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

**WORKING PAPER**

## **Unsung heroes? Anti-trafficking advocacy and celebrity at the grassroots.**

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**Abstract**

While there is growing attention to the role of celebrity advocacy in development and the emergence of new development actors such as celebrity agents and brokers, very little attention has been given to celebrity making processes in the global South. There is scant work on the impact of these processes on grassroots activism and advocacy in the South itself. Drawing on a two and half year ESRC project on post trafficking livelihoods, sexuality and citizenship, this paper explores the role of celebrity in anti-trafficking advocacy with particular reference to Nepal. Recently here the national and international profile of the anti-trafficking lobby has been raised by two international awards (a CNN 'heroes' award and a US State Department award presented by Hilary Clinton) to representatives of different anti-trafficking groups. This paper explores the impact of these awards on anti-trafficking professionalisation in the country. It analyses how they created national celebrities and explores the effects of that on local perceptions of trafficking. This includes examining the reactions of different groups (e.g. politicians, donors, NGOs, returnee trafficked women and their families and the wider public). Connecting with wider debates on trafficking, the paper examines the extent to which celebrity awards and engagement in advocacy map onto cleavages within the anti-trafficking lobby more globally. How do processes of celebrity making in the South affect advocacy at local, national and international scales? To what extent do these processes facilitate struggles for citizenship in contexts where historically many returnee trafficked women and their children are stateless, non-citizens?

## INTRODUCTION

This paper draws on a recently completed Economic and Social Research Council project entitled 'Post Trafficking in Nepal: Sexuality and Citizenship in Livelihood Strategies'<sup>1</sup>. Nepal is one of the leading source countries for sexually trafficked women in South Asia. While many Nepali women have been traditionally trafficked to India, new destinations facilitated by the traditionally open border between the two countries are emerging. India has recently become a transit route for trafficking on to the Middle East in particular and South East Asia in general. 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 2011, Richardson et al. 2009; more widely, AWHRC 2003, GAATW 2004, Kangaspunta 2006, Kempadoo, Kim and Chang 2007, United Nations 2003, US State Department 2010). Yet very little research has focused on the situation of returnee women themselves (Richardson et al. 2009). In the broader project we are interested in how returnee livelihoods intersect with sexuality and citizenship and aim to tease out how the issues raised by trafficking intersect with development agendas.

The project lasted two and half years and involved qualitative work. The bulk of this consisted of forty six interviews with returnee trafficked women<sup>2</sup>. Our sample selected women who self-identified as returnee women and who had differing levels of engagement with NGOs and social movements<sup>3</sup>. Interviews were taped and transcribed in Nepali and then translated into English. Where we draw on this material in this paper we do so using the idiom of the original translation as we wish to recognise that Nepali English is one of the many forms of global English spoken in the world. All interviewees, with the exception of those who can be identified by the award of an international prize, are anonymised. The sample drew 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. These interviews were split between Kathmandu and three rural sites. The three rural sites selected were identified by the government as having high occurrences of trafficking<sup>4</sup>. Pilot fieldwork in

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<sup>1</sup> Project Res-062-23-1490. This large ESRC project runs from November 2009 to April 2012. <http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk>

<sup>2</sup> For more detail of this process see 'The process of data analysis: Interview with returnee women' <http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/#/the-process-of-data-analysis/4554537747>. Last accessed 13/9/11.

<sup>3</sup> We started by contacting women through NGOs and then used snowballing techniques to try to reach women without current, direct NGO contact

<sup>4</sup> 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. For more details on the specific make up of the sample and the sites chosen see WORKING PAPER (ESRC Project Res-062-23-1490) 'Post Trafficking In Nepal Sexuality and Citizenship in Livelihood Strategies'

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January 2010 indicated that professionalisation was as an increasingly important issue for anti-trafficking groups in Nepal. It was therefore decided that a sub set of the 46 interviews (9 in total) would be conducted with returnee trafficked women who identify as activists in order to explore these issues in more depth. The majority of quotations in this paper draw on this material where issues of grassroots celebrity were specifically explored as part of wider professionalisation processes. These interviews along with 15 semi-structured, stakeholder interviews with activists, key personnel in NGOs and in government, were conducted October-November 2011 in English using a translator where necessary. Other qualitative methods involved the analysis of discourses and emerging policies on trafficking and citizenship in Nepal<sup>5</sup>. We also tracked the evolution of debates in committees of the key Constituent Assembly convened in April 2008 to draft a new constitution<sup>6</sup>.

A key aspect of the wider research project was to gain knowledge that is grounded in the actual experiences of Nepalese trafficked returnee women themselves. Reflecting this focus, from its inception as a research idea, the project been founded on a partnership with the Non-Government Organisation 'Shakti Samuha', the only anti-trafficking organisation in Nepal to be founded and staffed by returnee women<sup>7</sup>. Shakti Samuha was founded in 1998 but initially struggled to gain legal recognition as an NGO because the founding members did not at that time hold citizenship cards<sup>8</sup>. As a result, it has a long standing interest in improving the citizenship rights of trafficked women. It grew from a very small base to provide solidarity for returnee women in a number a ways, through hostels, including a working women's hostel, outreach programs and livelihoods training, including in non traditional skills (see Laurie et al 2010). Only returnee trafficked women can become members and serve on the executive

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'Crossing back over the open border: geographies of post trafficking citizenship in Nepal'  
<http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/cgi-bin/download.cgi>. Last accessed 12/6/12

<sup>5</sup> This included a review of the National Plan of Action, the most recent national Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report (see below) and the UN Global Plan of Action against Trafficking. For more details see the working notes section on the project website.

<http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/#/publications/4538205925>. Last accessed 13/9/11

<sup>6</sup> After a decade of civil war, 1996-2006, Nepal is undergoing political transformation by restructuring the nation and re-drafting the constitution through a Constituent Assembly process. Nepal's first multi-party democratic constitution was ratified in 1990. In April 2006 an Interim 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<sup>6</sup> 2007). Two years later an elected Constituent Assembly (CA) was convened in April 2008 which declared the country to be a Federal Democratic Republic after ending the Monarchical parliamentary system.

<sup>7</sup> Dr Meena Poudel came to Newcastle to do a PhD on anti-trafficking after several years of working with Shakti Samuha. Immediately prior to her departure this was in her role as country director for Oxfam. The project idea emerged as collaboration at this time and from the outset Shakti's agenda shaped the focus on the situation of returnee women. As the project took some time to fund in the meantime Dr Poudel took up a position with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Mission in Azerbaijan as a result once the project was funded a partnership was also established with the IOM mission in Nepal.

<sup>8</sup> Citizenship for women has traditionally been obtained after the age of 16 with the support of a male relative. For more details see Richardson et al 2009.

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committee. In recent years Shakti has grown significantly as an organisation, managing a number of projects funded by a range of international donors including Free the Slave and Save the Children (Shakti 2008) and more recently the IOM's economic empowerment program. The Shakti partnership has played a crucial role in drawing attention to 'the making of celebrity in the global South', which is the central theme of this paper.

In 2011 one of Shakti's founding members, Charimaya Tamang (also known to her friends as Anu), received an international award from the US State Department for her efforts in fighting trafficking. A year previously a CNN heroes award had been given to Anuradha Koirala the founder of another anti-trafficking NGO Maiti Nepal, the largest anti-trafficking organisation in the country. Maiti is a highly networked organisation with a wide ranging portfolio of projects encompassing border activism on trafficking prevention, hostels and skills training. It attracts significant funding from international donors and private sector sources and has developed a close working relationship with the government over a long period. It has a high profile internationally in anti trafficking circuits.

The State Department and CNN awards raised the international profile of anti-trafficking advocacy hugely in Nepal. The awards also made both women into local and international celebrities. Anu's award in particular became an important source of pride for Shakti members. However while it is clear that this award marked Shakti's arrival on the international stage as a leading anti-trafficking organisation, questions remain about the extent to which this recognition also fixed their identity as returnee trafficked women. This paper explores these issues and examines some of the potential costs involved in celebrity making in the South.

### **Configuring the spaces of anti trafficking advocacy: the role of new development actors and celebrity**

Doing celebrity through charity and development work is now a widely established practice attracting a growing body of critical scholarship (Brocking 2009; Goodman 2010; Ritchie and Ponte 2011). Along with other emerging actors such as the private sector implementing Corporate Social Responsibility agendas (CSR), international volunteers and the military in post conflict zones, celebrities have a growing presence internationally and in the global South as new development actors (Baillie Smith and Laurie forthcoming). All these new actors are present in the arena of anti-trafficking in a global context as well as in specific global South post conflict settings like Nepal.

NGOs and government organisations configure the spaces into which anti-trafficking advocacy can act and the choice to recognise specific efforts and people through international awards is part of this process. At the heart of donor activities is their role in what is often termed 'the rescue industry' (Agustin 2007).

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This industry has a policy focus on ‘the three Rs’: Rescue, Repatriation and Rehabilitation<sup>9</sup>. Crucial to the policy framing of trafficking and livelihoods is the link between a rescue agenda and donor aid in Nepal. Here the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report published from the United States’ 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 bilateral aid<sup>10</sup>. This policy context is important because in this way, as Shah (2006) argues, international discourses of trafficking together with local interpretations of stigma and honour are able to set the contextual scene that then, in turn, influences the success or defeat of particular agendas of women’s rights-based organising in specific places.

There are also geopolitical reasons for the emphasis placed on promoting anti-trafficking initiatives and celebrating their success in Nepal. Nepal’s strategic location between China and India also brings in extra dimensions concerning border enforcement and international security which help configure the spaces into which anti-trafficking advocacy can act. The TIP report aims at preventing trafficking via a criminalisation approach. Traffickers are seen as a core part of lucrative organised-crime circuits, linked intimately to the arms trade and therefore by extension to an agenda focused on the war on terror. As a result, TIP’s criminalisation emphasis sidelines other anti-trafficking agendas such as promoting sustainable livelihoods for people vulnerable to trafficking or living in post trafficking situations, where issues of stigma and rejection affect their ability to make a living and lead lives with dignity<sup>11</sup>.

While these differences in approach to anti-trafficking are significant, the field is also fractured by other cleavages based in different feminist and anti-slavery politics. Different awards therefore operationalise different anti-trafficking discourses, and are often hotly contested<sup>12</sup>. Diverse awards *make* celebrities of grassroots activists by recognizing their efforts in a specific discursively bounded

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<sup>9</sup> ‘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 (as explained in a footnote above our snowballing approach helped identify a number of these women for our sample of returnee trafficked women). Nevertheless, for many the experience of gaining a livelihood after returning is influenced by access to NGO and/or government shelters and hostels where they receive support services including counselling and skills training

<sup>10</sup> For a longer review of the current TIP report for Nepal see the working notes section on the project website <http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/#/publications/4538205925>. Last accessed 13/9/11

<sup>11</sup> See Poudel 2011 and Richardson et al 2009 for discussion of trafficking and stigma in Nepal.

<sup>12</sup> A previous award made to another Shakti executive member was rejected by the organisation because of the particular line followed and the poor consultation process with the wider organisation. This resulted in the nominee, a long standing member of Shakti eventually leaving the organisation.



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field. Different discourses can be traced through different awards. The CNN award to the founder of Maiti, for example, is represented on CNN screened bulletins as part of its support for a wider anti-slavery campaign whereas the US State Department award celebrated the success of a criminalization approach. One of the reasons Chairmaya was selected from among the founding members of Shakti was that she was the first person to successfully prosecute her trafficker.

It is important to understand however, that these different awards, no matter what particular approach they celebrate, are able to *make* celebrities because they operate in a transnational context where the '*doing* of celebrity' already circulates as a familiar technology of development. Thus celebrity engagement with the ribbon culture (Moore 2008) of Band Aid, Comic Relief and Make Poverty History is the wider backdrop against which the more recent high profile celebrity engagement with anti-trafficking must be read internationally as well as in Nepal.

A range of 'celebrities' have been involved in raising awareness of trafficking from celebrities with a small 'c', such as faith-based campaigns like 'Stop the Traffik' headed by the British evangelical pastor Steve Chalke (Chalke 2009)<sup>13</sup>, to big 'C' celebrities like actors, singers and models working through the types of broker and agents discussed by Brockington (forthcoming). The most recent of these is the 'Real men don't buy girls campaign' (figure 1) launched by the Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher Launch Foundation to End Human Trafficking, recently described as:

***Freedom -- it's in our DNA*** "That statement is both truth and a tag line. Specifically, it's the tag line for the Demi and Ashton Foundation (DNA), which was launched today. DNA's mission is to help raise awareness about and eventually bring an end to human trafficking, and it was created by Hollywood power couple Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher".  
<http://news.change.org/stories/demi-moore-and-ashton-kutcher-launch-foundation-to-end-human-trafficking> 25.01.10

Demi Moore recently visited Nepal as part of the 'CNN's Freedom project ending modern slavery'<sup>14</sup> of which the award to Anuradha Koirala the founder of Maiti also formed a part.

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<sup>13</sup> The book named after the campaign has a web page with an endorsement from the actress Emma Thomson and announces that there is a chapter by Cherie Blair  
<http://www.stopthetraffik.org/news/press/book.aspx> last accessed 12/6/12

<sup>14</sup> See <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/2011/06/22/nepals-stolen-children-2/> for a video clip. Last accessed 12/6/12

Figure 1



The 'coolness' factor of such large scale initiatives which engage extremely well with 'A list' stars also chimes with the types of corporate interests that have chosen to associate CSR initiatives with anti-trafficking. A notable example is the Body Shop which launched its global campaign to 'Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People in 2009'. This campaign focuses on raising awareness of trafficking among young people in the North and raising funds for projects in the global South through the launch of its Soft Hands Kind Heart Hand Cream product which to date has raised £1 million according to its campaign website<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 2).

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<sup>15</sup> Working alongside ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes  
<http://www.thebodyshop.co.uk/values-campaigns/trafficking.aspx> last accessed 12/6/12



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Figure 2 Body Shop poster outside Body Shop booth in Kuala Lumpur Airport (October 2011)



Interestingly, the Body Shop's partner for this project in Nepal is Maiti<sup>16</sup> raising questions about the extent to which the new development actors in anti-trafficking, while occupying distinct ground and coming from different backgrounds, are increasingly interconnected at diverse scales. How does such networking affect actors outside these circles without strong celebrity or corporate links? What price is paid and by whom when such alliances are formed and feted as successful by the award of international prizes? The next section moves on to explore some of these issues by examining how the CNN and State Department awards were responded to in Nepal.

### **Grassroots celebrity: the benefits and costs**

In order to understand the significance of international awards for anti-trafficking in the Nepal context it is important to consider the everyday experience of rejection faced by returnee trafficked women. The stigma associated with being a trafficked woman in Nepal is huge. For some women marriage becomes the only form of livelihood available to manage the social rejection they encounter (Richardson et al 2009). However even when women are married and gain social status, fears and anxieties often remain about whether "one day it will be known anyway" (Laurie et al 2011: 14). The very real, embodied sense of social

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<sup>16</sup> Presentation by Maiti Nepal. Inter agency anti trafficking meeting. Kathmandu, November 2011.

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rejection that returnee trafficked women feel is summed up in the words of a returnee trafficked woman who is a general member of Shakti:

*“The attitude towards us gets ultimately changed when people recognise us as trafficked women. The attitude to look at us is bad... People look at us from up to down and down to up (head to foot and foot to head); people stare at us in an embarrassing and humiliating way”. (Quoted in Laurie et al 2011:16)*

When comparing her feelings about the CNN hero and State Department awards, a Shakti executive committee member alluded to stigma as the ‘real experience’ of trafficked women which for her distinguished the significance of the two awards. She described how they honored different knowledges, reflecting the positionality of the two activists, one as a trafficked woman and the other as non trafficked.

*“To be honest I felt like someone else getting the award when she (head of Maiti) got award of CNN Hero. I felt totally different at that time because Anuradha is not a trafficked person; she didn't experience it personally. She knew about it from other. For her it's just getting knowledge through a book. But this time a trafficked woman received the award; it is her real experience. So this time I felt like our award. My idea is Anuradha got the award for working for trafficked survivors, in this regard she worked for other but in our case (Charimaya's case) we got the award working for ourselves because we ourselves are trafficked survivors”.*

For this activist US recognition for anti-trafficking efforts was a source of pride for all trafficked women and indeed for the country more generally.

*“I feel very happy on it. It is a matter to be proud not only for those who are associated with Shakti but for all trafficked women who are not member of Shakti and it is a matter of proud even for the country itself. It is a big thing to be recognized by a foreign government like US and to receive the award from it at time when our own government has not recognized who we are and what we have done”.*

The fact that Charimaya was a trafficked woman, made a difference to how Shakti women in general felt about the awards. The State Department honour became ‘our award’ for them. These discussions were often cast in the context of comments about Shakti being ‘a family’ which emerged as a common theme throughout interviews with Shakt members at all levels of the organisation (executive committee members, founding members and ordinary members). The solidarity found in Shakti was incomparable to that found elsewhere. For many women whose biological families rejected them, the solidarity of a surrogate family was very significant. Illustrating how strongly this was felt, the interviewee

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above at one point hit the floor, with her fist, and smiled as she loudly claimed 'Shakti is mine'. The use of word 'sister' by another executive member, based outside Kathmandu, in the quotation below, is also indicative of the degree of familial understanding.

*"This time Anu sister got the award. And I felt like it is our award, our organization got this award".*

To sum up, both awards helped strengthen a collective identity of 'returnee trafficked women' by celebrating anti-trafficking in general, whilst also facilitating differentiation that distinguished an 'us' and 'them' within the sector. This identity formation process has wider implications in the context of increased competition for funding and professionalisation of anti-trafficking advocacy that followed. The quodos of the award, coupled with being described by the US State Department as the first organisation in the world to be founded by returnee trafficked women, helped establish a niche for Shakti nationally, regionally and internationally in anti-trafficking circuits. International recognition raised their profile and established their authenticity to positive effect, as two quotations from two other executive board members make clear.

*"Because of this award [referring to the award Anu got] many people got to know about Shakti Samuha. Earlier people didn't heard and know about the organization but now when [Anu/we] got the award, it is well known to many people. Whenever we talk about our organization, now people listen us with excitement".*

*"Of course there are advantages of Anu getting this award. Though Anu got this award she is linked to Shakti Samuha. So the award has helped to introduce the organization with donors and to others; now everyone knows about Shakti Samuha, this is the situation".*

This award occurred at a crucial moment when the new constitution and citizenship rights were under formal debate and popular discussion. At this point Shakti and other anti-trafficking groups were actively lobbying the Constituent Assembly to give greater recognition to the specific citizenship needs of returnee trafficked women and their children<sup>17</sup>. In this context Anu's award reflects the scalar politics at the heart of transnational anti-trafficking advocacy. It allowed returnee trafficked women 'to jump scale', serving political ends by highlighting the lack of recognition from their own government about 'who we are and what we have done'.

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<sup>17</sup> For details of lobbying activities for the Constituent Assembly process see 'activist workshop report February 2011 <http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/#/kathmandu-activists-workshop/4551573402> last accessed 12/6/12 and Reserach workshop, report Kathmandu November 2012 <http://www.posttraffickingnepal.co.uk/#/making-livelihoods-seminar/4563059569> last accessed 12/6/12

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While it is clear from this discussion that there are many positive implications of international awards targeting the anti-trafficking sector, including enhancing collective institutional identity making, the cost of these awards is also significant. As we elaborate below, such cost is often borne more by individuals than organisations.

### ***Backlash and remembering***

Anu herself has spent a lot of time reflecting on the implications for the community of trafficked women of the award she received,. In a long interview she described the repercussions for those who have recently joined Shakti. She says *“there is now a big challenge in their part that people would identify them as trafficked survivors as Shakti is known as survivors’ organization, this kind of fear is there among those who have joined us recently”*. This fear is a fear of being ‘found out’ and the stigma associated with such a revelation, as discussed above. Fear is also something Anu now experiences post the award personally, however hers is a different sort of fear. She is no longer free to move about unrecognized and is greatly concerned about reprisals from traffickers when she goes about her activist work.

*“Earlier I could freely go in the communities and approach the sisters and do the activities on my own, without any problem and without any fear. Trafficking is an organized crime and it has very organized network. There was no fear for me in the past. But now after this event and publicity people know me as Charimaya fighting trafficking issues; it wouldn’t be as easy as it was before for me to go to the communities” (Anu).*

The act of being lauded by the US State Department as the first woman successfully to take her trafficker to court makes Anu a prized target for organized crime and traffickers seeking to make an example of her. Her new celebrity status therefore has a double edge.

Another aspect of the double edged nature of Anu’s celebrity is the memories evoked for her and for others by the award process. She mentioned two moments in particular that triggered different sets of memories. These are worth reflecting on in detail as they help explain what ‘jumping scale’ and ‘doing scalar politics’ actually mean in terms of embodied experiences. They also illustrate how acts of solidarity are intimately bound up in these processes.

The first moment is a personal reflection that Anu shared towards the end of our interview, as the discussion strayed onto more personal accounts of how we felt as a team when we heard the news of the award and saw the photograph in figure 3 of the moment when she received it from Hilary Clinton.

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Figure 3 Charimaya Tamang receiving her award for the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton



Part of a longer exchange, here we quote Anu's answer to our question, which was based on curiosity rather than research design, about what it was like meeting with Hilary Clinton.

*Anu: Thank you for that. All together 10 people around the world were invited there for the award and one of them was from India however s/he was not able to attend the event. So we were nine. Those awardees have played different roles in different sectors. Some of them were advocate and some of them have represented government organizations. When the awardees were invited on stage for award their background was also mentioned. My turn was on the second last (the ninth). When my turn came they also gave my background saying only one and the first survivor who was able to fight with the traffickers and got success. I while hearing that background at some point went back and found myself being in the same situation. I saw a rainbow around and not the mass; I did not see anything. I found myself again back in same situation. If you download the website you could see it in my face; my face was completely disturbed. The US Secretary of State came to me and said 'Congratulations!' I remember I had thanked her but I was not in a condition to be able to speak further. It was quite hard for me. The US Secretary of State noticed that it was quite hard for me. Then she came to me and hugged me. She patted on my body just to make me feel comfortable and perhaps to encourage me. At that time she had said, "You are not alone, we are also with you". While she was patting on my body I felt a kind of*



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*warmth and suddenly woke up and saw the audience in front of me. Then I realized 'oh! I'm here for the award'. You know the patting of the US Secretary of Foreign Affairs gave a life again. If she had not done so anything might have happened to me; I might go in depression or collapse.*

*I would like to tell you one thing. It has been so long that I've been working and fighting for this issue but I have never had experienced this before this journey. I have never had flash back like the last time. It was the first time.*

This whole narrative was very moving for us all to share, not least because it was also shocking. It was a surprise for Anu where she realized (and for us when she recounted this) to learn that the moment when her prize was awarded was the first time she experienced flashbacks of this nature. The very act of someone reading out her achievements brought unwelcome, paralyzing memories back for her. Although it was her first time in the US, she had previously travelled widely in South Asia as part of her advocacy work in Shakti and was not expecting anything very different. The flashback therefore took her by surprise and she was transported back and far away. It was Hilary Clinton's touch that brought her back to where she was. This act and the subsequent words spoken by the Secretary of State at that moment clearly illustrate how the solitaries of scalar politics are embodied in powerful ways.

The second moment Anu recounted was another personal reflection but unlike the first, was one that was also shared with fellow Shakti founding members. In 1996 more than a hundred women were 'rescued' from Indian brothels and some of these women later formed Shakti Samuha. This moment and the story of their arrival at Kathmandu airport from India has become an important part of Shakti's foundational narrative (see Brown 2000; Shakti 2008; Laurie et al 2010). Memories of this day were triggered by Anu's return from Washington which she described as follows:

*"To talk about my return in Nepal it was again a big shock to me. 15 years ago when we landed on the same airport we/I had to cover my face in order to hide it. 15 years after this incident again I arrived in this airport and this time I saw a big mass there to welcome me with flowers and garlands. I saw the changes. May be it was due to the changing time and context... I don't know how to define it".*

For another founding member Anu's return to the same airport also prompted memories, for this woman, however, these were vivid ones of rejection.

*"We were very happy the day when knew Anu ji got the award. On her return we went to airport to receive her. But that day reminded us the very day in 1996. Because we were directly brought at the airport and*



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*we didn't even had a dress to wear; some of us had taken the dress from others. It reminded me the way we were treated by the media, the government and the society; it reminded us the stigma, rejection and all the comments made against us. Those who were pelting stones [figuratively] at us saying Bombay ko bhalu (bears of Bombay-bhalu is a word used here for prostitute), the same media was there in the airport to welcome her on her return from US after receiving the award. We saw this difference. It is a matter to be proud for her receiving the award".*

What is interesting reading these two quotations together is that both women took support, courage and some pride in the fact that it was the same press that had rejected them all that time ago that was now telling a different story. While a collective and individual moment of restoration to some extent, this was not pain free for either woman. Nevertheless, both marked 'the difference' from the time before and thought about how far they had come.

While Anu wondered about whether changing times and context had brought about the difference, the other woman reflected on at what cost and to whom such recent success was gained later in the same interview. As a long standing friend of Anu, she compared the impact of the two different awards (the CNN Heroes and the State Department) on the two recipients. She worried about the 'different difference' the awards made to the women's lives in real terms.

*"It sometimes really hurts me when I compared Anu didi with Anuradha Koirala (head of Maiti Nepal) who got another award last year. You see Anuradha in a car and you see Anu didi who has a long history of struggle rushing all the time and running on foot; she also got the award; she is hero but you see the difference. She has fought a lot for the organization and from organizational point of view it is very good. Many donor agencies have approached Shakti Samuha particularly after Anu receiving this award opting to support it. But personally what has she got? What she has gained? After all she is a trafficked woman and people see her this way<sup>18</sup>. It is painful to me and I feel the difference when I compare the life styles of these two women" (Anu didi and Anuradha).*

These words are a sobering reflection on the dangers of fixing a trafficked woman's identity on individuals through celebrity making. Despite the potential benefits of this as a collective identity for organizational strategic positioning within anti-trafficking advocacy networks, there are considerable costs for some.

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<sup>18</sup> Our emphasis

### CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to explore the role of celebrity in anti-trafficking advocacy making a distinction between 'doing' and 'making' celebrities. Whilst most academic attention to date has focused on the charity and advocacy work of 'A list' stars in development, here we have examined a neglected theme in celebrity studies by addressing the role of international awards in making grassroots celebrities in the global South. We have examined the benefits and potential costs of such processes for local actors, drawing specifically on the example of two international awards made to anti-trafficking activists in Nepal. We have argued that while institutions gain a higher profile, attract more funding and members through processes of celebrity making, this increased recognition also introduces potential dangers to both individuals and institutions.

The paper argued that the scalar politics associated with celebrity making play an important role in the success of anti-trafficking advocacy. However questions remain about who these politics represent a success for? Certainly criminalisation discourses around trafficking have been promoted by *making* grassroots celebrities, thereby fulfilling a core element of the US TIP agenda. It could also be argued that the anti-trafficking lobby in general in Nepal has benefitted in terms of using celebrity status and international recognition to put pressure on the government. Our analysis of the embodied aspects of these processes however also highlights their role in managing some of the dangers that come with remembering and suggest that some individuals pay a high price for their celebrity.

The support given to the term 'trafficked women' as a political identity through creating grassroots celebrities has also led to unanticipated outcomes. Anti-trafficking organisations in Nepal have reported that they are increasingly coming across cases of women who are presenting themselves as trafficked women when in fact, after a short period, it becomes apparent that they have not actually experienced trafficking. Giving a higher profile to the support available to trafficked women seems to be encouraging some women to falsely identify in this way in order to access services. Given the discussion above about the stigma women who have been trafficked experience, unless recent events mean that society really is at a point of undergoing seismic change, it can only be assumed that the circumstances that propel non trafficked women into such a strategy must be extremely dire. It is here that future research needs to examine the ways in which trafficking and migration experiences nationally and internationally in Nepal are increasingly blurred and address the epistemic and physical violence done by a development model that give so much priority to generating remittances.

Several organisations, including Shakti, are currently developing more strict assessment criteria to verify whether a woman has been trafficked. We would argue that such an increase in technocratic professionalization further adds to

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the 'policing' of the anti-trafficking sector in Nepal and returns us to the question of whose agenda grassroots celebrity making in anti-trafficking really is serving?

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