Post Trafficking In Nepal Sexuality and Citizenship in Livelihood Strategies (ESRC Project Res-062-23-1490)

WORKING PAPER

Sexual trafficking, poverty, marginalization and citizenship in Nepal

Nina Laurie: Nina.Laurie@ncl.ac.uk
Meena Poudel: mpoudel@iom.int/meena.poudel@ncl.ac.uk
Diane Richardson: Diane.Richardson@ncl.ac.uk
Janet G. Townsend (presenter): Janet.Townsend@ncl.ac.uk

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology,
Newcastle University,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE1 7RU
UK

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Abstract
Sexual trafficking is a priority issue for many governments yet many aspects of sex trafficking remain poorly understood. In particular little attention has been given to the situation of trafficked women when they return from trafficking situations and seek to (re)establish a sense of belonging and respect. Drawing on an Economic and Social Research Council project on citizenship and livelihoods post sexual trafficking in Nepal, we focus on how the livelihood opportunities available to returnee trafficked women intersect with gendered and sexualised models of citizenship in a post-conflict situation where citizenship is being seen as the key mechanism for establishing new forms of belonging, institutionalised through a Constitutional Assembly. (Our research partners are Shakti Samuha, a Nepali Non Government Organization (NGO) created and staffed by returned trafficked women, and the International Organization for Migration, an intergovernmental organization.) Focusing on the negotiations involved in these processes over the last ten years, we examine the configuration of feminist advocacy networks and the everyday negotiations that underpin policy formation in emerging democratic settings. We analyse how the issues faced by returnee trafficked women are being addressed through new political spaces and processes, charting how grassroots NGOs and donors align themselves differently around human rights, violence against women, HIV/AIDS, migration and anti-trafficking agendas. We explore the exclusions and inclusions associated with new alliances and ask how these influence the citizenship subjectivities available to returnee trafficked women. For Shakti Samuha, rights and access to citizenship are necessary for these women to secure livelihoods and inclusion.

Keywords: Anti-trafficking, livelihoods, citizenship, poverty, sexualities in development.

Introduction

Nepal is one of the source countries for sexually trafficked women in South Asia. While many Nepali women have been traditionally trafficked to India for sexual purposes, new destinations facilitated by the open border between the two countries are emerging. India has recently started to operate as a transit route for trafficking on to the Middle East in particular and South East Asia in general. This paper explores how the newly emerging national and transnational policy discourses around trafficking, citizenship and development frame livelihoods for trafficked women who subsequently return to Nepal. It explores the extent to which returnee trafficked women and their advocates are able to tackle poverty linked to their marginalisation[1], social stigma and lack of access to citizenship rights upon their return. While much work on trafficking examines the process and flows of trafficking (for Nepal, Bal Kumar 2001, Beshford 2006 Brown 2000, Chen and Marcovici 2003, Hennick and Simkhada 2004, Human Rights Watch 1995, MWCSW 2001, Poudel 2008, Richardson et al. 2009; more widely, AWHRC 2003, GAATW 2004, Kangaspunta 2006, Kempadoo, Kim and Chang 2007, Pattanaik and Sanghera eds. 2005, United Nations 2003, US State Department 2010), very little research has focused on the situation of returnee women themselves (Richardson et al. 2009). Seeking to address this gap this paper draws on preliminary work from a new Economic and Social Research Council project on citizenship and livelihoods post sexual trafficking in Nepal[2] in order to underline the importance of a focus on the situations of returnee trafficked women in the 'war on poverty' over the next ten years.

Shah (2006) argues that international discourses of trafficking and local interpretations of stigma and honour influence the success of rights-based organising in particular contexts. Returnee trafficked women, while representing one of the most stigmatised, excluded and vulnerable groups in Nepal, are also beginning to organise around rights to sustainable livelihoods. Our partner organisation 'Shakti Samuha'[3] is one of the leading anti-trafficking organisations in Nepal (GAATW 2007) and the only NGO founded and run by returnee trafficked women in South Asia. Their demands challenge discourses of victimisation and assert citizenship claims focused on a right to chosen livelihoods. DFID and the World Bank (2006:26) call for equal rights to citizenship for women and men in Nepal.

After a decade of civil war Nepal is undergoing political transformation by restructuring the nation and re-drafting the constitution through a Constitutional Assembly process. With this comes a re-definition of citizenship rights where it is anticipated that an established gender bias in accessing citizenship will be permanently overturned. Until now notions of female citizenship have been

[1] This paper will show them to be a classic marginalised group.
[2] Post Trafficking livelihoods in Nepal: Women, Sexuality and Citizenship' (RES-062-23-1490).
[3] http://www.shaktisamuha.org.np/ (Last accessed 28th July 2010).

based on ideas of kinship (Joshi 2001:158). Since 1963 citizenship claims need to be sponsored by a male relative (a husband or father)[4]. As many girls are trafficked before the age of sixteen the majority do not have citizenship if they return and family reaction to their stigmatized status and associated family stigma and dishonor, often then makes becoming a formal citizen difficult. Not having a citizenship card severely limits returnee women's livelihood options. They (and any children they may have) have difficulty accessing government services, health and education, skills training and waged employment. In the broader project we aim to understand how citizenship and livelihoods are constructed by returnee sexually trafficked women as representatives of broader marginalised groups such as widows, single women, lesbians and badi[5] women (Cox 1992) when new democratic moments and opportunities emerge. Other excluded groups include ethnic minorities and indigenous people where according to Anaya (20099:13) "patterns of trafficking of indigenous girls and women" are found. To what extent are the interests of 'excluded groups' included in the re-working of citizenship in Nepal? In particular we seek to understand how returnee women from different backgrounds and with different experiences of sexual trafficking attempt to access citizenship and with what success. How does citizenship shape their livelihood options and poverty eradication strategies? In this paper we focus in particular on geographies of stigma and poverty associated with returning from trafficking situations. We then go on to examine some early findings around the ways in which both individuals and anti-trafficking organisations are dealing with stigma and poverty by locating themselves in specific ways within shifting anti-trafficking, pro-democracy and development discourses and networks. Before this however, we first outline our methodology and provide a brief background on the current political situation in Nepal.

Methodology and research sites

Our funded project started on 1st November 2009 and lasts for two and a half years. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the imperative to examine the experiences of trafficked women themselves, research methods are qualitative. They involve the analysis of discourses, policies of trafficking and models of citizenship operating in Nepal, fifteen-twenty semi-structured interviews with activists, key personnel in NGOs and in government and forty five in-depth interviews[6] with returnee women, split between Kathmandu and three rural sites. Acknowledging the importance of theorising 'bias' we consider that a reflexive analysis of the role of returnees and NGOs in anti-trafficking and pro-democracy networks is integral to our methodology. Our project 'bias' is important because it selects women who self-identify as returnee women and NGOs and social movements which identify with anti-trafficking and/or gender rights agendas.

[4] While the interim Assembly of 2006 declared that girls can claim citizenship through their mothers if their mothers already have their own citizenship, this needs to be endorsed in the Constitution when it is finished.

[5] A cultural label 'untouchable' because of women's historic status as traditional entertainers in land owners households.

[6] All/nearly all conducted in local languages.

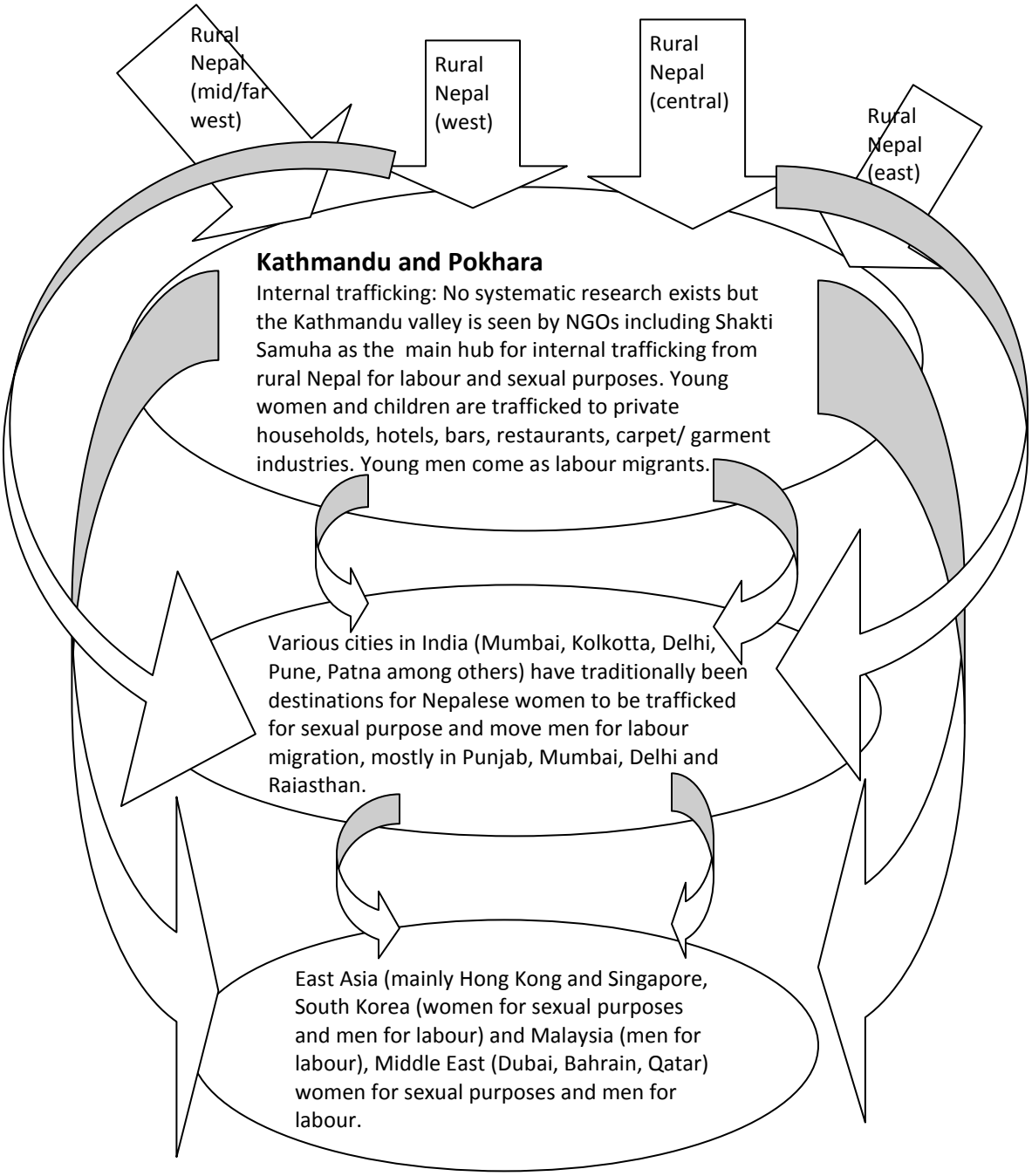
Methodologically part of the aim is to understand how they have come to that position and how they critically consider the livelihood options of returnee trafficked women to be more than those of 'victims'. Given the extreme sensitivity of the research, in the first instance participants are being approached through our local partner organisation, Shakti Shamuha, and other anti-trafficking NGOs. Using these as an important source of data for participant observation and some interviews, we are adopting snowballing techniques to try to reach women without current, direct NGO contact. The sample aims to draw in women with different representation by local home region, age of being trafficked/returned, ethnicity, caste and religion, length/number of trafficked journeys, returnee routes and timeframes of return, access to citizenship and type of contact with intermediaries. All these factors we hypothesise can influence their access to livelihood options upon return.

Kathmandu is where the majority of returnee women settle. It also plays an important role in trafficking as the centre for domestic and international transport, where processes of trafficking originate and transit through to and from other destinations is organised (see figure 1). As all institutional decisions are made and judiciary practices defended here this capital city has become the key site for both the pro-democracy movement and emerging feminist organisations. The SAARC[7] secretariat and anti-trafficking project are located here as are the offices of key bi-laterals and INGOs currently involved in funding anti-trafficking (for example, UNIFEM, USAID Save the Children Alliance and TdH[8]). Supported by a vibrant media, feminist and pro-democracy discourses are widely debated in the city.

[7] South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

[8] TDH (Terre des Hommes) is the current chair of the Inter Agency Coordination Group, Nepal (IACG) on trafficking in Nepal. It was initially formed in 1998 by International Labour Organisation (ILO), Oxfam, Save the Children (UK and Norway) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Now it includes more then 30 intergovernmental and international organisations.

Figure 1: Trafficking transit routes through Kathmandu



The three rural sites selected have been identified by the government as having high occurrences of trafficking[9]. Corresponding to government priorities on high risk areas and the government human development report 2004 (UNDP 2004), one site from the far west (Kailali) and two from the Central Development Region (Sindhupalchock and Makawanpur) have been selected (see figure 2).

Figure 2 Map of Nepal Administrative districts

Each rural site plays a significant role in trafficking either as an exit/transit point to India or an entry/transit point to Nepal. At the Shakti Samuha Annual conference of trafficked survivors in 2009, presentations from members coming form the rural districts reported that traffickers are moving women from the South East to traffic them through the far west region into India[10]. They argue that the success of NGO awareness training in the east central area and around that border region is forcing a shift in trafficking flows. Samarasinghe (2008) suggests that monitoring of the most frequently used crossing points is forcing traffickers to use more difficult routes despite transport challenges.

[9] These sites were drawn from the official list of 26 designated 'highly at risk areas'. This list has since been reviewed and extended in a recent version of the National Action Plan Against Trafficking of Women for Sexual Purposes and now covers 75% of Nepal.

[10] Personal communication, research team meeting with Shakti Samuha, February 2010.

The three selected rural sites all rank low on poverty indexes, with the development regions in the far west scoring lower than those in the Central Development Region. For example, Kailali has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.461 against 0.531 for the Central Development Region or 0.509 for the national average. Its Social Empowerment Index (SEI), Human Poverty Index (HPI) and Gender Development Index (GDI) are also all low when compared to those at a national level (UNDP 2009).

Each rural site is inhabited by diverse caste/ethnic groups, who speak different languages/dialects, practise different religions and experience forms of violence perpetuated by the diversified socio-cultural practices that contribute to trafficking (MWCSW[11] 2001). While 13.81% of the population in Kailali are dalits[12], the region is predominantly Tharu (44.76%), a marginalised ethnic group who are beginning to organise as an ethnic rights movement (Krauskopff 2008; Gunerante 2002) and, as part of the wider *Adivasi Janajan*[13]*,* are attempting to access development funds targeting social exclusion and to lobby the Constitutional Assembly for indigenous autonomy (Anaya 2009).

Preparation and liaison work in the UK and Nepal began from November 2009. A full team field visit to Kathmandu occurred in February 2010 to liaise further with project partners and conduct a series of meetings and informal interviews with key stakeholders. These included bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, government officials, the chair of the fundamental rights committee of the Constitutional Assembly, various anti-trafficking NGOs and activist groups focused on sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Rural fieldwork is scheduled to start after the rainy season in October 2010. To date the pilot and ten of the forty five interviews with returnee women have been conducted, in Kathmandu. Where we have drawn on these interviews in this paper we have used pseudonyms and have tried to keep to Nepali English iterations where possible in order show respect for the many forms of global English that are currently spoken in the world.

Reforming citizenship and democratisation in Nepal

Nepal's first multi-party democratic constitution was ratified in 1990. In April 2006 an Interim Constitutional Assembly was enforced following the people's movement III, the revival of the dissolved parliament and the brokering of peace talks with the Maoist rebels (GoN 2007). Two years later an elected Constitutional Assembly (CA) was convened in April 2008 which declared the country to be a Federal Democratic Republic after ending the Monarchical parliamentary system. This assembly marked a turning point for gender representation in Nepali politics. More than thirty per cent of the elected CA members are women and in addition the deputy speaker position is occupied by

[11] Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare

[12] Still considered terai untouchable and excluded from mainstream development.

[13] The collective term used for indigenous people in Nepal who comprise 59 different groups and make up 37.19% of the population of Nepal (Anaya 2009).

a woman from the grassroots. This assembly represents a huge increase in female formal political participation from the 1990s figures when most parties struggled to reach the five per cent quota for female candidates. Female representation is diverse encompassing women from various social backgrounds including in some cases women who are illiterate. Female representatives are drawn from across the range of ethnic, geographical class and religious grouping and include women who are farmers, landless women as well as former bonded labourers.

The original mandate to draft the new constitution by May 2010 was recently extended for another year after a negotiated agreement was reached between the then ruling collation and the main opposition group, which required the Prime Minster to resign. After some delay, during which the Maoists called for public strikes and disruptions because they feared a betrayal of the agreement, the Prime Minister finally stepped down in late June. As we write, a unity government is in the process of being formed and a new Prime Minister is being elected by the CA. The Unified Maoist party represent the largest group in the CA and are expected to play a key role in government, although pro-monarchical groups have been actively resisting the recent changes.

The new democratic scene in Nepal has met with great support from the donor community. Extreme poverty, a large rural population and the need for post-conflict resolution, together with Nepal's geopolitical importance between two of the fastest growing economies in the world, China and India, has set the scene for a large donor presence in the country. This includes a range of programs operated by different United Nations agencies such as UNIFEM, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ILO among others which have large anti-trafficking projects. More recently the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has started to take an interest in trafficking projects as part of its wider migration remit.

The discursive framing of anti-trafficking and aid in Nepal

Donors, NGOs and government organisations help shape the livelihoods open to returnee trafficked women through their role in what is often termed 'the rescue industry' (Augustine 2007). This industry has a policy focus on 'the three Rs': Rescue, Repatriation and Rehabilitation[14]. 'Rehabilitation' is a loaded and contested term for anti-trafficking advocates as it implies that women themselves are to some extent responsible for their experiences and need to be 'rehabilitated' in order to re-enter Nepali society. Not all women return to Nepal as result of a 'rescue mission' by NGOs or the Indian policy of carrying out raids on brothels, therefore some women remain outside the direct influence of the NGO rescue missions. Nevertheless, for many the experience of gaining a livelihood after returning is influenced by access to NGO and/or government

[14] But see Harrington 2005, Soderlund 2005.

shelters and hostels where they receive support services including counselling and skills training. As we shall see below, the nature of training, women's evaluations of various skills-training programs and the impact of these on their longer term potential livelihoods opportunities vary greatly.

Crucial to the policy framing of trafficking and livelihoods is the link between a rescue agenda and donor aid in Nepal. Here the role of the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report published from the United State's State Department plays a central role (US State Department 2010). How this report grades a specific country's implementation of policies and mechanisms that focus on the three Rs directly influences the allocation of bi lateral aid. Given this general context of the policy framing of anti-trafficking and the current Constitutional Assembly process, the shaping of political and policy agendas is a key focus of our wider project. In particular we are keen to examine the professionalization of activist anti-trafficking networks and the impact of this on the ability of grassroots activists and local NGOs to place the link between sexual citizenship and poverty on to transnational advocacy, donor and national pro-democracy and anti-poverty agendas. In this paper this issue is explored in relation to the ways in which NGOs and individuals locate themselves with changing policy discourses and how processes of NGO professionalization influence the construction of activist biographies around anti-trafficking. As we examine below, this occurs within a context of negotiating geographies of stigma and poverty.

Geographies of stigma and poverty

The geographies of stigma associated with sexual trafficking influence women's abilities to secure livelihoods upon their return from trafficking situations. Whether or not women were trafficked to India into the 'sex industry', the circus or other forms of bonded labour, these women are usually stigmatised as prostitutes and/or HIV carries when they return to Nepal (Poudel 2009). As one woman, Birahi who is HIV positive explained, while people did not usually say things directly in front of her, she felt threatened and scared much of the time. Despite this she tried to be brave and in one case she did answer someone back as she describes below

> "…there was a context one person (man) told me that 'you came from *uta'* (symbolic meaning of Mumbai)…..and 'you were working there as…..' and I was angry and reacted strongly by saying that 'why you bother about me, what you want from me? Did you see me going there and did you see me what I was doing there? This is nothing to do with you it was my personal matter'. After that he stopped saying those things to me."

Birahi managed to conceal her trafficked identity in her home village for more than a decade.

In another case, Sushila who is also HIV positive and who returned to her village from India, experienced so much harassment that she was unable to carry on with the new life and livelihood she was trying to establish.

> "It was hard living in the village. The people gossiped. I opened one small tea shop. One of my friends who is a member of Shakti Samuha had given me 1000 Rs. It was at Sindhupalchok. Ten minutes from my home. It was again very difficult. I used to make tea, local wine there and the men used to show me disrespect - trying to grasp me, touch my hands, talking in a stupid way, throwing stones on me. It was very embarrassing."

After eight months she was forced to close her shop.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that Sushila's experience occurred in Sindhulpalchok. We would argue that this location further points to the associative power of geographies of stigma and poverty, where origins as much as destination can affect how a returnee woman is seen. Sindhupalchok is located in the High Middle Hill area of Nepal. Its inhabitants are predominately people from the Tamang ethnic group. It is a highly stigmatised district/region because the Tamang communities here were one of the earliest to be exposed to trafficking. Over time a stereotype emerged implying that they sold their female members, daughters, sisters, wives into trafficking on a semi-organised basis, using the profits and any remittances for family welfare (see also Joshi 2001). Such stigmatized constructions of ethnicity probably have longer historical roots. In the 19th Century the feudal Rana ruling family recruited Tamang girls from this region to serve as entertainers for themselves in Kathmandu (Poudel 2009; Samarasinghe 2008). Until recently, even if a woman is a migrant worker not working in the 'sex industry', it is likely that she will have been read as sexually trafficked or seen as a prostitute if she returned to Sindhulpalchok from India or further afield.

With the huge increase in migrant workers (Seddon 2005) to the Middle East (UN Office 2010) and Malaysia (United States 2010) from all over Nepal in recent years[15] it is possible that stigmatised regional stereotypes will begin to be eroded. Elsewhere we have argued that neoliberal labour arrangements between Nepal and specific countries in the Middle East and parts of South East Asia where there are labour deficits make it easier for some women to pass as generic migrant workers upon return (Richardson et al 2009). Even if female

[15] While no official government statistics currently exist in published form, the research team's participant observation in high level meetings and policy briefings indicates that the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management are disseminating estimates that vary. For example, figures shared by the ministry suggest that 300,000 Nepalese migrants are working in the labour market abroad (this does not include India). Of these 11% are women and of these women 90% are estimated to be undocumented. However other figures for the Arab States alone put the estimate of Nepalese women working as migrants at 66,000 (more than double the 11% estimate of female participation in the overall foreign labour market).

migrant workers in the Middle East face situations of sexual exploitation similar to those of trafficked women, it seems they are likely to be read differently, especially if women have been in a position to send money home.

Individual strategies of dealing with stigma

While women's origins and the destinations to which they are trafficked appear to structure geographies of stigma, other geographical reference points also act to mark difference between women. Here the role of the Nepal-India border is significant. Some women use the border to say "I'm not 'as trafficked' because I 'escaped/was rescued' before I crossed[16]". This invocation of the border constructs a differentiated version of the binary of "acceptable and unacceptable" femininities and can be important to women who experience a further layer of stigma by association because of their involvement with an anti-trafficking NGO. Even for the following woman Sabita, who works closely with an anti-trafficking NGO and has taken the unusual step of revealing her trafficked status to her husband, this is a slow and difficult process fraught with fears of being seen as a bad (unacceptable) woman.

> *Question:* What will happen if it [that she has been trafficked] is known to a husband?
> *Answer*: maybe rejection, [names a woman] was married without sharing with her husband and later there was problem when it was known that she was trafficked…
> *Question:* Taking your case, are you still hiding or shared with everyone in your family?
> *Answer:* No, I haven't shared all, just a little…if they [other people] might have known from relatives, they haven't said to me. I have shared with father and mother…[and]… have shared few things with husband. They haven't asked me about details, I haven't shared in detail to him. … He has not taken me with negative perspective. I haven't shared all, just a bit. Earlier while marrying he didn't know, he said you don't have to say all things of your past. (laugh) But what I think is, knowing suddenly…..what will happen then?… One day it will be known anyway, … but seeing the behaviour, habits till now, I don't think anything negative will happen to me. ….but sharing…family might think she was like that (bad), and that might be known to all.

Managing stigma in this way is clearly very personal and requires much individual energy and courage. For most returnee women who have opted for marriage as a livelihood strategy to manage stigma (see Richardson et. al. 2009 for more details) being able to keep her trafficked identity a secret from her husband or her husband's family is important to avoid personal risk. While the

[16] This point was made by members of the Shakti Samuha executive board in one of the research team briefing sessions in February 2010.

woman speaking in the quotation above says she does not fear reprisals from her husband, other data emerging from the project suggests that for many returnee women who have chosen marriage as a way to establish a livelihood the situation is less positive. Many women live with situations of extreme abuse from their husbands. Fears of being discovered and potential violence and family rejection, we have learned, can lead to anxiety because of the constant worry that, as the interviewee above suggests, "one day it will be known anyway".

New skills and finding paid work

Individual strategies of dealing with stigma and poverty also focus heavily on the labour market. Here NGOs play an important role in providing skills training as part of the so called 'rehabilitation' process (Joshi 2001). These cover a range of skills including some that focus on traditional jobs for women like sewing, cooking and carpet making. Interviews with women for this project, however, so far support other work (Brown 2000, Poudel 2009). This suggests that these jobs seldom generate enough income to provide sustainable livelihoods. To date there has been little research on the "efficacy of the programs the women go through" (Joshi 2001: 164).

Our preliminary findings indicate that some NGOs, such as ABC[17], provide start-up funding[18] for women launching their own businesses, including in what gender and development experts call 'non-traditional' occupations (UN 1995, Diaw, 2010) such as driving 'tempos' (moto-rickshaws) or working as plumbers or electricians. The NGOs also provide basic business management skills. While ABC suggests that women can earn more in non-traditional jobs such as driving and working as security guards, some non-traditional occupations are better options than others. For example, many women face work-place prejudice in skilled service jobs traditionally dominated by men (Diaw 2010). Jobs such as plumbers and electricians require building up a client base and going into people's homes to work. These situations raise issues of confidence and personal safety which are a wider concern more generally for returnee women seeking jobs after training. In these contexts certain work spaces are considered more dangerous than others and it is not always immediately obvious to an outsider which falls into the dangerous category. For example, while a traditionally female workplace, carpet factories have also historically been a source of recruiting young girls into trafficking (Samarasinghe 2008). Another popular feminised job for returnee women is working in beauty salons. We were told by one NGO, however, of a successful beauty parlour which, when it became known through a media story that it was run by trafficked women, had to close because local men refused to allow their wives to attend. It was seen as an unsafe, disrespectful place for them. Even new so called 'modern' jobs such as

[17] http://www.abcnepal.org.np/abc/index.php (Last Accessed 28th July 2010).

[18] 10,00 Nepali Rupees (just under £90 at current exchange rates). Informal interview with research team February 2009.

computing, where skills training is being provided by NGO programs, are seen by some to pose a potential threat, as one woman Saraswoti, a Tamang woman from the Middle Hill region of Nepal, explains:

> "We also learnt computer for four month in Pokhara Vocational Training Centre where I had received training but computer I could not practice.
>
> M. Why ?
>
> S. Because computer I think was some thing easy skill for men because if you go to computer places, you see many men practicing and few women, but if you see beautician you see many women and very few men. Also what I feel is even if I do computer work with a group of men/boys I fear that I will be unsafe".

An increasing number of returnee women are aspiring to positions as migrant workers and a new emphasis is appearing among the livelihood strategies of returnee women. One of the founding members of Shakti Samuha for example has migrated to the USA with the organisation's support and is now working as a legal domestic worker. Saraswoti's story is particularly interesting with respect to returnee women making new livelihoods as migrant labourers. She was rescued from India in 1996 and after some time opened her own beauty salon in Kathmandu. Once she became established she married and her husband helped her secure citizenship and subsequently a passport. Saraswoti then went to work as a migrant worker in Oman, where, as she explains below, she prospered.

> "Yes, I'm skilled and capable to work, just got back from abroad….Recently, just a couple of months ago. .. I was working as spa staff, I'm a trained beautician and I was recruited by a beauty/spa company in a hotel. Also I wanted to learn some English, new skills and learn about new jobs…
>
> *Question*: What made you go to Oman?
>
> I wanted to earn more and better earning than what I used to make here because my beauty parlour was not doing well...There were differences, here it was small, not making money that I needed to support my living, there in Oman, was nice, more facilities and more money, also it was a company so I did not take responsibilities of paying rent, bills etc, I used to do the work and get salary at the end of month. Life was comfortable and more earning. (long laugh)".

While on the surface this seems like a safe option and success story in livelihood terms, not least because she liked her life and her work, when Sarswoti left Nepal for Oman the men in her marital family gave up work.

> "My husband and father in-law both of them left job since I left for Oman, they are not earning and using my earnings to support entire family that has five members. They have spent on their daily expenses like food, clothes etc."

It seems therefore that the opportunities that migrant worker status provides for women (whether sexually trafficked or not) are potentially a double edged sword as their labour is still open to exploitation by others (and as this example suggests, often by 'familiar' men), albeit in a form different from trafficking situations.

In the final section of the paper we turn to the livelihoods opportunities for women working in the NGO sector. We explore the extent to which NGO professionalization is shaping these livelihood opportunities, examining how different anti-trafficking organisations are locating themselves within these processes and how that in turn affects the way in which women locate their skills and experiences within this sector. In particular, we consider the extent to which activist biographies can become part of career making.

Who speaks for whom? NGO professionalization and location within competing discourses

Increased competition and success in obtaining international funding is forcing processes of professionalization within local anti-trafficking NGOs in Nepal. As the nature of organisations change, typically 'incomers' including men come to occupy new jobs in areas that need technical support such as communication and finance to cope with what Townsend et al. (2002) and Mawdsley et al. (2005) describe as the challenges of the growing audit culture in development.

NGO professionalization also often makes it necessary to harden the boundaries between interest groups in order to define 'territory' and to compete more successfully for funds and attention. Over the last two years this has been particularly the case in Nepal as the Constitutional Assembly process dominated public and political attention. The short time scale for drafting the constitution has meant that interest groups' identities have needed to be 'sharp' in order to gain attention and get their message across. The changing situation of our partner organisation Shakti Samuha over the last few years provides some useful

insights into the processes of marking territory and drawing boundaries in these contexts.

Shakti Samuha has grown from a small NGO founded by returnee women to become a large organisation operating a range of hostels, and programs. It now receives significant funding from diverse groups including the government, transnational advocacy organisations such as Free the Slaves, INGOs like Save the Children and bi-lateral donors like the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japanese Embassy. While only returnee trafficked women can be members of the executive board, Shakti Samuha has needed to recruit non-trafficked staff to operate some of these programs and now also has a number of male staff in the central office working on finance. Shakti Samuha's success has raised its profile nationally and internationally. It currently chairs one of the leading national anti-trafficking networks, the Alliance Against Trafficking of Women and Children in Nepal (AATWIN) comprising 30 anti-trafficking NGOs, media and local networks. This network, like Shakti Samuha, advocates a rights-based approach to tackling trafficking and post-trafficking situations. By contrast the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)[19], of which both AATWIN and Shakti Samuha are members, sees trafficking as a form of labour migration. Despite different emphases in their approaches towards trafficking Shakti Samuha currently serves on the board of GAATW which has a regional office in Bangkok. (For the transnational framework of GAATW, see Weitzer 2007.)

While part of wider networks, unlike many other anti-trafficking organisations in the region, Shakti Samuha has defined its territory clearly in the field of sexual trafficking and according to GAATW[20], as a result, it has formed weak alliances with groups supporting generic migrants' rights. It currently also has weaker links than previously with other stigmatised groups of women in Nepal such as lesbians and women with HIV/AIDS. There may be space to strengthen these former alliances now, however, given that the Constitutional Assembly has been prolonged for another year and the pressure to compete for political attention has eased somewhat.

Larner and Laurie (2010: 222) describe how publicly available accounts of the foundation of specific organisations are often used in targeted business strategies that help to locate institutions in competitive markets. While their work refers to the foundation narratives and timelines reproduced on private companies' websites, their analysis is relevant to understanding the increasingly competitive context faced by NGOs and the forced need to locate and position organisations to attract potential funders. Larner and Laurie argue that credentials in a specific field are validated through public narratives that mobilise historical strengths and point to key foundation moments. A similar process works in the 'not for profit sector' where public validation is important in establishing authority and an operational territory. Shakti Samuha's identity as

[19] http://www.gaatw.org/ (Last Accessed 28th July 2010).
[20] Personal communication, GAATW international coordinator.

the only anti-trafficking NGO run by "returnee women" has become important in this regard, as we describe below.

Formal introductions to the NGO usually begin with a public recounting of Shakti Samuha's founding 'rescue' narrative[21] which is also reproduced in abbreviated form on the first page of their 2008 annual report written in English and Nepali. In 1996 more than a hundred women were 'rescued' from Indian brothels and Shakti Samuha was later formed by some of these women who to this day make up members of its executive board. Harrowing stories of their treatment upon their return to Nepal pepper accounts of why they wanted to start their own NGO (Brown 2000:240). After being 'rescued' they were held in secure Indian houses for more than six months in deeply upsetting conditions (Joshi 2001). They were forced to undergo blood tests for HIV before being repatriated and were only allowed to leave Indian NGO houses when Nepali NGOs were ready to 'take them back'. Upon arrival in Nepal they were kept at the airport under heavy media attention which labeled them as prostitutes and as a source of HIV (Shakti Samuha 2008:2). They were then divided between a range of NGOs with varying degrees of experience in trafficking and diverse support services of differing quality. These organizations also held different political positions on trafficking ranging from seeing it as sexual slavery to a focus on migration and labour as described above (Joshi 2001). When the Shakti Samuha executive board present themselves in public they talk bravely of these formative moments very movingly. However this account looks set to become more than a story retold in face to face settings. The executive board has been recently discussing plans for their web site[22] where they wish to give greater prominence to their foundation story and compile an archive of their testimonials of this event[23]. In this way, we would argue, the foundation narrative is being memorialised, serving, among other things, to mark out a space for them as individuals and as an institution. They are also currently undertaking research training methods in order to become authors of their own research about trafficking.

From activist to making a career biography

The success of organisations such as Shakti Samuha opens up the possibility for some returnee women to make livelihoods working in the anti trafficking NGO sector. This is often work that returnee women find satisfying, as Sabita made clear:

> "*For doing job..I am satisfied with this job. This is social work, awareness program…doing awareness programs saving others from being trafficked is satisfaction".*

[21] In our own first face to face meeting as research partners in February 2010, this was also the case even though as partners we already knew the history and credentials of the organization.
[22] http://www.shaktisamuha.org.np/ (Last accessed 28th July 2010).
[23] Personal communication, research team meeting with Shakti Samuha February 2010.

Nevertheless as other research on NGO professionalization and long term grassroots activism suggests often this type of work pays very little (Jenkins 2008, 2009). As Sabita goes on to explain, such livelihoods are often especially difficult to maintain in urban centres like Kathmandu where living costs are high.

> *"It is difficult for filling stomach. It is expensive in place like Kathmandu, after having baby there is so much of expenses involved with baby, have to pay for room rent, that is creating so much of difficulty. Sometimes feel like what to do, living with such a small money is so difficult.*

For NGO work that depends on project cycles there is the added pressure that jobs are insecure. So while Sabita experienced upward career mobility in the NGO she was working in, she is concerned that once project funding ends she will be on the streets, as she explains below:.

> *"Like, first when I came here I was in reception, looking after store, work of reception and later on I was sent to field as a field worker and till now I am in field.*
>
> *Looking the context of work, what I think is how long this job is going to last, this will go till funding provided by donor… there is a one year renewable contract, and that contract that happened, this year will happen next year what or not, it's uncertain? And this job..till when, if not tomorrow, maybe some day no job, there is no way to go, what to do where to go? Women may get forced to street, I have no capability to fight in other places, have no qualification."*

Elsewhere we have discussed the importance of the need to chart how returnee trafficked women move between different economic sectors to establish livelihoods (Richardson et. all 2009:268) and to analyse how skills learnt in one sector are deployed in another. However the above example suggests that despite having worked in the organisation for three years Sabita did not feel that she had any qualifications that would help her find other work. It appears that she did not see the skills she had learnt in this setting as transferable. This example raises a number of questions that will be explored as more data emerges. Is this the situation for all returnee women making livelihoods in anti-trafficking NGOs? Are some women more mobile across different sectors or able to move into better positions within the organisation than others? Are returnee women able to convert their experience in ways that enable them to move between the NGO and government sectors (Lewis 2008) or 'retool' to respond to donor labour demands when unexpected emergencies or natural disasters occur (Baillie-Smith and Jenkins 2009), as is the case in NGOs in other South Asian settings? Do

women value both the knowledge and the skills they learn in different ways? Emerging data seems to be suggesting that women working at the grassroots may value technical training courses and skills-training over the orientation they receive in the anti-trafficking advocacy world more generally. Can these knowledges provide a basis for securing a livelihood working for another type of NGO that does not focus on trafficking issues or do women see these jobs as paid activism linked only to that place?

As anti-trafficking NGOs become established and vie for political space the mobilization of the identity 'trafficked woman' both gains and loses currency in different ways and for different groups of people. Emerging evidence seems to suggest that working for an anti-trafficking NGO limits women's possibilities because of stigma by association as outlined earlier. Becoming paid staff working for such an organization rather than merely an activist member can potentially represent a way for returnee women to negotiate such stigma. This can be particularly important for women dealing with the fears of being 'found out' by spouses and wider family members as discussed above. These issues take us to the heart of the tensions produced for and between individual and collective identity-making in the context of NGO professionalization. The institutional imperative may be to claim ground as a specific type of anti-trafficking organization based on the presence of returnee trafficked women thereby fixing these identities. For the women themselves however, NGO professionalization maybe an opportunity for an individual woman to distance herself from this identity and move on with her life.

Closing thoughts on sexual trafficking and poverty: what have we learned since 2000 and what should we do 2010-2020?

In addressing the theme of this conference we would argue that over the last decade there has been a failure to focus on the chronic poverty faced by women when they return from trafficking situations. The 'rescue industry' has foregrounded policies and political initiatives that follow the three Rs with very little regard to women's longer term opportunities. As a result, there has been a failure to address the factors which structure their chronic poverty. This paper has sought to highlight how returnee trafficked women's poverty in Nepal is experienced through the interconnections between sexualized forms of social stigma, a lack of citizenship and poor livelihood options.

In recent years the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) in Nepal have been dictated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These look set to be met with the exception of two: HIV and AIDS and universal primary education (UNDP 2010). While the MDGs have led to increased gender parity in some areas, with for example, notable improvements in targeting primary education coverage for girls (Diaw 2010), the PRSPs have been guided down narrow pathways that

have failed to address violence against women or name trafficking specifically (Richardson et al. 2009). The new constitutional framework and the understandings of citizenship it will generate will shape whatever approaches to tackling poverty can emerge in the future. It is important that these approaches give more attention to the demands of the anti-trafficking lobby and the needs of returnee women as it is unlikely that the sexual trafficking of girls and women from Nepal will disappear in the near future.

While the focus of PRSPs has become narrower over the last decade, trafficking trends have become more complex. Geographical routes have shifted and expanded. With the increased emphasis on rescue the flow of returnee trafficked women has grown. The cohorts of female overseas workers has also enlarged (Samarasinghe 2008) and over time greater numbers of women who see themselves as trafficked and non trafficked will be returning to Nepal. In these contexts the ways in which returnee trafficked women have been able to tackle poverty and stigma and gain livelihoods of choice could have wider resonance, especially for the many female migrant labourers who experience sexual exploitation while overseas. This topic is currently under-researched and should be part of the research agenda for tackling poverty over the next decade.

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