



TAIWAN FOUNDATION
for DEMOCRACY

財團法人臺灣民主基金會

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Ms. Sunita Danuwar Wins the 2015 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy announces today that the winner of 2015 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to Ms. Sunita Danuwar of Nepal. Ms. Sunita Danuwar, was once a victim of human trafficking, is a leading social activist in Nepal and the founding member and current president of Shakti Samuha, the first non-governmental organization sheltering survivors from human trafficking in Nepal.

Ms. Danuwar chooses to tell her story with incredible courage to raise awareness on human trafficking prevention. In 1995, when Ms. Danuwar was a 14-year-old, she was trafficked to India and turned into a sex-slave by force. In February, the next year, under the huge pressure from national and international organizations, Mumbai police raided the red light areas and saved minors under 18 years old from forced sex-slavery. Almost 500 girls and women were rescued from the brothel, nearly 200 of whom were Nepali girls and women including Sunita. Later on, thanks to the support of WOREC Nepal, Ms. Danuwar and her friends attended a training session and learned that they should not feel guilty and nor responsible for what happened to them. Moreover, Ms. Danuwar and other fourteen girls organized and formed a group called Shakti Samuha, which means "the power group" in English, aiming at fighting against women trafficking through that organization.

Ms. Danuwar's role in Shakti Samuha is not confined in one but multi-dimensional. She has been a coordinator, program director, counselor, and trainer. She is a counselor for the rescued girls and women; a teacher to teach and also empower them. Ms. Danuwar has a key role in making policy of Shakti Samuha and planning strategy and also involved in policy making, strategy development and organizing training programs.

Since the foundation of Shakti Samuha in 1996, they have been organizing and

empowering returning trafficking survivors by providing shelter, legal aids, counseling and vocational training for jobs like barista, seamstress, or beautician. It has set up Women Protection Committees in 11 districts of Nepal in order to prevent trafficking and violence against women. They have also set up Adolescent Girls Groups based in the poorest communities in order to pass on the message about the dangers of trafficking. Now this organization is reaching out to rural districts where trafficking is prevalent, helping to keep women safe and make a united stand against the traffickers.

Ms. Sunita Danuwar was chosen after a two-stage reviewing process. The final review panel included Dr. Nisuke Ando, Director of the Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute and former Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Committee; Mr. Paul Graham, Member of the World Movement for Democracy Steering Committee; Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the 2008 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award laureate; Dr. Carolina Hernandez, Professor of Political Science at the University of the Philippines and President of Institute of Strategic and Development Studies, Inc.; Ms. Asma Jahangir, Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; TFD Chairman Wang Jin-Pyng, and Dr. Teh-Fu Huang, President of the TFD.

Ms. Danuwar will formally receive the 2015 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award at a ceremony in Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel Taipei on December 10th, the International Human Rights Day. The Award consists of one sculpture and a US\$100,000 grant to support Ms. Danuwar for her dedication to rescuing female victims from human trafficking and advocating on the prevention.

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For more information about the Award, please visit:

<http://www.tfd.org.tw/opencms/english/adhra/index.html>