

# Contribution Paper from Shakti Samuha

By Sunita Danuwar (Executive Director of Shakti Samuha)

## **Voice of survivors**

Sunita Danuwar is a founder member of Shakti Samuha. Ms. Danuwar became a sex-slave by force at the age of only 14. For many, it looks unbelievable that a trafficked woman could lead a social movement in a closed society like Nepal but Ms. Danuwar broke all social barriers and has been able to become a role model for many people across the globe. Now, she is recognized as a leader who is changing life of many trafficked survivors and those at risk for human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a very shameful crime that occurs everywhere in the world. This is a serious human rights violation. Despite of this, every 30 seconds a person is trafficked somewhere in the world. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal published a National Report on trafficking in person, especially on women and children in Nepal in 2013-15, which shows a total of 9,000 to 9,500 persons were attempted to traffic, and 8,000 to 8,500 persons were trafficked in each of the FYs 2013/14 and 2014/15 based on the NGOs and Police Record. Evidence suggests that the number of the interception of the vulnerable persons has increased after the earthquake – an increase by at least 15 percent before and after three months of the earthquake.

The Nepal society is guided by a patriarchy mindset. In this context, it is very hard for trafficking survivors to reintegrate into the society. Although being a survivor is not the fault of the individual, society often treats them as criminals. Survivors are deprived of their dignity and this makes their life very difficult. As survivors speak from their own experience, there can be no more powerful voice in human trafficking.

## **About Shakti Samuha**

Shakti Samuha (SS) is the first organization established and being managed by trafficked survivors worldwide in 1996. It is an organization of human trafficking survivors who are trying to convert tears into power. The goal of Shakti Samuha is to establish a progressive society, devoid of trafficking and other kinds of violence against women.

In 1996, 500 girls/women were rescued from slavery in Indian brothels during widespread police raids. Among them, around 200 were Nepalese girls/women and remaining was the citizen of India, Bangladesh and other countries. Governments of other countries took the initiation to repatriate them in their own country. But the Nepal government denied repatriation by saying what would be the proof that rescued girls are the citizen of Nepal. But the main concern of the Nepal government was that if those rescued girls/women repatriate in Nepal they would bring HIV into the country and the prostitution would be spread within the country.

The Nepal government struck to not bring rescued girls/women, but at the same time the human rights based organizations, especially 7 organizations, were arguing with the Nepal government that repatriation of the survivors to the country is survivors' rights and the government should be accountable for this action. The discussion happened until 6 months and during that period all rescued Nepali girls/women were kept in the government shelter home of India, where condition was bad and worse than prison.

In the absence of Government support, 7 NGOs took the lead in returning and rehabilitating the girls/women. After returning in the country, situation was not in favor of survivors. Lots of stigmatizations were faced by survivors at that time including media and service providers. Government started to check HIV of all girls without taking the consent of survivors and without ensuring the confidentiality. HIV was found in some girls, after that very painful moments started. All girls started to cry as they thought they also have HIV and they will die soon. They lost hope to live. In this condition, the founder of Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC Nepal) and active

women rights defender Dr. Renu Adhikari Rajbhandari knew the situation. Dr. Rajbhandari planned the 10-days basic health rights training including the life skills, HIV, and human trafficking training for them. 12 survivors were taking the rehabilitation services from the WOREC rehabilitation center. Dr. Rajbhandari also requested other rehabilitation centers to send participants but only 3 survivors joined the training and remaining other organizations did not send survivors to participate that training. Training was very helpful to them as they were able to understand that being a trafficking survivor is not their own fault and even if they have HIV they can live for some years as other human. That's why at the last day of the training the 15 girls who were the total participant of the training decided that they will unite, they will not let go their tears, and they committed to **“convert their tears into power”** to fight against human trafficking. They also gave the name for organization, that is, **Shakti Samuha** (Shakti means “Power” and Samuha means “Group”). As a power group they united and devoted to fight against human trafficking.

### **Vision**

Women and children survivors of human trafficking will be living a dignified life in society through economic and social empowerment.

### **Mission**

Act as a supportive organization to involve affected women and children and those at high risk of human trafficking in the anti-human trafficking campaign to ensure and protect the rights of survivors through awareness, organizing, and empowering themselves.

### **Objectives**

- To establish income generating and skills based programs that create a sustainable livelihood for trafficking survivors.
- To advocate and lobby for necessary changes to the law.

- To organize meetings and campaigns to raise awareness and minimize the risk of trafficking.
- To establish safe house and emergency support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking survivors.
- To manage and update data on trafficking survivors.
- To assist trafficking survivors with legal, employment, and counseling services.
- To coordinate with local, national and international organizations.
- To protect vulnerable girls and women from trafficking.
- To organize the development of staff members for effective program implementation.

Shakti Samuha received ‘The Ramon Magsaysay Award’ as a testimonial of Shakti Samuha’s hard efforts and invaluable contributions in the anti-human trafficking campaign from Philippines in 2013 and also honored by French Republic Human Rights Award, from the French Government in 2015. The founder’s members are also honored by different national and international awards.

### **Extent of trafficking in Nepal and main factors contributing the problem**

Nepali victims are trafficked within Nepal, to India, the Middle East, Malaysia, Dubai Qatar and other countries in Asia. The victims are forced to become prostitutes, dancers, domestic servants, beggars, factory workers, mine workers, circus performers, child soldiers, and other commercial sex industries. The trend of trafficking is changing, in the name of marriage, organ transformation, and surrogacy mother, foreign employment within the country and outside the country. A survey conducted by UNICEF estimates that 800 girls are engaged in prostitution in the Kathmandu Valley alone.

In the context of Nepal, poverty, illiteracy, lack of livelihood opportunities and the impact of natural disasters exacerbate the vulnerability of children and women and

increase the risk for trafficking. Nepal is facing both in-country and cross-border trafficking. The open border between Nepal and India is 1,000 miles long with just 14 immigration checkpoints along the route. This makes it easy for smuggle over 20,000 women and young girls (mostly ages between 12-25) from Nepal to India every year.

## **Partnership with International Organizations and current programs of SS**

Shakti Samuha only works with the organizations that their vision, mission and goal match with Shakti Samuha works. (The list of the international organizations is attached separately). Shakti Samuha is also the member in different global and international network. Through this, Shakti Samuha is raising the issues of human trafficking globally.

Shakti Samuha has focused all programs in major three themes i.e. Prevention, Protection and Capacity Building. Since its inception, Shakti Samuha is actively involved in the anti-human trafficking campaign. Shakti Samuha has taken a holistic approach with participatory intervention; Shakti Samuha facilitates forming and strengthening adolescent group and survivor group in a community to prevent human trafficking. Shakti Samuha has **71 Adolescent groups (1608 adolescence members), 20 trafficking survivor's groups (363 members) and 2 Networks of women (22 members)**. It is an integrated rights-based approach to address the issue of trafficking and violence against women from a holistic perspective, and only a multi faceted approach can address numerous and complex underlying causes of human trafficking by eliminating unequally power relations.

Shakti Samuha intervened to recognize the issue of human trafficking as a human rights violation at the community and national level. It has developed close and strong collaboration with the government agencies such as Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Home, Office of the Prime Minister,

Ministry of Local Development at the national level by pushing for victim-centric mechanism, laws and policies.

Shakti Samuha intervened in the national plan of action against trafficking. Shakti Samuha has been successful in motivating decision makers and law enforcement agencies through its partnership and collaborative efforts to bring positive changes in the issues of human trafficking. Thus, continuation of these approaches to consolidate the achievements so far, and further improvement of the legislation through up scaling of this intervention, are necessary to end human trafficking.

Similarly, Shakti Samuha is also working on the Protection theme and under this theme Shakti Samuha supports repatriation of trafficking survivors. Shakti Samuha is currently operating five safe homes (3 located in Kathmandu, 1 located in Kaski and 1 located in Sindhupalchowk). Through these safe homes, Shakti Samuha provides psychosocial counseling, legal aid, education, health support, and life skills as per need of the survivors. Shakti Samuha also provides the different capacity building support for survivors such as vocational and skill base trainings as per interest of survivors. If survivors were ready to reintegrate into family or community, Shakti Samuha does risk assessment before reintegration. And if there is no risk then Shakti Samuha does reintegration into family or urban area based on the interest of survivors. Thus, it is important to make survivors economically empowered before reintegration. Thus, Shakti Samuha provides different vocation trainings i.e. handicraft, tailoring, beautician, hotel management, bakery etc. And Shakti Samuha also provides some income generation support to establish their own business. Shakti Samuha also organizes different type of issues base capacity building program to enhance the capacity of survivors.

### **Partnership with the Nepal Government**

In 1996, the Nepal government denied repatriation of trafficked survivors but since 2006 the Nepal government started to celebrate National Anti-Human Trafficking Day and in 2007, first time the Nepal Government honored to Shakti Samuha appreciating

the effort of the organization in anti-trafficking campaign in the country. Similarly, with long lobby, National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT) formed under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCS) where currently Ms. Sunita Danuwar, a founder member and current Executive Director of Shakti Samuha is a member on this committee. Similarly, in the district level there is the District Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (DCCHT) and Shakti Samuha member is representing in this district committee.

### **About Women Rehabilitation Center**

Additionally, the Nepal government has established altogether 8 rehabilitation homes to provide rehabilitation support for trafficked survivors. And the Nepal government has vested Shakti Samuha with authority to manage rehabilitation homes in the Sindupalchowk district. Basically, this rehabilitation home also provides rehabilitation support for survivors. Survivors can receive different support until 6 months from this home but Shakti Samuha, as the organization for survivors, could not let them go in a risk situation after completing 6 months. Thus, unless survivors are fully prepared to reintegrate, survivors can live in this home.

### **Last words for Korean readers**

It is very challenging to work in this sector as human trafficking is the organized crime so let's join our hands to stop human trafficking globally. If we unite, we can make it possible and we can change the world. Be the voice of survivors.

### **The Name list of Partner Organization**

<b>N.</b>	<b>Current Program</b>	<b>Area/District</b>	<b>Partner Agency</b>
1	Anti-Trafficking Information Booth in Bhotechour and Baunnepati VDC	Sindhupalchowk	Plan International
2	Capacity building program	Kathmandu	ECPAT International
3	Combating Trafficking in Person (CTIP) Program	Banke, Makwanpur and Sindhupalchowk	The Asia Foundation (TAF)
4	Empowering girls and women for prevention and protection from human trafficking	Kathmandu, Sindhupalchok & Nuwakot	Child Welfare Scheme Hong Kong (CWS HK)
5	Empowering survivors: SSS (Self Assurance, Self Confidence and Self Reliance)	Sindhupalchowk	New Community Project (NCP)
6	Female workers in Cabin, Dance and other restaurants in Kathmandu	Kathmandu	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
7	Information Desk in District Administrative Office, Gorkha	Gorkha	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
8	Prevention and support to human trafficking and CSEC survivor	Kathmandu and Makawanpur	Freedom Fund and Geneva Global (GG)
9	Preventing and responding to child trafficking in post-earthquake setting	Sindhupalchowk	Save the Children
10	Prevention and protection of child sexually abused among women and girls and those who are at high risk of abuse and human trafficking	Banke, Bardiya and Kailali	World Childhood Foundation, Sweden
11	Prevention and support to the children and women survivors of trafficking in eight earthquake affected districts	Makwanpur, Sindhuli, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Gorkha, Dhading, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur	UNICEF
12	Program for the Prevention, Protection, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Girls and Young Women (Emergency Shelter Home/Sumire)	Kaski, Pokhara	Kidasha and International Support Association of School Construction (ISSC), Japan
13	Protect children and youth who are highly vulnerable to growing risks of trafficking by proposing Protection Centers	Nuwakot	ECPAT Luxembourg
14	Recovery and rehabilitation in post disaster	Sindhuli, Ramechhap and Sindhupalchowk	Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP)



15	Recovery and rehabilitation in post disaster	Rasuwa	Global Fund for Women
16	Reintegrate and Empowerment of Trafficking Survivor Women and Girls	Bardiya and Jhapa	Free the Slaves (FTS)
17	Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficking survivors, Girls/women at the risk of trafficking and subjected to sexual abuse (Safe Home, Sangharshashil Aawas and Sakura)	3 shelter homes in Kathmandu districts	Free a Girl , Rhest, International Support Association of School Construction (ISSC), Japan
18	Women Rehabilitation Center	Sindhupalchowk	Women and Children Office, Sindhupalchowk (Nepal Government) and Global Fund for Women