

The horrors of human trafficking

By MARK CONNORS

FOUR Newcastle residents hope to shine a spotlight on Nepal's human trafficking crisis when they screen their self-produced documentary next month.

Newcastle ambassadors for 3 Angels Nepal Belinda Bow and Robyn Raymond were joined by cinematographer Daniel Bracken and photographer Melissa Histon on a two-week expedition to the isolated region in March.

It is estimated that 54 young girls and women are trafficked out of Nepal and into India every day.

Ms Bow said while some were enticed to cross the border with well-paying jobs or a promise of marriage to a wealthy man, others are drugged and abducted from their villages.

"They are auctioned off to the highest bidder - some of them are as young as eight," Ms Bow said. "Virgins are the most valued as some believe they can cure them of AIDS."

Over the past three years, 3 Angels Nepal has rescued 4000 girls, manning 14 checkpoint stations along the border.

More than 160 children are now living in 12 children's homes maintained by the 3 Angels charity.



HARSH TRUTHS: A Badi community visited by 3 Angels Nepal ambassadors.

However, as the border is more than 1600 kilometres long, trafficking still remains a problem.

"It was very confronting," Ms Bow said. "Their stories were all so different."

"Often the only common trait

was that they had been abducted, tortured, raped or drugged."

Although the team heard many dark, gut-wrenching stories, they also heard hopeful tales from women who had escaped.

Ms Bow said the team hoped

to educate people about the true impact of human trafficking.

"What's refreshing about the Nepali people is that they want a hand up, not a hand-out - they are not asking for people to come in and Westernise everything," Ms Bow said.

"They are looking for a

HARSH TRUTHS: Robyn Raymond, Melissa Histon, Daniel Bracken and Belinda Bow have returned from Nepal and will soon screen their documentary on human trafficking.

generational change and putting a stop to human trafficking."

■ The 3 Angels Nepal documentary *Latitude* will be screened at the Watt Street Arc Theatre on Wednesday, November 19 at 7pm. Tickets are \$25 and are available from stickytickets.com.au.