

# Post Trafficking in Nepal

Sexuality and citizenship in livelihood strategies



IOM International Organization for Migration



# *Sexual trafficking, poverty, marginalization and citizenship in Nepal*

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## Who are returned trafficked women?

- Most women trafficked from Nepal (maybe 12,000 a year?) go as girls, taken by deception, false marriage or coercion, most to brothels in Mumbai, India.
- Hundreds (at least) **return to Nepal** after escape, 'rescue' or just losing their value, after 5 -10 years.



## **We focus on returnee trafficked women - Why?**

- Lack of research to date that focuses on returnees
- Family stigma makes citizenship difficult – we'll see how later
- In turn livelihoods are difficult



# Why Nepali women?

- Returnee trafficked women, while one of the most stigmatised, vulnerable groups in Nepal, are beginning to organise around rights to sustainable livelihoods. **Our partner organisation 'Shakti Samuha' was set up and is run by trafficked women, a rare such organisation and the only one in Nepal.**
- Shakti Samuha's demands challenge discourses of victimisation and assert **citizenship** claims, focused on a right to **livelihoods**, which need to be analysed in relation to current democratic processes.



# Two groups of policies on sexual trafficking:

- GAATW, including Shakti promote **Citizenship and livelihoods. Self-determination.** GAATW includes sex workers organisations.
- CATW, US govt (determines aid through TIP Reports), Nepali Govt, most NGOs, promote: **Three Rs: Rescue, Repatriation and Rehabilitation** (in centres).



## Context: Women's citizenship in Nepal

- In Nepal citizenship is awarded on blood rights.
- *Fathers* pass citizenship to their sons and daughters.
- **The mother is not considered on a par with her husband in terms of being able to confer citizenship on her child.**
- Under the Constitution (1990), only a person over 16 years of age whose father is a citizen of Nepal at the birth of the child shall be a citizen of Nepal. According to the Citizenship Act of 1963, after the age of 16 both men and women shall apply for a certificate of citizenship to ensure that their citizenship rights are protected.
- **Citizenship is a relatively simple process for a young man, however for a woman an application must be supported either by her father or her husband.**



# Methods

- Analysis of discourse, policies of trafficking and models of citizenship
- Semi structured interviews with activists and key informants in NGOs and government
- In depth interviews with returnee women (20-25 in urban areas – mainly Kathmandu -- and 20-25 from rural districts). Leading topics are escaping stigma, livelihoods and citizenship. Trafficked women are very sensitive, so this is Meena Poudel in Nepal's languages.



## Preliminary findings: institutional strategies

- Increased competition and success in obtaining international funding is forcing processes of professionalisation within local, Nepali anti-trafficking NGOs.

Outcome: Non members and increasingly men come to occupy staff positions, even in Shakti Samuha.



## Who speaks for whom? Shakti's strategic location within competing discourses

Shakti Samuha establishing an identity and legitimacy as  
the only anti-trafficking NGO run by **"returnee women"**

That is, by promotion of 1996 'rescue' founding narrative

They are also seeking training in research methods



# Who am I and who speaks for whom? Individual strategies in dealing with examples stigma

- Concealment
- Marriage, maybe not telling the husband
- Creating a career biography: from trafficked women to activist to professional (Staff Worker)



## 2000 – 2010 - 2020

- 2010: Many returnee trafficked women in Nepal suffer **chronic poverty** through stigma, lack of citizenship, lack of livelihood.
- It is time in development studies for more research into intersections between development and sexuality. **Locally unacceptable sexualities often lead to chronic poverty, regardless of capabilities.**

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# Where to find out more

ESRC project 'Post Trafficking Livelihoods in Nepal: Women, Sexuality and Citizenship'

[www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk](http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk)



Richardson, D., Poudel, M. and Laurie, N. (2009) *Sexual Trafficking in Nepal: Constructing Citizenship and Livelihoods, Gender, Place and Culture* Vol 16, No. 3, pp257-276.

PhD Meena Poudel *Dealing with Hidden Issues: Social Rejection Experienced by Trafficked Women in Nepal* (Newcastle 09)