 14.

Unfair game ... Nolukhanyo Vasi
MILLER & MACLEAN

She now helps the desperate new arrivals at the New Life Centre come off drugs, get medical treatment and set about finding alternative work.

But the charity can pay her just £48 a month. And with a £32 rent bill to pay and a young son to feed, she is forced to continue working the streets.

She says: "Life is hard and when I have no money to eat, I force myself to do it again. It's never been as hard as the first time.

"My aunt had brought me from my home village and I trusted her. She told me and my parents I could live at her house. But one day she took me to a bar in town.

"She pulled a mini-skirt, high heels and a backless white top out of her bag and told me to put them on.

"A guy came over to us and asked, 'How much?' I didn't understand what was going on. Then my aunt said to me, 'Look, if you want to have money here you must sleep with a man'.

"They took me upstairs to a room with a bed in it. The man handed my aunt some coins and before she left she put a condom on him. She knew I had no idea about things like that.

"It was very painful and I was crying, but the man told me to stop being selfish.

"I never saw my aunt again. The manager was good to me for a while but when I grew up a bit he got tired of me.

"If I refused to do what he said he would beat me with a leather whip."

Nolukhanyo dreads telling her nine-year-old son she has no idea who his father is.

She says: "How can I admit to him I was a prostitute?"

"He is free of HIV, thank God, but we both will carry that shame for ever.

"I can no longer have a relationship with a man. I have never been treated as a woman, just a thing.

"When you are mistreated at such a young age you just expect to be damaged by everyone.

"If any young girl thinks coming to Johannesburg in 2010 will bring her happiness, she should think again."

Read more: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/2736480/Brutal-reality-of-South-Africa-child-prostitutes.html#ixzz0X1GRnTyf>