

February-March 1993

WORLD VISION



Coming

Women in the

Out of the

Third World



Shadows

Russian Pen Pals:

**Friendship
Tucked in an
Envelope**

Korean Orphan:

**In from
the Cold**

 *Shyness
prevents me
from express-
ing what I feel.
To whom can I
reveal my
aching heart?
My heart is
scorched in
the breeze.
I cannot leave
the house for
fear of scandal.
Yet my heart
soars in the air
away from
its cage. *

Bangladeshi Women's Song

Women in the Third World

Coming Out of the Shadows

TEXT BY BARBARA THOMPSON

PHOTOS BY JON WARREN

Halima Khatun





FOR CENTURIES, women in the developing world have lived as second-class members of their own families. They have been deprived of health, education, and legal rights. Yet with increasing education opportunities and through innovative programs like World Vision's "savings and loans" groups, women in Bangladesh are taking control of their lives. The results are benefiting everyone.

It's 5:00 a.m. and a monsoon rain is falling over the Ershad Nagar slum. Here, at the edge of Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, more than 50,000 people make their homes in one-room shacks crowded along narrow, garbage-strewn paths.

Inside a 6- by 8-foot dwelling,

Now I Have Dreams

I was married when I was 7, but until I was 12 I lived with my mother and father. Then my parents explained that I was married and must go live with my husband.

We had five children, and we were happy. My husband drove one rickshaw and rented out six others for hire.

After 10 years, when I was 22, my husband became sick with tuberculosis. He was in the hospital for two years. We sold the rickshaws to pay for his treatment. Then he died.

We moved from a one-room house to a tiny shack in a slum. I worked as a maid and my sons worked as haulers. Sometimes we ate; sometimes we went hungry.

I heard from my neighbors about the World Vision savings group. Here I could save money and get a loan to start a business. But first I had to take a functional literacy course.

I only went to school for a few days as a child, and due to my age, the literacy course was very difficult. But I was determined. In six months I learned to read and write and calculate.

After graduation, I was eligible for my first loan. I borrowed \$27 and my son and I started a chicken business. We repaid the loan in five months.

Next I borrowed \$40 and I began my grocery business. Since then I have borrowed and repaid seven loans. With my last loan, \$300, I purchased this cement building. My family lives in two rooms, and the store is in the front.

I keep the shop open every day of the year from 6:00 a.m. until midnight. We only close for prayer. I earn \$4 a day, four times what women make in garment factories. With this income, I sent a daughter to college and helped my son begin a rickshaw business. I will send my youngest daughter to college too.

When I was a child I had no time for dreams. Now I have dreams, but they are not for myself. My dreams are for my children.

*Halima Khatun
Dhaka, Bangladesh*

a young widow, Ayesha Kharoum, cooks rice and lentils over a clay stove. Water drips from a makeshift roof, woven of thatch and scraps of plastic. A single light bulb casts a dim yellow glow over two children sleeping on a floor mat.

Outside, the slum's maze of lanes are fast becoming rivers of sewage. Water seeps into Ayesha's home, waking Mesrajs, 10, and Mohammed, 7. Ankle deep in water, Ayesha feeds them breakfast.

At 8:00 a.m. Ayesha wades to a neighborhood training center to embroider blouses. With two timeouts for child care, she continues sewing until 11 that night. By working 12 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week, Ayesha earns almost \$30 a month. It is twice the usual wage for female garment workers, and it enables Ayesha to send her children to school.

"As a child, I dreamed of learning to read and write," says Ayesha. "I didn't get this blessing, but I am giving it to my children."

Ayesha's daughter, Mesrajs, has her own dream. Undaunted by recurring fevers and chronic malnutrition, she is a top student at a church-run school. "I want to be a doctor," says Mesrajs. "I want to serve the people of my country."

Formidable Barriers

In Bangladesh and throughout the developing world, mothers like Ayesha are helping fulfill their daughters' dreams. Despite devastating poverty and limited choices, they are breaking down the centuries-old barriers that prevent women from learning how to improve their standard of living.

On the surface, these barriers seem insurmountable. Women occupy the bottom rung of society in many developing countries. They eat "least and last" and are more likely to be malnourished than men. One in two suffer from nutritional anemia, a condition that lowers resistance to disease and can lead to premature death from malnutrition.

While women work up to seven hours a day longer than men, their domestic work is largely unrecognized and unvalued. For work outside the home, they are paid 75 percent less than males. Women routinely are denied access to basic education, and they seldom learn the job skills needed for economic self-sufficiency.

In some developing countries, discrimination against females begins before birth. Using fetal testing procedures such as amniocentesis, a growing number of families choose to abort female fetuses. For girls allowed to be born, signals of inferiority may begin

with breast feeding. Infant girls routinely are nursed for shorter periods than boys. As children, girls receive smaller and less nourishing meals.

This practice remains deeply ingrained even in educated families. "I am talking about so much liberation," says one university graduate in Bangladesh. "But I still give the better portion of food to my son, not my daughter."

The preferential nourishment of boys is reflected in death rates. In Bangladesh, two girls die for every boy.

Girls also begin working at an earlier age than boys. By 8 and 9, while most boys are still playing soccer and climbing trees, girls are learning the domestic tasks they will need for marriage such as cooking and cleaning. At puberty, many are forced to live indoors, in seclusion.

"I was an extrovert who loved the free life," says Pusba Rozario, remembering her childhood in a Bangladeshi village. "I was happiest outdoors, playing with my friends. But when I was 12,



the physical change came. Suddenly my mother prohibited me from going outside. This was my first great heart-break."

Among women's many losses, they often regret most being denied an education. In Bangladesh, only one in two girls enroll in primary school. Less than one in ten go to high school. These statistics are particularly disturbing in light of recent research indicating that education is the single most important factor affecting a woman's quality of life and the survival rate of her children.

By 12 or 13, many girls in developing countries are already married to men two and three times their age. Pregnancy often begins at puberty, and young mothers are further malnourished by the strain of bearing children. In India, because of malnourishment, one of two pregnant women do not gain weight during the last trimester—the time when a healthy woman usually gains at least 20 percent of her pregnancy weight. This lack of weight gain

leads to premature, underweight babies who are susceptible to disease and infant death.

Few Options

Munni, a small woman in a soiled sari, was 15 when her family arranged her marriage to a 35-year-old rickshaw driver from a Dhaka slum. Now, five years later, she has three children. At 18 months, her youngest child is too malnourished to produce normal hair and skin pigment.

"When my husband cannot pedal his rickshaw, there is no food for the children," Munni says. "The children cry, and then my husband hits me because I cannot keep them quiet." Her eye is black and swollen from a recent beating.


Munni accepts her beatings as a necessary part of marriage. Raised to believe in the absolute power of husbands and unable to read or write, she believes that she and her children can-

not survive without the \$1 a day her husband earns pedaling a rickshaw.

For most women, divorce or a husband's death poses the greatest threat to their survival. In predominantly Muslim Bangladesh, a man may divorce his wife simply by saying "I divorce you" three times. Divorced or widowed women seldom remarry, and they have few options. Many end up as homeless beggars.

Ayesha's neighbor, Sufia, is a skeletal-thin woman who lives with her mother and three children in an 8- by 8-foot hut. The roof leaks and the only furniture is a torn sleeping mat. Tacked to the wall is a glossy magazine photo of a plump, jeweled movie star who simultaneously graces and mocks the malnourished family living beneath her gaze.

Sufia's husband died from tuberculosis in 1986. During his long illness, Sufia borrowed \$300 (a year's wages) to pay for his medical treatment. Today she supports her family on the small wages she earns at a garment factory.



As a child, I dreamed of learning to read and write," says Ayesha. "I didn't get this blessing, but I am giving it to my children."

I Will Teach My Children

Shadheda is a 25-year-old slum woman from Bangladesh who brought her 18-month-old child to a Child Survival Project sponsored by World Vision.

"When I was a child I dreamed I would have a family with enough food to eat, with clothes and good shelter. But this was not to be. I still have dreams—who doesn't? I want to see my children happy and prosperous. But my husband is sick, so what dreams will I have?

"I am 25. I was 14 when I was married, and I have five children. My husband is a rickshaw puller. I knit doilies to sell, and I earn a dollar or so a month.

"I brought my youngest child to the Child Survival Project because she was dying from diarrhea. I knew nothing of oral rehydration therapy or foods rich in Vitamin A.

"Now my children are immunized, and I have learned how to cook food in the proper way. No one ever told me before. I boil our water. I add some extra oil to the children's food. If there is money, I mix some vegetables with our rice and lentils, and maybe buy bananas once or twice a week.

"No one taught me, but I will teach my children. And when I see a malnourished child, I will help the mother learn about food. If the child cannot be cared for at home, I will refer them here. Because I am a witness. I have seen with my own eyes."

Women occupy the bottom rung of society in many developing countries.



Interest on her loan accumulates at 120 percent a year, and Sufia pays more than 85 percent of her income to a neighborhood loan shark.

"I see only darkness," Sufia says when asked about her future. Her eyes are bright with fever, and her ragged sari cannot hide her emaciated frame. She has already given up her 4-year-old son for adoption. "I don't know where he is," she says weeping.

Living at the edge of human endurance, the suffering of women like Sufia is increased by their spiritual isolation. In Bangladesh, while men gather for prayer in mosques up to five times a day, women must meet Allah alone and behind the veil. Not even Allah, it seems, looks favorably on women.

In this environment, the message of Jesus is especially good news for women. "Jesus valued women, and out of his compassion he held them in equal status to men," says Pusba Rozario, a women's development worker for World Vision Bangladesh.

Spending on Women

Today, throughout Bangladesh, development monies once spent exclusively on men are increasingly used to fund small-scale projects for women.

In Harbang, near the Burmese border, a Buddhist monk, Urajinda, runs an orphanage and school for boys and girls. He plans to open a technical college for women. "In our orphanage there have been children whose mothers were still alive," says Urajinda. "I have seen first hand the suffering that comes when women cannot support their families."

In Dhaka, Dr. Igbal Anwar runs a child survival project sponsored by World Vision. He teaches health and nutrition to young mothers, and urges families to delay marriage for girls until after their 18th birthday. Assisted by more than 150 student volunteers, Anwar and his staff have helped decrease the child death rate in their district from one in seven to one in 27.

More and more projects are run by women themselves. Throughout Bangladesh, women development workers are organizing savings groups (see sidebar), teaching nutrition and health, and informing women of their legal rights.

Saving to Borrow

The sky is dark and rain has been falling steadily all morning in a commercial center of Dhaka. The streets are packed with men peddling rickshaws and selling merchandise. There is not a single woman in public sight—not even a woman wearing a veil.

Inside a brightly lit shop, seven women in richly colored saris are sitting on floor mats, surrounded by tables piled high with yards of material and spools of thread. Some are sewing; one is measuring cloth; another is cutting material. The women work steadily, averaging a garment per worker every hour.

The shop is part of a revolution in women's development. The seven women are former "floating people": the transient urban poor who, driven by poverty and hunger, spend their lives moving from one slum to another. The women are not educated, and prior to working in the garment shop, none had ever earned a single taka (Bangladesh's smallest currency, worth less than one-third of a cent).

In 1987, with help from a World Vision savings project, the women pooled their individual borrowing power to get start-up capital for a

Savings and Loans

In Bangladesh and other developing countries, hundreds of women benefit from a unique "savings and loans" project sponsored by World Vision. The project enables destitute women to borrow the start-up capital needed to begin cottage industries and small businesses.

Membership in the program begins with basic education, including daily classes that help the women learn to read. After the classes, the members of a



The women pooled their individual borrowing power to get start-up capital for a sewing business.

sewing business. Today they are co-owners of their own shop and earn \$20 a month. With this modest income, all seven women are the primary wage earners in their family.

"Before I was working, my husband and I quarreled a lot," says one member of the group. "Now we have more to eat, and my husband loves me more. We make decisions together and live in peace."

A 22-year-old co-worker tells a

more sobering story. "My husband tortured me often. There was nothing I could do. But after I got a job, I realized I was not powerless. I left my husband. Now I support myself."

Heartened by the success of the garment shop, the women are already planning to open their second business. Every month they set aside a portion of their wages in a savings account. The funds will be used for a down payment on a confectioner's shop.

An Overdue Revolution

The winds of social revolution felt in this small sewing shop in Dhaka are blowing throughout the developing world. Women are taking the lead in small businesses and cottage industries. Armed with education and technical training, they are giving the gift of survival to their children.

It is a revolution long overdue. Women are the sole breadwinners in one-quarter to one-third of all families in the developing world, and their standard of living determines the well-being of future generations. For every woman living in poverty, there are four hungry children. Women's work, in and outside the home, can provide families and communities not only with the basics of survival but with dreams and choices. As the global economy suffers, and the portion of the economic pie available to the developing world shrinks, women's roles become increasingly important to countries whose best hope for survival lies in the united effort of *all* citizens. ☉

Barbara Thompson is a free-lance writer in Decatur, Ga.

savings group deposit their savings in a joint bank account on a weekly or monthly basis. They are then eligible to borrow money from the same account at 12 percent a year. (Local interest rates are up to 120 percent a year).

A member's first loan is for \$10 or less. When the loan is repaid, she is eligible to borrow a larger sum. With each subsequent loan and repayment, a woman's borrowing power increases. The loans are used to begin a variety of businesses, including machine repair shops, stalls, rickshaw services, carpentry

shops and, in one case, a bookstore.

Each savings group consists of approximately 80 members, who are governed by an elected committee of six or seven women. The group decides together how to distribute the interest on their savings and repaid loans. Some groups pay dividends; others invest in new businesses.

Because members of the group act as guarantors for one another, there are few defaulters. Instead, most women repay their loans early, making themselves eligible for bigger loans and better investments.

Friendship Tucked

“Did we get any mail?” I asked my husband, Russell, when I arrived home from work around midnight. I had been waiting for weeks for a letter from Russia. Russell hadn’t checked the mailbox, so I went. I was so tired I pulled the mail from the box without looking at it. Throwing it on the kitchen table, I trudged to the bathroom and started brushing my teeth.

“HONEY!”, my husband yelled. “Did you see this?” I dashed to the kitchen. He was holding a letter decorated with roses and exotic stamps. We sat at the table with a pot of raspberry tea and slowly opened the envelope:

Dear friends, your letter was to us as a ray of light in a dark kingdom. Thank you very much for your hearty message. We were happy to hear you pray for us and our motherland.

I thought back to the day four months earlier when we joined a ministry called *The Russian Connection*, which matches people in the United States with foreign pen friends. Our family was matched with the Gromovs.* We wrote letters, prayed for them, and watched the mailbox daily.

Despair overcomes us sometimes, Ivan Gromov continued. *Our country is standing on the edge of political, economic, and moral precipice. It's an agony of communist monster and we are afraid our motherland will not be able to bear it.*

We are glad we find your support!

I am the rural schoolteacher living in peasant's house without convenience as 100 years ago. I acquired the inside freedom. I have the dream. But I don't want life only for bread. I want that moral and democratic basis will be reigning in my life and my country. I must work for life lit by Christian morals.

We have a scottish sheepdog, two rabbits, two she-goats, 20 hens. Our animals are tame. We like to play with them. Please write to us about your life. We wait for your letter! We pray for you!

They had received our letters. What a thrill!

Our next letter told of Christmas plans and a new hutch for the childrens' bunnies. We asked about their favorite recipes, traditions, and customs. Because they had “acquired the inside freedom” we shared our faith in Jesus Christ. We asked about their faith and wondered if they were part of a church. We also tucked a tiny packet of tomato seeds, a bag of raspberry tea, and photos in with our letter.

The following week we received a Christmas card decorated with a Russian church surrounded by a forest of fir trees. A delicate film of snow powdered the scene. Not a bit like our California Christmas—and absolutely enchanting. We wondered if they had gotten our simple drawing of the babe in the stable.

Letters flew across the sea. *March 1 is today*, they wrote. *It is the springtime.*

*The Russian family's names have been changed at the request of the author.



into an Envelope

BY SHARYN SOWELL

Nature begins to awake and the gladness is going in our hearts. We have planted your tomato seeds, also cucumbers, cabbages, and pepper.

The Gromovs sent their affection, mailing a lavender field flower with a description of nearby meadows. Once they enclosed a lovely handmade doily. Correspondence was blooming into full-fledged friendship as we learned about their daily lives.

Our she-goats gave birth to two kids. They play very much and are our favorites. Our rabbits have eight little rabbits. They are delightful. Tomatoes stand on the windowsill. We get ready for gardening.

The difficult time has come. Inflation rages. We have not bought clothes for two years, but we will suffice these trials. We need only your moral support. You ask about our church. Most Russian churches were demolished by communists, therefore our village has no church. Religion was forbidden. Many police collaborated with the state. You must remember the atheistic education. It is difficult to regenerate faith. You

are our single help.

I understood the importance of our friendship with these courageous people. If we were their brightest hope then the Lord was going to have his work cut out with us! I felt like the little boy with his basket of loaves and fishes.

Family and friends kept their eyes open for Christian resources in Russian. Several began writing to pen friends too.

We savor the differences between the Gromovs and ourselves.

It was interesting to hear about your animals, we city dwellers wrote. We have never been around goats. It must be fun to play with the babies. What are their names? Our dog Lucy is a wonderful playmate too! We included questions about their school, friends, and favorite foods.

Soon we got another letter. *Kind regards to you in the name of our precious Savior!* they wrote. *It was nice to receive your postcard! We wrote that most churches were demolished. Most Russians were not faithful. I don't know one religious child. The people are embittered and our aim is to return to faith. The faith was trampled. They described their school calendar, herb garden, and local wild animals. We smiled at a sketch of an inch-high tomato seedling and marvelled at a tiny crocheted snowflake.*

Your question about our favorite food caused us to smile. *Our main food is potatoes and other vegetables from our kitchen-garden. In shops we can buy only bread. The potatoes is boiled in water. Milk from she-goats and eggs are our foods too. We feed ourselves. I have one request. Masha has low heart pressure. Coffee can help her. I shall be a lucky man if you can send coffee for her. It is impossible to obtain in our country. We await your letters. We pray for you always. Love, from your brother and sisters.*

Three days later we heard that a local choir was going to Moscow. They agreed to deliver a package to the Gromovs. I ran to the store grinning. Shopping had never been this wonderful!

Into a medium-sized box I crammed three pounds of coffee, an outfit for each person, thread and crochet hooks for Masha, who is an expert needlewoman, and assorted "irresistibles" like vitamins and bubble bath.

We also sent a letter separately. We

U.S.A. (C.M.A.)
Sharyn Sowell
26 W. Porter
ullent-



With love and prayers!

For now it's too expensive for us to visit each other, but postage is still an inexpensive way to travel.



The Sowell family on vacation

tried to put our admiration and affection on paper:

God bless you, who are so dear to us! We had a chance to send a package with a friend. We also had a Russian envelope so we can mail this letter separately. Thank you for the beautiful crocheted doily. We treasure it! Jeremiah 29:10-11 is precious. God has a plan for our welfare, not for calamity, to give our families a future and a hope. How wonderful that we, like Israel, find Him when we seek Him. You Russian believers have suffered 70 years as Israel did, and now you can begin strengthening the church again!

We told them about our dear Grandma's death and our sadness. She left us a heritage of faith. Then we tucked 15 dollar bills into the envelope and prayed everything would arrive safely.

It seemed like forever waiting to hear whether the package had arrived. Their letters didn't mention it and we didn't want to worry them with anxious inquiries. We sent picturesque postcards from our vacation. The children mailed drawings and notes.

Finally we received news of our gifts. We received your letter and parcel. Thank you for your rich present. We find

15 dollars in this letter. It is our two-month income. It is great help.

You have great care for us. You wrote about your grandmother's funeral. Accept our condolence. We have not grandmothers and grandfathers. They died many years ago. Masha's grandfather was exiled in Siberia as a prosperous peasant and died there. Grandfather would not emigrate to America. He would not believe the state would rob his property acquired by honest work. My mother, grandmother, and grandfather, and kinsmen was exiled. They had not work or food. My grandmother wanted to accomplish suicide. And she was a believer! My mother prevented her.

We have shared their spring flood and our drought, their frozen winter and our weekend getaway, their first openly celebrated Easter and our successes with a struggling Sunday school class.

Perhaps someday we'll sit together and talk into the wee hours. We have plenty to laugh about and cry over together, much to be thankful for and hopeful about. For now it's too expensive for us to visit each other, but postage is still an inexpensive way to travel. 🌐

Sharyn Sowell is a free-lance writer in Fullerton, Calif. She is now corresponding with 17 pen pals.

WORLD VISION IN ACTION

Health Care

World Vision is providing health care to victims, particularly children, of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States, health professionals have been traditionally isolated from the rest of the medical world. Nurses, regarded as low-level health workers, traditionally receive two years of training that prepares them for little more than feeding and bathing patients. Working with the Russian Republic Institute of Medicine in Moscow, World Vision is developing resources and more advanced training programs for five nursing schools. Every year, 90,000 people graduate from Russia's 400 nursing schools.

Spiritual Support

Over the past two years, World Vision has provided Sunday school materials and other Christian literature to various regions. Small libraries (64 volumes) consisting of Bibles and Christian classics have been distributed to more than 1,000 public schools in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Through the Russian Bible Society, illustrated children's Bibles are being distributed in World Vision projects, schools, pediatric hospitals, and orphanages throughout the CIS.

World Vision, working with InterDev, a missions research agency, is helping CIS church leaders to develop evangelistic outreach programs.

Social Services Training

World Vision is conducting eight five-day workshops to teach management and planning skills to 400 social service leaders in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and Turkmenistan.

The Russian Connection is an outreach of Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times. If you would like to participate in this letter-writing ministry, write to ASSIST, P.O. Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92642-2126, or call (714) 530-6598.

A humanitarian aid worker with experience in Vietnam writes an open letter to President Bill Clinton.

President Bill Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton,

Please accept my congratulations on your election as president of our country. I wish you the best as you assume responsibilities that will shape the next chapters of our nation.

I was a marine aviator during the Vietnam war. I've returned three times since doing humanitarian work for World Vision.

Last Veteran's Day, I stood on top of Marble Mountain in Danang. Across the airstrip and the city, I could see the Hai Van Pass, the mountains of the Quang Nam Province, and the city of Hoi An. I could also see the long white strand of China Beach. It was a familiar sight, because I had flown many hours in helicopters from Marble Mountain, Navy carriers, and a hospital ship. The aircraft are gone from the flight line, but not the memories of what went on there.

The desire of the United States government to acquire more information about MIA serviceman is both expected and understandable. However, with increased contact, we have reached both a breakthrough and an impasse. The Vietnamese are not able to account for all of their own people, much less ours. Forests have grown, rivers have altered courses. The diplomatic corps may well have not known about photographs found in archives. We don't always remember that 70 percent of all the Vietnamese alive today were in their early 20s or not yet born between 1969 and 1973.

It's time to help the 70 million Vietnamese people living in conditions that are below standards found in 50 percent of Africa. The needs for basic health and education services are overwhelming as are requirements for economic development. Americans can help. We can help by sending a message of support and assistance so that a war that has long divided our nation can come to an end. We can be healed by reaching out to share with others.

There cannot be a complete peace without reconciliation. Restoring relationships does not mean we forget our pain or our loss. Like many others, I lost a cousin, boyhood and college friends, and squadron mates. It still hurts; some of the pain will never go away.

Normalization is a political act. It is what gov-

ernments do. Reconciliation is a personal act of restoring harmony in relationships. It is what people do.

Allowing the people of the United States to put the past behind them will not require our government to invest money we don't have. Others are able and will invest. The European Economic Community, Japan, business interests from Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Indonesia are already there. U.S. companies will follow. The recent AT&T agreement is a case in point. In addition, almost 100 humanitarian aid and volunteer agencies from around the world are hard at work today in Vietnam.

Please lend your support to the growing sentiment that the United States government should lift its embargo against Vietnam. I believe that the U.S. people are ready to finally end a war that has cost us all in so many ways.

Lifting the embargo will also bring increased respect from the Vietnamese, who welcome Americans but are confused by a government that is asking them for something they may not be able to provide. In our search for information from the past, we will achieve more openness and cooperation if we work together than if we, as a nation, continue to maintain a position that cannot be supported in the long run.

With respect,

Ron Maines



Ron Maines sits with friends, on "King's Throne," Marble Mountain, Danang.

FIVE ISSUES
CONCERNING
THIRD WORLD
WOMEN:

LITERACY
EMPLOYMENT
CHILD BEARING
SINGLE PARENTING
AIDS

WOMEN



OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD



Seen primarily as homemakers and child-bearers, Third World women often do not have access to education, credit, or legal rights. Job opportunities are often limited to manual, low-paid labor, and they are usually paid much lower wages than men for the same work.

Poverty also makes domestic chores exhausting. Women in the developing world spend as much as six hours a day gathering water. Aid organizations such as World Vision and UNIFEM are helping Third World women by providing education, job skills training, funding for small businesses, and legal advice.

Prostitution used to be the only way Halimatou Maiga could earn enough money to support her family of six, including her mother and two young children. Now Halimatou spends her evenings baking bread and croissants, which she sells on the street or in front of her home in Gao, Mali.

Three years ago, Halimatou, 30, was one of five women who learned new job skills at a local World Vision center. As part of the Women's Dignity Program, the center teaches skills including cooking, sewing, health, literacy, and financial planning.

After graduation, Halimatou had pans made from metal she collected from oil cans. World Vision gave her a gas stove which she paid for with later earnings. Her mother and sister took over cooking meals at home and her daughters help put the bread in the oven. Now Halimatou earns about 35 percent more than the average monthly income in her community.

Since the program began in 1989, 23 women have graduated. This year 20 more women are studying at the center and 70 women are on a waiting list. ☉

-Report and photo by Kim Olson

Los Angeles schools are offering a program to teach parents that, no matter how poor their own education, they can make a difference in their children's.

Helping Parents Help Kids

Ana Mejia, a Salvadoran immigrant who works as a sewing machine operator in Sun Valley, Calif., considers herself a concerned parent. But she speaks little English and is uncomfortable consulting teachers about the academic progress of her 11- and 13-year-old sons. Helping them with their homework is virtually out of the question.

"When they ask me questions in math, I don't know the answers," Ana, who received only a fifth-grade education in El Salvador, said in Spanish.

That's why Los Angeles Unified School District officials, with funding from World Vision, have embraced the Parent Institute for Quality Education, a weekly night class that teaches parents like Ana that—no matter how little formal learning they have—they can make a difference in their children's education.

Like Ana, experts say, many Latino parents—particularly immigrants—feel helpless when it comes to playing an educational role. Some do not understand how the U.S. school system works. Others feel intimidated because of their own lack of education.

Studies have repeatedly shown that when parents take an active interest, their children perform better in school, officials say.

"The message is simple", said Vahac Mardirosian, a Baptist minister who founded the nonprofit institute in San Diego five years ago. "The schools, by themselves, cannot educate children. The home and the schools working in collaboration will ensure a better product."

Mardirosian, who has been involved with Latino educational issues since the student walkouts of the 1960s, developed the institute program to help reduce dropout rates among Latino students.

Now the institute offers its free course on more than 30 campuses each

enrolled in the program, and another 170 parents in East Los Angeles took the course.

Raised in Mexico by Armenian parents, Mardirosian says that many Latino immigrants—particularly those from poor countries—place too much faith in the schools alone, and discount their own influence on their children's education.

That, he argues, helps explain the difference between the percentages of Latino and Anglo students who complete high school. In the spring of 1991, the dropout rate of Latino high school students in Los Angeles was 41.7 percent, compared to 26.2 percent for Anglos.

Julian Nava, a Cal State Northridge history professor who served on the Los Angeles Board of Education for 12 years, agrees that Latino parents—particularly immigrants—may be reluctant to get involved in their children's schools out of respect for the teachers.

Many Latin Americans have "confidence in the schools, that the schools are going to do the job which the parents are

talk, psychology lessons, and common sense advice on such topics as how the school system works, discipline, preparing children for college, communication, self-esteem, and cultural conflict.

And, although he developed the program with Latinos in mind, Mardirosian said the lessons are appropriate for all parents.

"The base of a good education is what comes from the home," the 67-year-old minister emphatically told about 50 parents recently.

"Encourage work," he said. "Ask your child to do the homework while you are watching. That way, your child knows that you understand that his work is important."

By coming to class each week, the parents also start to feel more comfortable being on the school campus, so that if their children should have a problem, they may be more willing to return to consult with teachers, Mardirosian said.

The response of Parent Institute graduates confirms Mardirosian's view. One school principal said that after parents completed the program, many came to him and said, "Now I feel I can express my concerns."

Dalia Cervantes, who has a 13-year-old son in high school, said that after taking the course, she went to her son's school and introduced herself to the principal and to all of her son's teachers. Her son's schoolwork, she said, has been improving steadily ever since. "Now my son says, 'Oh my God, my mom and the principal are friends,'" Cervantes said. "He's doing a little better now, because he sees that I have taken some action."

In July, four more schools offered the course, and World Vision has committed \$2 million to start the program on campuses throughout Los Angeles over the next four years.

"We know, statistically speaking, that in the Latino community 50 percent of the kids are not going to graduate," said Luis Madrigal, World Vision's director of Latino programs. "We feel that we can intervene through this program. The Parent Institute has a proven track record. It's not a guessing game. We know that it's going to work."

Copyright, 1992, Los Angeles Times. Reprinted by permission. Amy Louise Kazmin is a Los Angeles Times staff writer.

For more information about the Parent Institute for Quality Education, please contact Luis Madrigal at (213) 255-2575.



MICHAEL TAYLOR

Institute graduate Maria DeLaLuz Debora (left), tells instructor René Maldonado, she can now help her children, Dario and Wendy, with their homework.

year in the San Diego area. The program has won accolades from San Diego school officials for bolstering parental involvement in the educational process.

In January 1992, with a grant from World Vision, Mardirosian introduced his program to Los Angeles, where school district officials hope it will produce similar results.

Last March, 174 parents of students in Highland Park graduated from the course. In June, more than 140 parents in Glassell Park, including Ana, were

admittedly not capable of doing," he said.

"Latino parents trust the school system more than other people," Mardirosian said. "Parents see the schools here, they look very nice, very solid. Everybody who works in the school has a college degree, and they think: 'I have a second- or a third-grade education. What can I do to add to these experts?'"

His answer—delivered over and over during the courses—is that parents can do a lot.

Each session features a blend of pep

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR HELPING OTHERS IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

Compiled and written by Tamera Marko



MAIL ORDER COMPASSION

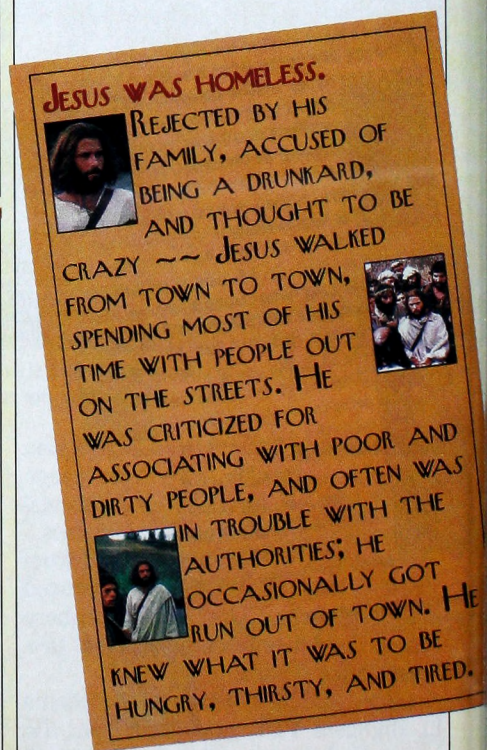
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"Jesus Was Homeless," a 16-page scripture booklet is available to those who want to help homeless men and women nationwide. Produced by the International Bible Society, the booklet includes color pictures, Scripture, and explains in simple terms that Jesus, like many homeless people, was ridiculed, poor, and without a home. Designed to endure streetlife, the booklet is tearproof and waterproof. Booklets cost \$2.40 each or \$46.80 for a case of 25. For more information, contact International Bible Society, 1820 Jet Stream Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921; (800) 524-1588.



SMART TALK FROM SMALL FRY

Check out KIDS NEWS, a monthly newsletter written, published, and sold by a group of children ages 9 to 14. KIDS NEWS, which covers everything from rap music to race relations, is part of KIDS COMMUNITY, an after-school youth program at Jubilee Christian Fellowship, a Mennonite church in Richmond, Va. The youth group members live in Richmond's East End, a neighborhood struggling with drugs, violence, and unemployment.

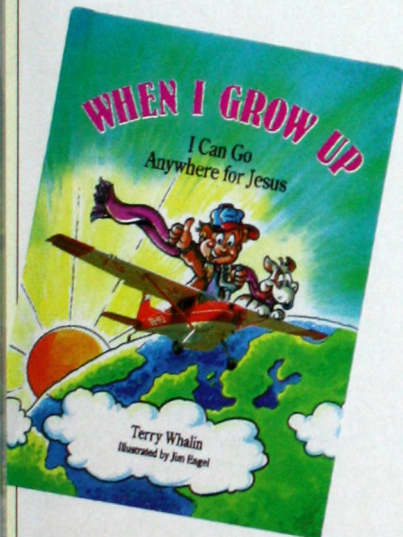
The writers are paid \$5 for the day they spend writing. Each writer also earns money by selling copies in the neighborhood for 25 cents apiece.

KIDS COMMUNITY members also participate in a simulation city, including a store, a mayor, a city council, a bank, and a cinema. "We're teaching them how society operates, but from a kid's perspective," says the Rev. Stan Maclin. "Many times we adults think we know what is best for kids, but this is a community of the kids, for the kids, and by the kids."

To order a KIDS NEWS subscription, send a check or money order for \$7 payable to KIDS NEWS, P.O. Box 8141, Richmond, VA 23223.

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“Those who want heaven most have served the Earth best.”
—C. S. Lewis

HE'S TURNING THEM ON

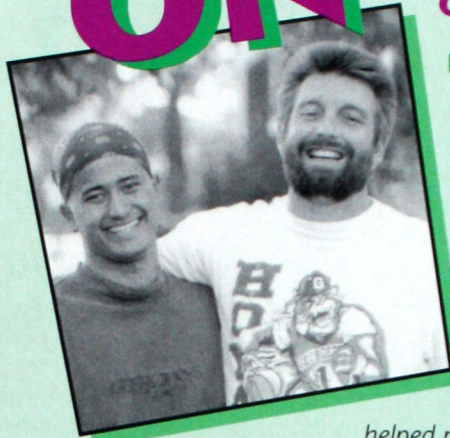
CHUCK BOOHER

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Ministry: Youth Pastor

Profile: Contagiously crazy; fun-loving and gregarious; a deep desire to see teens grow in Christ

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IT WAS AN AWESOME EXPERIENCE. I KNOW NEXT YEAR I'M GONNA GET A LOT OF FRIENDS TO COME ALONG.
—JASON KARMAN

A Korean orphan triumphs over cultural barriers, poverty, and homeless winter nights to become a university professor.

IN FROM THE COLD

In 1953 South Korea was a country overwhelmed with the aftermath of war. Women whose husbands died in the war worked 15-hour days in factories or sold wares on the streets. Probably the most tragically affected were the thousands of orphans roaming the streets scavenging for food. U.S. soldiers returned home haunted by the terrified screams of these children wandering through bombed-out villages, frantically searching for their parents.

In war-ravaged Dong Tu Chon, close to the North Korean border, 5-year-old Sung Sam Oh lived in a one-room rice straw cabin with his mother and two younger brothers.

Over the next 39 years, Oh lived through what many call an economic miracle, during which South Korea advanced from one of the world's poorest nations to a leading industrialized country. The foreign aid trucks filled with clothing and food are gone. In Seoul, South Korea's capital, streets in posh sections of town are lined with shops and showrooms boasting Nike running shoes, Hyundai cars, and a myriad of sophisticated electronic equipment.

Today Oh is a 46-year-old professor



The Korean war had just ended and thousands of war orphans like this boy roamed the streets scavenging for food.

WORLD VISION

with two master's degrees and one Ph.D. He teaches agricultural education at Kon Kuk University in Seoul.

Room With Another View

It is Teacher's Day, a Korean tradition in which students honor their teachers with visits and gifts. For a few moments, Oh's mind is far away from the stack of brightly decorated packages and yellow flowers neatly arranged in an elegant white vase on his desk. He

is looking out his office window, silently thanking God for his blessings.

From his perch overlooking the river, busy streets, and green trees, Oh can see the apartment where he lives with Do-Hee, his wife of 15 years, and their two teenage children. He stares at his home nestled next to a red brick chimney puffing smoke.

The view is a stark contrast to the scene he inhabited as a young boy struggling to survive in a crowded, decimated city, where a full stomach would have been a rare, lavish gift.

"I was hungry often," Oh says. "But all my friends were hungry. I thought it was normal." His mother, who sewed clothes in a factory, couldn't earn enough money to pay for her children's education. Neighbors recommended that she take them to the World Vision orphanage located in the same town.

The transition from playing in the streets with friends to disciplined life in an orphanage was difficult for Oh. "The orphanage was like a military unit," Oh says. "Daily life was scheduled. Wake up at 6 a.m., go to bed at 10 p.m." Like many other children new to such structure, Oh rebelled. "In the morning we walked toward school but spent the day traveling to nearby villages and mountains collecting fruits," he says.

Homeless Winter Nights

When he turned 15, Oh started thinking about his future. Did he want to spend the rest of his life barely earning enough money to keep food in his belly and shoes on his feet?

"I decided to study hard because I knew it was the only way I could really survive in this country without wealth or political connections," Oh says. "I knew I must compete with my brain."



During the bitter cold winter months Oh's teacher let him sleep on the floor in his office, the same office that Oh now occupies as a professor.

After three years of intense studying, Oh asked his teacher to write him a college recommendation. "My teacher didn't want to do it because I was so poor and no one could pay for the tuition," Oh says. "My teacher advised that I go work in a factory."

But Oh persisted and finally his teacher helped him. He began studying agricultural education at Kon Kuk University. Although World Vision and the university paid for his tuition, he didn't have money for food or housing. "I didn't know anyone at school," Oh says. "I didn't have anywhere to live." During the days, Oh attended class and studied at the library. At night he slept outside.

During the bitter cold winter months, Oh's teacher let him sleep on the floor in his office, the same office that Oh now occupies as a professor. But it was an old building without heating, and Oh often suffered from colds and coughs.

"It was a secret that I lived in this office, because students were not allowed to sleep in the building. When all the students went home, I sneaked into this office."

Oh hid his belongings—one spoon, one pair of chopsticks, and one bowl—in a cabinet underneath his professor's bookshelf. "I dreamed and prayed a lot for food," he says. "I was so hungry." Occasionally his professor would bring him rice. "One day after I was dreaming about food, my classmates brought me lunch," he says.

God's Yellow Light

Immediately after he finished his final exams, Oh collapsed with sickness, his inflamed throat and fluid-filled lungs choking his breaths into painful, hacking coughs. Doctors at the World Vision Children's hospital told a woozy Oh he almost died of pleurisy.

"I was so weak from four years of college life, too many

days without enough to eat, too many nights sleeping in the cold winter," Oh says, folding his hands tightly together and resting a trembling chin on them. "I remember lying there thinking: I tried to do my best under my circumstances and I was in the hospital as a reward for my best efforts? ... But finally I felt like God was shining a yellow light instead of a green light on my life. Maybe this is God's will—a chance to rest."

During his year in the hospital, Oh continued to study books about education. He wrote a letter to his high school principal asking him to give him a job if he was cured. The principal wrote back, promising him a teaching position.

After two years teaching there, Oh served his mandatory three years in the

Korean army and then continued his education. In 1985, while finishing a Ph.D in education program evaluation at Florida State University, Oh's financial aid fell through. After much soul searching and praying, Oh wrote a letter to Stan Mooneyham, the former president of World Vision, asking to borrow money. Mrs. Nancy Mooneyham sent him a check for \$1,000.

"I still keep a photocopy of that money order and I will repay that with \$1,000 interest," Oh says. "I put money away each month for this."

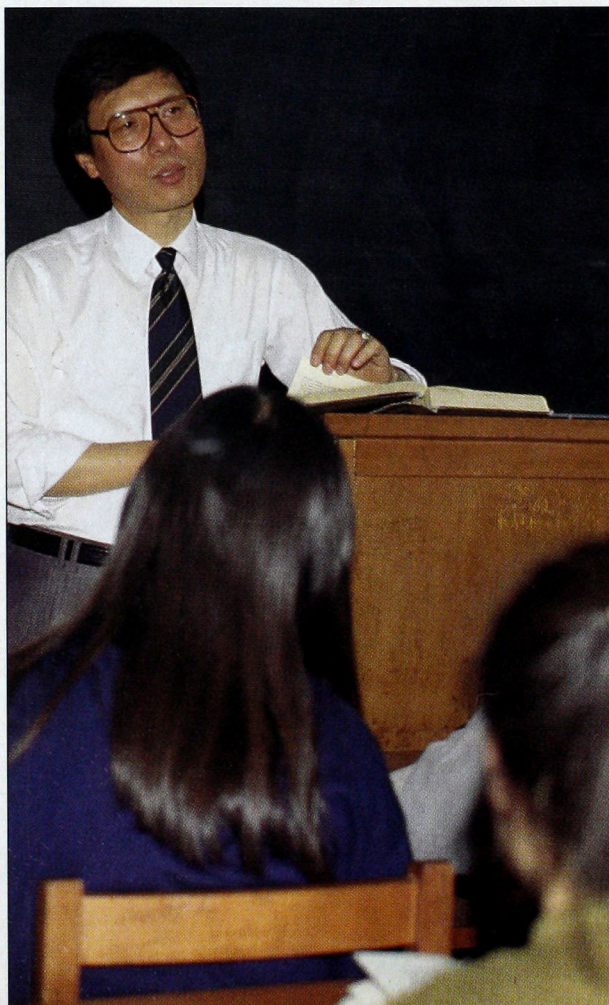
Full Circle

When Oh finished his Ph.D program, he returned to Korea. His former professor at Kon Kuk University was ready to retire, and Oh was hired to fill the position. Sometimes, especially when the winter chill reminds him of long nights sleeping on the office floor, "I sit on this chair next to the window and look outside and think about my past college life," Oh says. "But those are sad memories."

Oh, like many Koreans whose friends, parents, siblings, and children died during the war or the agonizing years of recovery afterward, wants to make something good out of his pain.

"Sometimes I talk to my children about when I was poor," Oh says. "I tell them I suffered, but I did my best. I tell them that they can do whatever they want if they don't forget and give up their dream."

Oh's dreams have expanded since he was a teenager. "When I decided to apply for college, my only goal was to be able to have three meals a day. But since I was a student at this university, I have wanted to become president of this university. Maybe someday that dream will also come true." ☉



Professor Oh teaches a university agricultural class.

FROM MULE TO MIRACLE

BY BRIAN BIRD

The winter sun has slipped well beneath the horizon when Jumberto Bolivar turns and points with pride to a bubbling pot of his sweet-smelling cream confection in the kitchen of his small house on the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia.

"Better to have no butter at all than to have butter without my caramel flavoring," Bolivar says with a smile. "Better to have no life at all than to have life without Jesus Christ."

Jumberto's wife of 12 years, Gloria, reads to

were getting rich and we were also drug addicts," he says.

Bolivar was what drug trade insiders call a "mule"—a human beast of burden, responsible for moving up to 250 pounds of cocaine every two weeks out of Colombia on its way to North America. Sometimes, it meant brokering the cocaine between two parties. Other times, it meant risky flights to Miami, concealing cocaine in carry-on luggage and hoping to slip by customs and drug enforcement officials.

Then Bolivar got a promotion. The cartel gave him the responsibility of overseeing a cocaine-production laboratory. But along with the glamour of having more money than they ever dreamed of, the Bolivars lived a hellish existence as Jumberto became increasingly addicted to the deadly drugs.

"I was doing them all because they were easy to get. Cocaine cigarettes, barbiturates, hashish, LSD, and marijuana. I was a slave to drugs. I was dying physically. And inside, I was dying spiritually," Bolivar says.

Bolivar's darkest hour came in 1987 when, ironically, his cartel, disgusted by his failing judgement and drug use on the job, forced him out of the business.

Unemployed and enslaved by his habits, Bolivar contemplated suicide. "It seemed like a good idea. I had already lost everything. My life was worth nothing anyway," he recalls somberly. "But I decided that I would cry out to God one last time."

God answered with a flood of peace and a sense of forgiveness that caused him to weep non-stop for four days.

"Pure grace, that's what it was. Miraculous, life-changing grace," he adds. "When I cleaned up my life, I began to have a vision to help other throwaway people," says Bolivar. "We Colombians, even Colombian Christians, have blinders when it comes to the discardable people in our society—the drug addicts, the street children. We don't want to admit

"When I cleaned up my life, I began to have a vision to help other throwaway people."



BRIAN BIRD / WORLD VISION

Jumberto Bolivar, his wife, and daughters stand behind a milk-hauling cart used for Bolivar's butter-making business.

their two children in the warm evening light of another room. Her eyes are full of grace.

This idyllic picture differs greatly from Jumberto's life five years ago when he was a drug addict and a member of a notorious cocaine cartel.

"That we're even here today is a miracle of God," Bolivar says, his eyes moistening. "We shouldn't be, but Jesus rescued us, and now we've been called to rescue others."

As Bolivar remembers his life's dark days, he pulls out a photo of himself wearing the green fatigues of a soldier of fortune.

"We were exporting chaos to North America. We knew it, but we didn't care, because we

that they exist, but they do. I was one of them."

But before Bolivar could carry out his vision, he had to put his house in order. Two years ago, he moved his small family to a quiet rural *barrio* on the outskirts of Bogotá and began a butter- and cheese-making business. Now, instead of addictive drugs, his small kitchen laboratory churns out *arequipe*, a creamy caramelized butter for school children.

And it was Bolivar's entrepreneurial spirit, combined with his spiritual vision, that made him a perfect candidate for a loan from a program World Vision of Colombia began last year. Called Solidarity Economics, the program has established revolving loan funds in communities across Colombia to make low-interest loans to small-scale enterprises and help them avoid high-interest loan sharks.

With his first loan Bolivar purchased a pedal-powered, milk-hauling cart to speed up production. Since paying off the first loan, he has received a second loan to power his cart with a motorcycle.

"God has shown me that these loans are not just to help me make more money. They are a part of God's plan for me to reach the throwaway people. And the best way to help them is to grow my business so I can provide jobs in the community," Bolivar explains.

"In Colombia, when the church does help, we usually just preach the gospel, which is good. But these young people also need something to fill the idle time that used to be taken up by drugs. Something to occupy their minds, so they won't think about the drugs.

"That's what I want my business to be. A training ground for these young people. Something for them to look forward to when they kick the drugs," Bolivar says. "This is something I want the whole world to know about." ☉

Brian Bird is a journalist and screenwriter in Ontario, Calif.

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Helping People Care

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NEXT TO THE LAST WORD

Tom Brockaw of NBC had it right. Reporting from Mogadishu, Somalia, the day the Marines landed, he said that the relief workers, not the Marines, are the real heroes of Somalia. Some believe the U.S. and U.N. forces entered Somalia to provide relief goods. Not so! Their role is to provide security so that relief workers can provide help to the starving with less risk of robbery and injury.

Unfortunately, there are more Somalias just around the corner. Mozambique and southern Sudan have human needs that rival those in famine- and civil war-torn Somalia. World Vision is already there and in other famine-distressed parts of Africa meeting immediate relief needs. Our long-term goal is to see families and their communities return to sustainable lifestyles with a knowledge of Christ.


Much of the success of these programs depends upon women's role in these societies. Be encouraged by our cover story on women in Bangladesh.

—Terry Madison

WORLD VISION

Volume 37, Number 1

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WORLD VISION magazine is published bimonthly by  **WORLD VISION®**

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Send all editorial correspondence and changes of address to WORLD VISION Magazine, 919 W. Huntington Drive, Monrovia, CA 91016. Please send address changes at least 30 days before moving and enclose the address label from a current copy. Member: Evangelical Press Association and Associated Church Press. Copyright © 1993 by World Vision Inc.





FASHIONABLY LATE

When I visited Somalia recently, a reporter asked me a difficult question. It carried the hard edge of accusation: "Where were you 18 months ago?" The implication of that question was clear: World Vision was seen as a "Johnny-come-lately" to Somalia. The early morning laborers to that starving vineyard had come from other employment pools, and our late arrival coincided with the tidal wave of media interest that ultimately jarred a distracted world into a response.

The question made me instantly defensive. "Hey, you ought to be glad we're here at all. We've

been slugging it out in Mozambique, Angola, southern Sudan. This isn't the only place people are starving, you know!"

But it was a fair question, and it got right to the heart of the tensions that all international relief agencies face: multiple disasters, razor-thin budgets, pre-occupied donors, long and badly stretched supply lines.

As I reflected on the reporter's question, I remembered that Jesus was once put under the same penetrating strobe light. Lazarus had been dead for days, and Martha and Mary greeted Jesus with words that must have hit him right

between the eyes: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

"Jesus, where on earth have you been?"

We sometimes forget that Jesus didn't heal everybody. Not everyone got fed. Not every dead body got a second crack at life. Much of the delivered compassion seems to come at random, good ministry taking place at points of interruption.

With Lazarus, of course, things appear to be different. Jesus was uncharacteristically calculating, intentionally waiting a few days to hype his arrival. This disciplined approach vanished, however, when he got to the grave. All the conflicting tensions were felt.

Painfully, Jesus was forced to acknowledge the finite resource of time. What happened this day would be the last straw for the Pharisees who sought his life. Jerusalem beckoned, and a final divine appointment with Golgotha had already been carefully scripted. All of this produced humanity's deepest emotions. Jesus broke down in tears.

Jesus didn't solve everyone's problems on the spot, but Lazarus bears witness to Christ's all-encompassing potential. Likewise, in Somalia, where migration to the feeding centers continues, not everyone survives the trip, but we were privileged to see the hope in the faces of new arrivals.

Asha Gure is one of those who made it. Her husband's death put the entire family burden squarely on her young shoulders. She began the trip a widow, eight months pregnant, with two sons, Mohammed, 8, and Nu, 7. She walked for two months, 300 miles, giving birth along the way.

She arrived exhausted, her baby already severely malnourished, her two sons pockmarked with measles, every bone in their pencil-thin bodies protruding. They appeared to be disoriented, not realizing their journey was over, not remembering how long it had been since a smile had been allowed on their faces.

We were profoundly grateful to be there to greet them. As physically vulnerable as they were, they could be saved. Hallelujah!

But back to the reporter's question: Jesus told a liberating story just before entering Jerusalem. It's about hired laborers. Chosen at different times during the day, all received the same wages. World Vision's work in Somalia may have much in common with those late hires. Seeing Asha Gure and her family have a second chance at life, we certainly felt the joy of a full wage.

Asha Gure didn't ask about our work 18 months earlier, or where we had been when her husband had died. Her two-month saga was over, and she could begin to rebuild her life. But what about those who perished along the way? How will our own competing tensions be resolved? What do we do with the realization that not everyone makes it, and we can't make everything right? Humility is a good place to begin. And then, gratefulness, because of a sovereign God who still has the power to call life from the grave. ☉

We were profoundly grateful to be there to greet them.

HILIP MAHER / WORLD VISION



Asha Gure's two sons: Mohammed, 8, and Nu, 7.

Published by
World Vision Inc.
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Miracles can begin here!

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Yes! I want to begin the Love Loaf program in my church.

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February-March 1993

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Out of the

Third World

Shadows

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Tucked in an
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**In from
the Cold**


 Shyness

prevents me
from express-
ing what I feel.

To whom can I
reveal my
aching heart?

My heart is
scorched in
the breeze.

I cannot leave
the house for
fear of scandal.

Yet my heart
soars in the air
away from
its cage. 

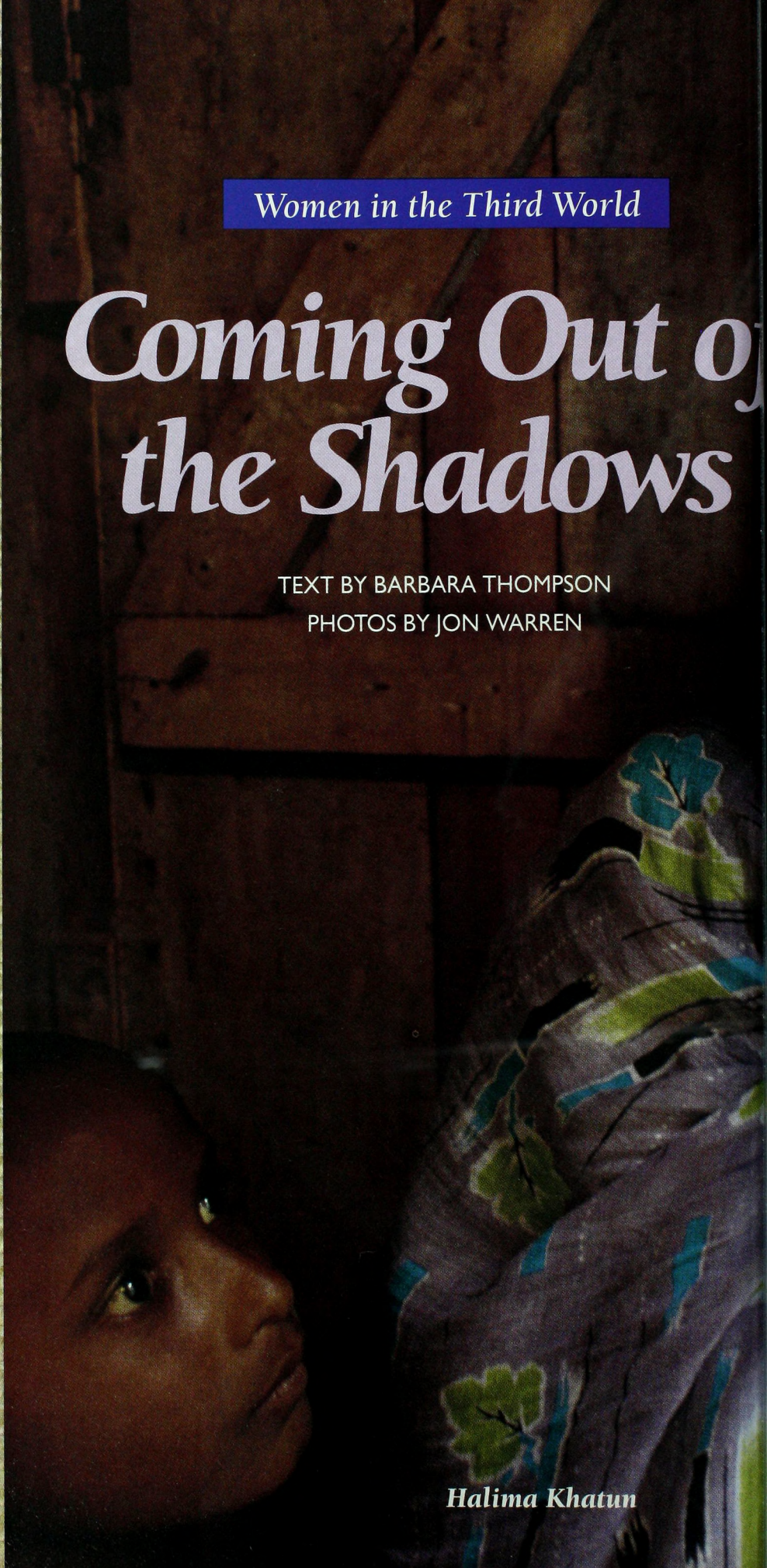
Bangladeshi Women's Song

Women in the Third World

Coming Out of the Shadows

TEXT BY BARBARA THOMPSON

PHOTOS BY JON WARREN



Halima Khatun



FOR CENTURIES, women in the developing world have lived as second-class members of their own families. They have been deprived of health, education, and legal rights. Yet with increasing education opportunities and through innovative programs like World Vision's "savings and loans" groups, women in Bangladesh are taking control of their lives. The results are benefiting everyone.

It's 5:00 a.m. and a monsoon rain is falling over the Ershad Nagar slum. Here, at the edge of Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, more than 50,000 people make their homes in one-room shacks crowded along narrow, garbage-strewn paths.

Inside a 6- by 8-foot dwelling,

Now I Have Dreams

I was married when I was 7, but until I was 12 I lived with my mother and father. Then my parents explained that I was married and must go live with my husband.

We had five children, and we were happy. My husband drove one rickshaw and rented out six others for hire.

After 10 years, when I was 22, my husband became sick with tuberculosis. He was in the hospital for two years. We sold the rickshaws to pay for his treatment. Then he died.

We moved from a one-room house to a tiny shack in a slum. I worked as a maid and my sons worked as haulers. Sometimes we ate; sometimes we went hungry.

I heard from my neighbors about the World Vision savings group. Here I could save money and get a loan to start a business. But first I had to take a functional literacy course.

I only went to school for a few days as a child, and due to my age, the literacy course was very difficult. But I was determined. In six months I learned to read and write and calculate.

After graduation, I was eligible for my first loan. I borrowed \$27 and my son and I started a chicken business. We repaid the loan in five months.

Next I borrowed \$40 and I began my grocery business. Since then I have borrowed and repaid seven loans. With my last loan, \$300, I purchased this cement building. My family lives in two rooms, and the store is in the front.

I keep the shop open every day of the year from 6:00 a.m. until midnight. We only close for prayer. I earn \$4 a day, four times what women make in garment factories. With this income, I sent a daughter to college and helped my son begin a rickshaw business. I will send my youngest daughter to college too.

When I was a child I had no time for dreams. Now I have dreams, but they are not for myself. My dreams are for my children.

*Halima Khatun
Dhaka, Bangladesh*

a young widow, Ayesha Kharoum, cooks rice and lentils over a clay stove. Water drips from a makeshift roof, woven of thatch and scraps of plastic. A single light bulb casts a dim yellow glow over two children sleeping on a floor mat.

Outside, the slum's maze of lanes are fast becoming rivers of sewage. Water seeps into Ayesha's home, waking Mesrajs, 10, and Mohammed, 7. Ankle deep in water, Ayesha feeds them breakfast.

At 8:00 a.m. Ayesha wades to a neighborhood training center to embroider blouses. With two timeouts for child care, she continues sewing until 11 that night. By working 12 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week, Ayesha earns almost \$30 a month. It is twice the usual wage for female garment workers, and it enables Ayesha to send her children to school.

"As a child, I dreamed of learning to read and write," says Ayesha. "I didn't get this blessing, but I am giving it to my children."

Ayesha's daughter, Mesrajs, has her own dream. Undaunted by recurring fevers and chronic malnutrition, she is a top student at a church-run school. "I want to be a doctor," says Mesrajs. "I want to serve the people of my country."

Formidable Barriers

In Bangladesh and throughout the developing world, mothers like Ayesha are helping fulfill their daughters' dreams. Despite devastating poverty and limited choices, they are breaking down the centuries-old barriers that prevent women from learning how to improve their standard of living.

On the surface, these barriers seem insurmountable. Women occupy the bottom rung of society in many developing countries. They eat "least and last" and are more likely to be malnourished than men. One in two suffer from nutritional anemia, a condition that lowers resistance to disease and can lead to premature death from malnutrition.

While women work up to seven hours a day longer than men, their domestic work is largely unrecognized and undervalued. For work outside the home, they are paid 75 percent less than males. Women routinely are denied access to basic education, and they seldom learn the job skills needed for economic self-sufficiency.

In some developing countries, discrimination against females begins before birth. Using fetal testing procedures such as amniocentesis, a growing number of families choose to abort female fetuses. For girls allowed to be born, signals of inferiority may begin

with breast feeding. Infant girls routinely are nursed for shorter periods than boys. As children, girls receive smaller and less nourishing meals.

This practice remains deeply ingrained even in educated families. "I am talking about so much liberation," says one university graduate in Bangladesh. "But I still give the better portion of food to my son, not my daughter."

The preferential nourishment of boys is reflected in death rates. In Bangladesh, two girls die for every boy.

Girls also begin working at an earlier age than boys. By 8 and 9, while most boys are still playing soccer and climbing trees, girls are learning the domestic tasks they will need for marriage such as cooking and cleaning. At puberty, many are forced to live indoors, in seclusion.

"I was an extrovert who loved the free life," says Pusba Rozario, remembering her childhood in a Bangladeshi village. "I was happiest outdoors, playing with my friends. But when I was 12,



the physical change came. Suddenly my mother prohibited me from going outside. This was my first great heart-break."

Among women's many losses, they often regret most being denied an education. In Bangladesh, only one in two girls enroll in primary school. Less than one in ten go to high school. These statistics are particularly disturbing in light of recent research indicating that education is the single most important factor affecting a woman's quality of life and the survival rate of her children.

By 12 or 13, many girls in developing countries are already married to men two and three times their age. Pregnancy often begins at puberty, and young mothers are further malnourished by the strain of bearing children. In India, because of malnourishment, one of two pregnant women do not gain weight during the last trimester—the time when a healthy woman usually gains at least 20 percent of her pregnancy weight. This lack of weight gain

leads to premature, underweight babies who are susceptible to disease and infant death.

Few Options

Munni, a small woman in a soiled sari, was 15 when her family arranged her marriage to a 35-year-old rickshaw driver from a Dhaka slum. Now, five years later, she has three children. At 18 months, her youngest child is too malnourished to produce normal hair and skin pigment.

"When my husband cannot pedal his rickshaw, there is no food for the children," Munni says. "The children cry, and then my husband hits me because I cannot keep them quiet." Her eye is black and swollen from a recent beating.


Munni accepts her beatings as a necessary part of marriage. Raised to believe in the absolute power of husbands and unable to read or write, she believes that she and her children can-

not survive without the \$1 a day her husband earns pedaling a rickshaw.

For most women, divorce or a husband's death poses the greatest threat to their survival. In predominantly Muslim Bangladesh, a man may divorce his wife simply by saying "I divorce you" three times. Divorced or widowed women seldom remarry, and they have few options. Many end up as homeless beggars.

Ayesha's neighbor, Sufia, is a skeletal-thin woman who lives with her mother and three children in an 8- by 8-foot hut. The roof leaks and the only furniture is a torn sleeping mat. Tacked to the wall is a glossy magazine photo of a plump, jeweled movie star who simultaneously graces and mocks the malnourished family living beneath her gaze.

Sufia's husband died from tuberculosis in 1986. During his long illness, Sufia borrowed \$300 (a year's wages) to pay for his medical treatment. Today she supports her family on the small wages she earns at a garment factory.



As a child, I dreamed of learning to read and write," says Ayesha. "I didn't get this blessing, but I am giving it to my children."

I Will Teach My Children

Shadheda is a 25-year-old slum woman from Bangladesh who brought her 18-month-old child to a Child Survival Project sponsored by World Vision.

"When I was a child I dreamed I would have a family with enough food to eat, with clothes and good shelter. But this was not to be. I still have dreams—who doesn't? I want to see my children happy and prosperous. But my husband is sick, so what dreams will I have?"

"I am 25. I was 14 when I was married, and I have five children. My husband is a rickshaw puller. I knit doilies to sell, and I earn a dollar or so a month.

"I brought my youngest child to the Child Survival Project because she was dying from diarrhea. I knew nothing of oral rehydration therapy or foods rich in Vitamin A.

"Now my children are immunized, and I have learned how to cook food in the proper way. No one ever told me before. I boil our water. I add some extra oil to the children's food. If there is money, I mix some vegetables with our rice and lentils, and maybe buy bananas once or twice a week.

"No one taught me, but I will teach my children. And when I see a malnourished child, I will help the mother learn about food. If the child cannot be cared for at home, I will refer them here. Because I am a witness. I have seen with my own eyes."

Women occupy the bottom rung of society in many developing countries.



Interest on her loan accumulates at 120 percent a year, and Sufia pays more than 85 percent of her income to a neighborhood loan shark.

"I see only darkness," Sufia says when asked about her future. Her eyes are bright with fever, and her ragged sari cannot hide her emaciated frame. She has already given up her 4-year-old son for adoption. "I don't know where he is," she says weeping.

Living at the edge of human endurance, the suffering of women like Sufia is increased by their spiritual isolation. In Bangladesh, while men gather for prayer in mosques up to five times a day, women must meet Allah alone and behind the veil. Not even Allah, it seems, looks favorably on women.

In this environment, the message of Jesus is especially good news for women. "Jesus valued women, and out of his compassion he held them in equal status to men," says Pusba Rozario, a women's development worker for World Vision Bangladesh.

Spending on Women

Today, throughout Bangladesh, development monies once spent exclusively on men are increasingly used to fund small-scale projects for women.

In Harbang, near the Burmese border, a Buddhist monk, Urajinda, runs an orphanage and school for boys and girls. He plans to open a technical college for women. "In our orphanage there have been children whose mothers were still alive," says Urajinda. "I have seen first hand the suffering that comes when women cannot support their families."

In Dhaka, Dr. Iqbal Anwar runs a child survival project sponsored by World Vision. He teaches health and nutrition to young mothers, and urges families to delay marriage for girls until after their 18th birthday. Assisted by more than 150 student volunteers, Anwar and his staff have helped decrease the child death rate in their district from one in seven to one in 27.

More and more projects are run by women themselves. Throughout Bangladesh, women development workers are organizing savings groups (see sidebar), teaching nutrition and health, and informing women of their legal rights.

Saving to Borrow

The sky is dark and rain has been falling steadily all morning in a commercial center of Dhaka. The streets are packed with men peddling rickshaws and selling merchandise. There is not a single woman in public sight—not even a woman wearing a veil.

Inside a brightly lit shop, seven women in richly colored saris are sitting on floor mats, surrounded by tables piled high with yards of material and spools of thread. Some are sewing; one is measuring cloth; another is cutting material. The women work steadily, averaging a garment per worker every hour.

The shop is part of a revolution in women's development. The seven women are former "floating people": the transient urban poor who, driven by poverty and hunger, spend their lives moving from one slum to another. The women are not educated, and prior to working in the garment shop, none had ever earned a single taka (Bangladesh's smallest currency, worth less than one-third of a cent).

In 1987, with help from a World Vision savings project, the women pooled their individual borrowing power to get start-up capital for a

Savings and Loans

In Bangladesh and other developing countries, hundreds of women benefit from a unique "savings and loans" project sponsored by World Vision. The project enables destitute women to borrow the start-up capital needed to begin cottage industries and small businesses.

Membership in the program begins with basic education, including daily classes that help the women learn to read. After the classes, the members of



The women pooled their individual borrowing power to get start-up capital for a sewing business.

sewing business. Today they are co-owners of their own shop and earn \$20 a month. With this modest income, all seven women are the primary wage earners in their family.

"Before I was working, my husband and I quarreled a lot," says one member of the group. "Now we have more to eat, and my husband loves me more. We make decisions together and live in peace."

A 22-year-old co-worker tells a

more sobering story. "My husband tortured me often. There was nothing I could do. But after I got a job, I realized I was not powerless. I left my husband. Now I support myself."

Heartened by the success of the garment shop, the women are already planning to open their second business. Every month they set aside a portion of their wages in a savings account. The funds will be used for a down payment on a confectioner's shop.

An Overdue Revolution

The winds of social revolution felt in this small sewing shop in Dhaka are blowing throughout the developing world. Women are taking the lead in small businesses and cottage industries. Armed with education and technical training, they are giving the gift of survival to their children.

It is a revolution long overdue. Women are the sole breadwinners in one-quarter to one-third of all families in the developing world, and their standard of living determines the well-being of future generations. For every woman living in poverty, there are four hungry children. Women's work, in and outside the home, can provide families and communities not only with the basics of survival but with dreams and choices. As the global economy suffers, and the portion of the economic pie available to the developing world shrinks, women's roles become increasingly important to countries whose best hope for survival lies in the united effort of *all* citizens. ☉

Barbara Thompson is a free-lance writer in Decatur, Ga.

savings group deposit their savings in a bank account on a weekly or monthly basis. They are then eligible to borrow money from the same account at 12 percent a year. (Local interest rates go up to 120 percent a year).

A member's first loan is for \$10 or less. When the loan is repaid, she is eligible to borrow a larger sum. With each subsequent loan and repayment, a woman's borrowing power increases. The loans are used to begin a variety of businesses, including machine repair shops, stalls, rickshaw services, carpentry

shops and, in one case, a bookstore.

Each savings group consists of approximately 80 members, who are governed by an elected committee of six or seven women. The group decides together how to distribute the interest on their savings and repaid loans. Some groups pay dividends; others invest in new businesses.

Because members of the group act as guarantors for one another, there are few defaulters. Instead, most women repay their loans early, making themselves eligible for bigger loans and better investments.

Friendship Tucked

Did we get any mail?" I asked my husband, Russell, when I arrived home from work around midnight. I had been waiting for weeks for a letter from Russia. Russell hadn't checked the mailbox, so I went. I was so tired I pulled the mail from the box without looking at it. Throwing it on the kitchen table, I trudged to the bathroom and started brushing my teeth.

"HONEY!", my husband yelled. "Did you see this?" I dashed to the kitchen. He was holding a letter decorated with roses and exotic stamps. We sat at the table with a pot of raspberry tea and slowly opened the envelope:

Dear friends, your letter was to us as a ray of light in a dark kingdom. Thank you very much for your hearty message. We were happy to hear you pray for us and our motherland.

I thought back to the day four months earlier when we joined a ministry called *The Russian Connection*, which matches people in the United States with foreign pen friends. Our family was matched with the Gromovs.* We wrote letters, prayed for them, and watched the mailbox daily.

Despair overcomes us sometimes, Ivan Gromov continued. *Our country is standing on the edge of political, economic, and moral precipice. It's an agony of communist monster and we are afraid our motherland will not be able to bear it.*

We are glad we find your support!

I am the rural schoolteacher living in peasant's house without convenience as 100 years ago. I acquired the inside freedom. I have the dream. But I don't want life only for bread. I want that moral and democratic basis will be reigning in my life and my country. I must work for life lit by Christian morals.

We have a scottish sheepdog, two rabbits, two she-goats, 20 hens. Our animals are tame. We like to play with them. Please write to us about your life. We wait for your letter! We pray for you!

They had received our letters. What a thrill!

Our next letter told of Christmas plans and a new hutch for the childrens' bunnies. We asked about their favorite recipes, traditions, and customs. Because they had "acquired the inside freedom" we shared our faith in Jesus Christ. We asked about their faith and wondered if they were part of a church. We also tucked a tiny packet of tomato seeds, a bag of raspberry tea, and photos in with our letter.

The following week we received a Christmas card decorated with a Russian church surrounded by a forest of fir trees. A delicate film of snow powdered the scene. Not a bit like our California Christmas—and absolutely enchanting. We wondered if they had gotten our simple drawing of the babe in the stable.

Letters flew across the sea. *March 1 is today*, they wrote. *It is the springtime.*

*The Russian family's names have been changed at the request of the author.



into an Envelope

BY SHARYN SOWELL

Nature begins to awake and the gladness is going in our hearts. We have planted your tomato seeds, also cucumbers, cabbages, and pepper.

The Gromovs sent their affection, mailing a lavender field flower with a description of nearby meadows. Once they enclosed a lovely handmade doily. Correspondence was blooming into full-fledged friendship as we learned about their daily lives.

Our she-goats gave birth to two kids. They play very much and are our favorites. Our rabbits have eight little rabbits. They are delightful. Tomatoes stand on the windowsill. We get ready for gardening.

The difficult time has come. Inflation rages. We have not bought clothes for two years, but we will suffice these trials. We need only your moral support. You ask about our church. Most Russian churches were demolished by communists, therefore our village has no church. Religion was forbidden. Many police collaborated with the state. You must remember the atheistic education. It is difficult to regenerate faith. You

are our single help.

I understood the importance of our friendship with these courageous people. If we were their brightest hope then the Lord was going to have his work cut out with us! I felt like the little boy with his basket of loaves and fishes.

Family and friends kept their eyes open for Christian resources in Russian. Several began writing to pen friends too.

We savor the differences between the Gromovs and ourselves.

It was interesting to hear about your animals, we city dwellers wrote. We have never been around goats. It must be fun to play with the babies. What are their names? Our dog Lucy is a wonderful playmate too! We included questions about their school, friends, and favorite foods.

Soon we got another letter. *Kind regards to you in the name of our precious Savior!* they wrote. *It was nice to receive your postcard! We wrote that most churches were demolished. Most Russians were not faithful. I don't know one religious child. The people are embittered and our aim is to return to faith. The faith was trampled.* They described their school calendar, herb garden, and local wild animals. We smiled at a sketch of an inch-high tomato seedling and marvelled at a tiny crocheted snowflake.

Your question about our favorite food caused us to smile. *Our main food is potatoes and other vegetables from our kitchen-garden. In shops we can buy only bread. The potatoes is boiled in water. Milk from she-goats and eggs are our foods too. We feed ourselves. I have one request. Masha has low heart pressure. Coffee can help her. I shall be a lucky man if you can send coffee for her. It is impossible to obtain in our country. We await your letters. We pray for you always. Love, from your brother and sisters.*

Three days later we heard that a local choir was going to Moscow. They agreed to deliver a package to the Gromovs. I ran to the store grinning. Shopping had never been this wonderful!

Into a medium-sized box I crammed three pounds of coffee, an outfit for each person, thread and crochet hooks for Masha, who is an expert needlewoman, and assorted "irresistibles" like vitamins and bubble bath.

We also sent a letter separately. We

For now it's too expensive for us to visit each other, but postage is still an inexpensive way to travel.



The Sowell family on vacation

tried to put our admiration and affection on paper:

God bless you, who are so dear to us! We had a chance to send a package with a friend. We also had a Russian envelope so we can mail this letter separately. Thank you for the beautiful crocheted doily. We treasure it! Jeremiah 29:10-11 is precious. God has a plan for our welfare, not for calamity, to give our families a future and a hope. How wonderful that we, like Israel, find Him when we seek Him. You Russian believers have suffered 70 years as Israel did, and now you can begin strengthening the church again!

We told them about our dear Grandma's death and our sadness. She left us a heritage of faith. Then we tucked 15 dollar bills into the envelope and prayed everything would arrive safely.

It seemed like forever waiting to hear whether the package had arrived. Their letters didn't mention it and we didn't want to worry them with anxious inquiries. We sent picturesque postcards from our vacation. The children mailed drawings and notes.

Finally we received news of our gifts. *We received your letter and parcel. Thank you for your rich present. We find*

15 dollars in this letter. It is our two-month income. It is great help.

You have great care for us. You wrote about your grandmother's funeral. Accept our condolence. We have not grandmothers and grandfathers. They died many years ago. Masha's grandfather was exiled in Siberia as a prosperous peasant and died there. Grandfather would not emigrate to America. He would not believe the state would rob his property acquired by honest work. My mother, grandmother, and grandfather, and kinsmen was exiled. They had not work or food. My grandmother wanted to accomplish suicide. And she was a believer! My mother prevented her.

We have shared their spring flood and our drought, their frozen winter and our weekend getaway, their first openly celebrated Easter and our successes with a struggling Sunday school class.

Perhaps someday we'll sit together and talk into the wee hours. We have plenty to laugh about and cry over together, much to be thankful for and hopeful about. For now it's too expensive for us to visit each other, but postage is still an inexpensive way to travel. ☉

Sharyn Sowell is a free-lance writer in Fullerton, Calif. She is now corresponding with 17 pen pals.

WORLD VISION IN ACTION

Health Care

World Vision is providing health care to victims, particularly children, of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States, health professionals have been traditionally isolated from the rest of the medical world. Nurses, regarded as low-level health workers, traditionally receive two years of training that prepares them for little more than feeding and bathing patients. Working with the Russian Republic Institute of Medicine in Moscow, World Vision is developing resources and more advanced training programs for five nursing schools. Every year, 90,000 people graduate from Russia's 400 nursing schools.

Spiritual Support

Over the past two years, World Vision has provided Sunday school materials and other Christian literature to various regions. Small libraries (64 volumes) consisting of Bibles and Christian classics have been distributed to more than 1,000 public schools in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Through the Russian Bible Society, illustrated children's Bibles are being distributed in World Vision projects, schools, pediatric hospitals, and orphanages throughout the CIS.

World Vision, working with InterDev, a missions research agency, is helping CIS church leaders to develop evangelistic outreach programs.

Social Services Training

World Vision is conducting eight five-day workshops to teach management and planning skills to 400 social service leaders in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and Turkmenistan.

The Russian Connection is an outreach of Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times. If you would like to participate in this letter-writing ministry, write to ASSIST, P.O. Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92642-2126, or call (714) 530-6598.

A humanitarian aid worker with experience in Vietnam writes an open letter to President Bill Clinton.

President Bill Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton,

Please accept my congratulations on your election as president of our country. I wish you the best as you assume responsibilities that will shape the next chapters of our nation.

I was a marine aviator during the Vietnam war. I've returned three times since doing humanitarian work for World Vision.

Last Veteran's Day, I stood on top of Marble Mountain in Danang. Across the airstrip and the city, I could see the Hai Van Pass, the mountains of the Quang Nam Province, and the city of Hoi An. I could also see the long white strand of China Beach. It was a familiar sight, because I had flown many hours in helicopters from Marble Mountain, Navy carriers, and a hospital ship. The aircraft are gone from the flight line, but not the memories of what went on there.

The desire of the United States government to acquire more information about MIA serviceman is both expected and understandable. However, with increased contact, we have reached both a breakthrough and an impasse. The Vietnamese are not able to account for all of their own people, much less ours. Forests have grown, rivers have altered courses. The diplomatic corps may well have not known about photographs found in archives. We don't always remember that 70 percent of all the Vietnamese alive today were in their early 20s or not yet born between 1969 and 1973.

It's time to help the 70 million Vietnamese people living in conditions that are below standards found in 50 percent of Africa. The needs for basic health and education services are overwhelming as are requirements for economic development. Americans can help. We can help by sending a message of support and assistance so that a war that has long divided our nation can come to an end. We can be healed by reaching out to share with others.

There cannot be a complete peace without reconciliation. Restoring relationships does not mean we forget our pain or our loss. Like many others, I lost a cousin, boyhood and college friends, and squadron mates. It still hurts; some of the pain will never go away.

Normalization is a political act. It is what gov-

ernments do. Reconciliation is a personal act of restoring harmony in relationships. It is what people do.

Allowing the people of the United States to put the past behind them will not require our government to invest money we don't have. Others are able and will invest. The European Economic Community, Japan, business interests from Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Indonesia are already there. U.S. companies will follow. The recent AT&T agreement is a case in point. In addition, almost 100 humanitarian aid and volunteer agencies from around the world are hard at work today in Vietnam.

Please lend your support to the growing sentiment that the United States government should lift its embargo against Vietnam. I believe that the U.S. people are ready to finally end a war that has cost us all in so many ways.

Lifting the embargo will also bring increased respect from the Vietnamese, who welcome Americans but are confused by a government that is asking them for something they may not be able to provide. In our search for information from the past, we will achieve more openness and cooperation if we work together than if we, as a nation, continue to maintain a position that cannot be supported in the long run.

With respect,

Ron Maines



Ron Maines sits with friends, on "King's Throne," Marble Mountain, Danang.

FIVE ISSUES
CONCERNING
THIRD WORLD
WOMEN:

LITERACY
EMPLOYMENT
CHILD BEARING
SINGLE PARENTING
AIDS

WOMEN



OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD



Seen primarily as homemakers and child-bearers, Third World women often do not have access to education, credit, or legal rights. Job opportunities are often limited to manual, low-paid labor, and they are usually paid much lower wages than men for the same work.

Poverty also makes domestic chores exhausting. Women in the developing world spend as much as six hours a day gathering water. Aid organizations such as World Vision and UNIFEM are helping Third World women by providing education, job skills training, funding for small businesses, and legal advice.

Prostitution used to be the only way Halimatou Maiga could earn enough money to support her family of six, including her mother and two young children. Now Halimatou spends her evenings baking bread and croissants, which she sells on the street or in front of her home in Gao, Mali.

Three years ago, Halimatou, 30, was one of five women who learned new job skills at a local World Vision center. As part of the Women's Dignity Program, the center teaches skills including cooking, sewing, health, literacy, and financial planning.

After graduation, Halimatou had pans made from metal she collected from oil cans. World Vision gave her a gas stove which she paid for with later earnings. Her mother and sister took over cooking meals at home and her daughters help put the bread in the oven. Now Halimatou earns about 35 percent more than the average monthly income in her community.

Since the program began in 1989, 23 women have graduated. This year 20 more women are studying at the center and 70 women are on a waiting list. ☉

-Report and photo by Kim Olson

Los Angeles schools are offering a program to teach parents that, no matter how poor their own education, they can make a difference in their children's.

Helping Parents Help Kids

Ana Mejia, a Salvadoran immigrant who works as a sewing machine operator in Sun Valley, Calif., considers herself a concerned parent. But she speaks little English and is uncomfortable consulting teachers about the academic progress of her 11- and 13-year-old sons. Helping them with their homework is virtually out of the question.

"When they ask me questions in math, I don't know the answers," Ana, who received only a fifth-grade education in El Salvador, said in Spanish.

That's why Los Angeles Unified School District officials, with funding from World Vision, have embraced the Parent Institute for Quality Education, a weekly night class that teaches parents like Ana that—no matter how little formal learning they have—they can make a difference in their children's education.

Like Ana, experts say, many Latino parents—particularly immigrants—feel helpless when it comes to playing an educational role. Some do not understand how the U.S. school system works. Others feel intimidated because of their own lack of education.

Studies have repeatedly shown that when parents take an active interest, their children perform better in school, officials say.

"The message is simple", said Vahac Mardirosian, a Baptist minister who founded the nonprofit institute in San Diego five years ago. "The schools, by themselves, cannot educate children. The home and the schools working in collaboration will ensure a better product."

Mardirosian, who has been involved with Latino educational issues since the student walkouts of the 1960s, developed the institute program to help reduce dropout rates among Latino students.

Now the institute offers its free course on more than 30 campuses each

enrolled in the program, and another 170 parents in East Los Angeles took the course.

Raised in Mexico by Armenian parents, Mardirosian says that many Latino immigrants—particularly those from poor countries—place too much faith in the schools alone, and discount their own influence on their children's education.

That, he argues, helps explain the difference between the percentages of Latino and Anglo students who complete high school. In the spring of 1991, the dropout rate of Latino high school students in Los Angeles was 41.7 percent, compared to 26.2 percent for Anglos.

Julian Nava, a Cal State Northridge history professor who served on the Los Angeles Board of Education for 12 years, agrees that Latino parents—particularly immigrants—may be reluctant to get involved in their children's schools out of respect for the teachers.

Many Latin Americans have "confidence in the schools, that the schools are going to do the job which the parents are

talk, psychology lessons, and common sense advice on such topics as how the school system works, discipline, preparing children for college, communication, self-esteem, and cultural conflict.

And, although he developed the program with Latinos in mind, Mardirosian said the lessons are appropriate for all parents.

"The base of a good education is what comes from the home," the 67-year-old minister emphatically told about 50 parents recently.

"Encourage work," he said. "Ask your child to do the homework while you are watching. That way, your child knows that you understand that his work is important."

By coming to class each week, the parents also start to feel more comfortable being on the school campus, so that if their children should have a problem, they may be more willing to return to consult with teachers, Mardirosian said.

The response of Parent Institute graduates confirms Mardirosian's view. One school principal said that after parents completed the program, many came to him and said, "Now I feel I can express my concerns."

Dalia Cervantes, who has a 13-year-old son in high school, said that after taking the course, she went to her son's school and introduced herself to the principal and to all of her son's teachers. Her son's schoolwork, she said, has been improving steadily ever since. "Now my son says, 'Oh my God, my mom and the principal are friends,'" Cervantes said. "He's doing a little better now, because he sees that I have taken some action."

In July, four more schools offered the course, and World Vision has committed \$2 million to start the program on campuses throughout Los Angeles over the next four years.

"We know, statistically speaking, that in the Latino community 50 percent of the kids are not going to graduate," said Luis Madrigal, World Vision's director of Latino programs. "We feel that we can intervene through this program. The Parent Institute has a proven track record. It's not a guessing game. We know that it's going to work."

Copyright, 1992, Los Angeles Times. Reprinted by permission. Amy Louise Kazmin is a Los Angeles Times staff writer.

For more information about the Parent Institute for Quality Education, please contact Luis Madrigal at (213) 255-2575.



MICHAEL TAYLOR

Institute graduate Maria DeLaLuz Debora (left), tells instructor René Maldonado, she can now help her children, Dario and Wendy, with their homework.

year in the San Diego area. The program has won accolades from San Diego school officials for bolstering parental involvement in the educational process.

In January 1992, with a grant from World Vision, Mardirosian introduced his program to Los Angeles, where school district officials hope it will produce similar results.

Last March, 174 parents of students in Highland Park graduated from the course. In June, more than 140 parents in Glassell Park, including Ana, were

admittedly not capable of doing," he said.

"Latino parents trust the school system more than other people," Mardirosian said. "Parents see the schools here, they look very nice, very solid. Everybody who works in the school has a college degree, and they think: 'I have a second- or a third-grade education. What can I do to add to these experts?'"

His answer—delivered over and over during the courses—is that parents can do a lot.

Each session features a blend of pep

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR HELPING OTHERS IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

Compiled and written by Tamera Marko



CHRIS REDNER

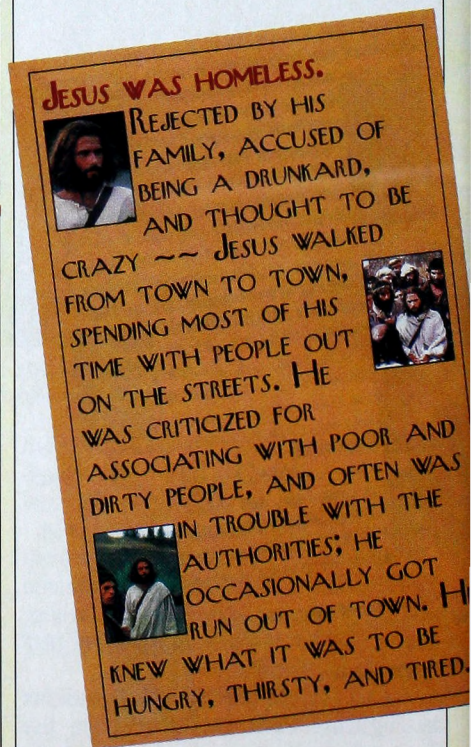
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Looking for ways to help needy people but unsure of where to begin? All you need is a pen and a World Vision Opportunities Catalog. This brochure includes a brief description of 17 World Vision programs that individuals, families, churches, and groups can participate in to help people in the United States and worldwide. On the brochure's reply card, check off the programs you want to learn more about and drop it in the mail. To order a catalog, send a SASE to World Vision, Opportunities Catalog, 919 W. Huntington Drive., Monrovia, CA 91016 or call (800) 423-4200.



SCRIPTURES STREET STYLE

"Jesus Was Homeless," a 16-page scripture booklet is available to those who want to help homeless men and women nationwide. Produced by the International Bible Society, the booklet includes color pictures, Scripture, and explains in simple terms that Jesus, like many homeless people, was ridiculed, poor, and without a home. Designed to endure streetlife, the booklet is tearproof and waterproof. Booklets cost \$2.40 each or \$46.80 for a case of 25. For more information, contact International Bible Society, 1820 Jet Stream Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921; (800) 524-1588.



SMART TALK FROM SMALL FRY

Check out KIDS NEWS, a monthly newsletter written, published, and sold by a group of children ages 9 to 14. KIDS NEWS, which covers everything from rap music to race relations, is part of KIDS COMMUNITY, an after-school youth program at Jubilee Christian Fellowship, a Mennonite church in Richmond, Va. The youth group members live in Richmond's East End, a neighborhood struggling with drugs, violence, and unemployment.

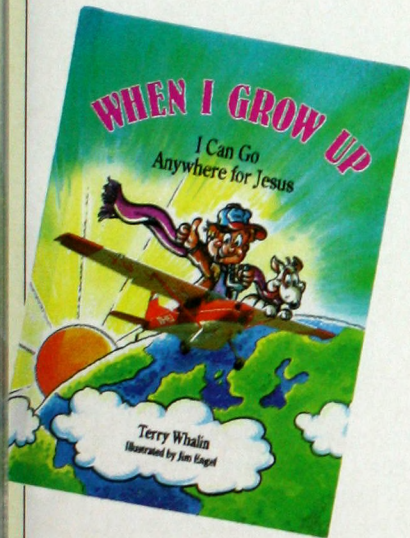
The writers are paid \$5 for the day they spend writing. Each writer also earns money by selling copies in the neighborhood for 25 cents apiece.

KIDS COMMUNITY members also participate in a simulation city, including a store, a mayor, a city council, a bank, and a cinema. "We're teaching them how society operates, but from a kid's perspective," says the Rev. Stan Maclin. "Many times we adults think we know what is best for kids, but this is a community of the kids, for the kids, and by the kids."

To order a KIDS NEWS subscription, send a check or money order for \$7 payable to KIDS NEWS, P.O. Box 8141, Richmond, VA 23223.

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—C. S. Lewis”

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FWV325

A Korean orphan triumphs over cultural barriers, poverty, and homeless winter nights to become a university professor.

IN FROM THE COLD

In 1953 South Korea was a country overwhelmed with the aftermath of war. Women whose husbands died in the war worked 15-hour days in factories or sold wares on the streets. Probably the most tragically affected were the thousands of orphans roaming the streets scavenging for food. U.S. soldiers returned home haunted by the terrified screams of these children wandering through bombed-out villages, frantically searching for their parents.

In war-ravaged Dong Tu Chon, close to the North Korean border, 5-year-old Sung Sam Oh lived in a one-room rice straw cabin with his mother and two younger brothers.

Over the next 39 years, Oh lived through what many call an economic miracle, during which South Korea advanced from one of the world's poorest nations to a leading industrialized country. The foreign aid trucks filled with clothing and food are gone. In Seoul, South Korea's capital, streets in posh sections of town are lined with shops and showrooms boasting Nike running shoes, Hyundai cars, and a myriad of sophisticated electronic equipment.

Today Oh is a 46-year-old professor



The Korean war had just ended and thousands of war orphans like this boy roamed the streets scavenging for food.

WORLD VISION

with two master's degrees and one Ph.D. He teaches agricultural education at Kon Kuk University in Seoul.

Room With Another View

It is Teacher's Day, a Korean tradition in which students honor their teachers with visits and gifts. For a few moments, Oh's mind is far away from the stack of brightly decorated packages and yellow flowers neatly arranged in an elegant white vase on his desk. He

is looking out his office window, silently thanking God for his blessings.

From his perch overlooking the river, busy streets, and green trees, Oh can see the apartment where he lives with Do-Hee, his wife of 15 years, and their two teenage children. He stares at his home nestled next to a red brick chimney puffing smoke.

The view is a stark contrast to the scene he inhabited as a young boy struggling to survive in a crowded, decimated city, where a full stomach would have been a rare, lavish gift.

"I was hungry often," Oh says. "But all my friends were hungry. I thought it was normal." His mother, who sewed clothes in a factory, couldn't earn enough money to pay for her children's education. Neighbors recommended that she take them to the World Vision orphanage located in the same town.

The transition from playing in the streets with friends to disciplined life in an orphanage was difficult for Oh. "The orphanage was like a military unit," Oh says. "Daily life was scheduled. Wake up at 6 a.m., go to bed at 10 p.m." Like many other children new to such structure, Oh rebelled. "In the morning we walked toward school but spent the day traveling to nearby villages and mountains collecting fruits," he says.

Homeless Winter Nights

When he turned 15, Oh started thinking about his future. Did he want to spend the rest of his life barely earning enough money to keep food in his belly and shoes on his feet?

"I decided to study hard because I knew it was the only way I could really survive in this country without wealth or political connections," Oh says. "I knew I must compete with my brain."



During the bitter cold winter months Oh's teacher let him sleep on the floor in his office, the same office that Oh now occupies as a professor.

After three years of intense studying, Oh asked his teacher to write him a college recommendation. "My teacher didn't want to do it because I was so poor and no one could pay for the tuition," Oh says. "My teacher advised that I go work in a factory."

But Oh persisted and finally his teacher helped him. He began studying agricultural education at Kon Kuk University. Although World Vision and the university paid for his tuition, he didn't have money for food or housing. "I didn't know anyone at school," Oh says. "I didn't have anywhere to live." During the days, Oh attended class and studied at the library. At night he slept outside.

During the bitter cold winter months, Oh's teacher let him sleep on the floor in his office, the same office that Oh now occupies as a professor. But it was an old building without heating, and Oh often suffered from colds and coughs.

"It was a secret that I lived in this office, because students were not allowed to sleep in the building. When all the students went home, I sneaked into this office."

Oh hid his belongings—one spoon, one pair of chopsticks, and one bowl—in a cabinet underneath his professor's bookshelf. "I dreamed and prayed a lot for food," he says. "I was so hungry." Occasionally his professor would bring him rice. "One day after I was dreaming about food, my classmates brought me lunch," he says.

God's Yellow Light

Immediately after he finished his final exams, Oh collapsed with sickness, his inflamed throat and fluid-filled lungs choking his breaths into painful, hacking coughs. Doctors at the World Vision Children's hospital told a woozy Oh he almost died of pleurisy.

"I was so weak from four years of college life, too many

days without enough to eat, too many nights sleeping in the cold winter," Oh says, folding his hands tightly together and resting a trembling chin on them. "I remember lying there thinking: I tried to do my best under my circumstances and I was in the hospital as a reward for my best efforts? ... But finally I felt like God was shining a yellow light instead of a green light on my life. Maybe this is God's will—a chance to rest."

During his year in the hospital, Oh continued to study books about education. He wrote a letter to his high school principal asking him to give him a job if he was cured. The principal wrote back, promising him a teaching position.

After two years teaching there, Oh served his mandatory three years in the

Korean army and then continued his education. In 1985, while finishing a Ph.D in education program evaluation at Florida State University, Oh's financial aid fell through. After much soul searching and praying, Oh wrote a letter to Stan Mooneyham, the former president of World Vision, asking to borrow money. Mrs. Nancy Mooneyham sent him a check for \$1,000.

"I still keep a photocopy of that money order and I will repay that with \$1,000 interest," Oh says. "I put money away each month for this."

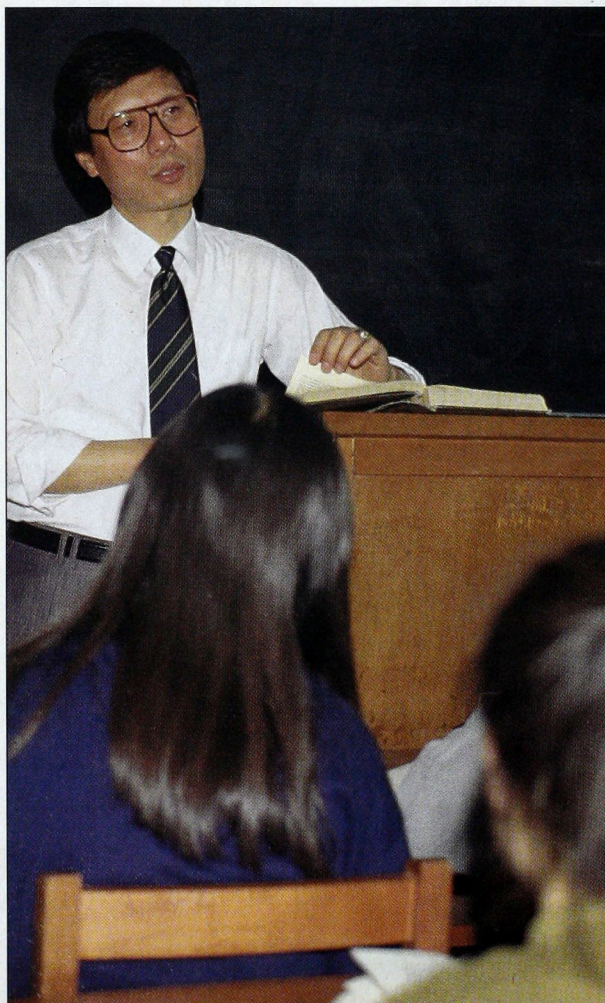
Full Circle

When Oh finished his Ph.D program, he returned to Korea. His former professor at Kon Kuk University was ready to retire, and Oh was hired to fill the position. Sometimes, especially when the winter chill reminds him of long nights sleeping on the office floor, "I sit on this chair next to the window and look outside and think about my past college life," Oh says. "But those are sad memories."

Oh, like many Koreans whose friends, parents, siblings, and children died during the war or the agonizing years of recovery afterward, wants to make something good out of his pain.

"Sometimes I talk to my children about when I was poor," Oh says. "I tell them I suffered, but I did my best. I tell them that they can do whatever they want if they don't forget and give up their dream."

Oh's dreams have expanded since he was a teenager. "When I decided to apply for college, my only goal was to be able to have three meals a day. But since I was a student at this university, I have wanted to become president of this university. Maybe someday that dream will also come true." ☉



Professor Oh teaches a university agricultural class.

FROM MULE TO MIRACLE

BY BRIAN BIRD

The winter sun has slipped well beneath the horizon when Jumberto Bolivar turns and points with pride to a bubbling pot of his sweet-smelling cream confection in the kitchen of his small house on the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia.

"Better to have no butter at all than to have butter without my caramel flavoring," Bolivar says with a smile. "Better to have no life at all than to have life without Jesus Christ."

Jumberto's wife of 12 years, Gloria, reads to

were getting rich and we were also drug addicts," he says.

Bolivar was what drug trade insiders call a "mule"—a human beast of burden, responsible for moving up to 250 pounds of cocaine every two weeks out of Colombia on its way to North America. Sometimes, it meant brokering the cocaine between two parties. Other times, it meant risky flights to Miami, concealing cocaine in carry-on luggage and hoping to slip by customs and drug enforcement officials.

Then Bolivar got a promotion. The cartel gave him the responsibility of overseeing a cocaine-production laboratory. But along with the glamour of having more money than they ever dreamed of, the Bolivars lived a hellish existence as Jumberto became increasingly addicted to the deadly drugs.

"I was doing them all because they were easy to get. Cocaine cigarettes, barbiturates, hashish, LSD, and marijuana. I was a slave to drugs. I was dying physically. And inside, I was dying spiritually," Bolivar says.

Bolivar's darkest hour came in 1987 when, ironically, his cartel, disgusted by his failing judgement and drug use on the job, forced him out of the business.

Unemployed and enslaved by his habits, Bolivar contemplated suicide. "It seemed like a good idea. I had already lost everything. My life was worth nothing anyway," he recalls somberly. "But I decided that I would cry out to God one last time."

God answered with a flood of peace and a sense of forgiveness that caused him to weep non-stop for four days.

"Pure grace, that's what it was. Miraculous, life-changing grace," he adds. "When I cleaned up my life, I began to have a vision to help other throwaway people," says Bolivar. "We Colombians, even Colombian Christians, have blinders when it comes to the discardable people in our society—the drug addicts, the street children. We don't want to admit

"When I cleaned up my life, I began to have a vision to help other throwaway people."



BRIAN BIRD / WORLD VISION

Jumberto Bolivar, his wife, and daughters stand behind a milk-hauling cart used for Bolivar's butter-making business.

their two children in the warm evening light of another room. Her eyes are full of grace.

This idyllic picture differs greatly from Jumberto's life five years ago when he was a drug addict and a member of a notorious cocaine cartel.

"That we're even here today is a miracle of God," Bolivar says, his eyes moistening. "We shouldn't be, but Jesus rescued us, and now we've been called to rescue others."

As Bolivar remembers his life's dark days, he pulls out a photo of himself wearing the green fatigues of a soldier of fortune.

"We were exporting chaos to North America. We knew it, but we didn't care, because we

Tom Brockaw of NBC had it right. Reporting from Mogadishu, Somalia, the day the Marines landed, he said that the relief workers, not the Marines, are the real heroes of Somalia. Some believe the U.S. and U.N. forces entered Somalia to provide relief goods. Not so! Their role is to provide security so that relief workers can provide help to the starving with less risk of robbery and injury.

Unfortunately, there are more Somalias just around the corner. Mozambique and southern Sudan have human needs that rival those in famine- and civil war-torn Somalia. World Vision is already there and in other famine-distressed parts of Africa meeting immediate relief needs. Our long-term goal is to see families and their communities return to sustainable lifestyles with a knowledge of Christ.

Much of the success of these programs depends upon women's role in these societies. Be encouraged by our cover story on women in Bangladesh.

—Terry Madison

WORLD VISION

Volume 37, Number 1

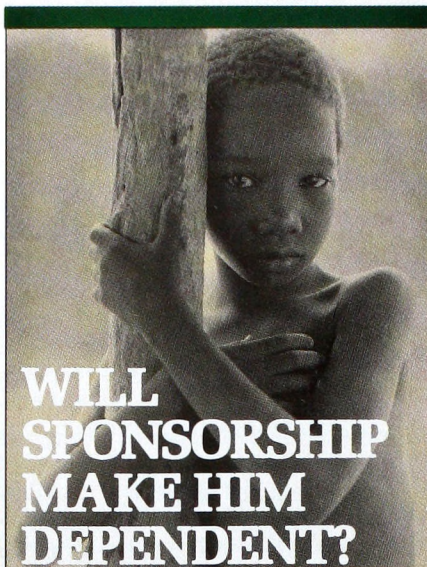
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WORLD VISION magazine is published bimonthly by **WORLD VISION®**

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World Vision is a nonprofit, Christian humanitarian agency dedicated to serving God by helping people care for those in need. It ministers to children and families, provides emergency aid, fosters self-reliance, furthers evangelism, strengthens Christian leadership, and increases public awareness of poverty around the world.

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WORLD VISION

that they exist, but they do. I was one of them."

But before Bolivar could carry out his vision, he had to put his house in order. Two years ago, he moved his small family to a quiet rural *barrio* on the outskirts of Bogotá and began a butter- and cheese-making business. Now, instead of addictive drugs, his small kitchen laboratory churns out *arequipe*, a creamy caramelized butter for school children.

And it was Bolivar's entrepreneurial spirit, combined with his spiritual vision, that made him a perfect candidate for a loan from a program World Vision of Colombia began last year. Called Solidarity Economics, the program has established revolving loan funds in communities across Colombia to make low-interest loans to small-scale enterprises and help them avoid high-interest loan sharks.

With his first loan Bolivar purchased a pedal-powered, milk-hauling cart to speed up production. Since paying off the first loan, he has received a second loan to power his cart with a motorcycle.

"God has shown me that these loans are not just to help me make more money. They are a part of God's plan for me to reach the throwaway people. And the best way to help them is to grow my business so I can provide jobs in the community," Bolivar explains.

"In Colombia, when the church does help, we usually just preach the gospel, which is good. But these young people also need something to fill the idle time that used to be taken up by drugs. Something to occupy their minds, so they won't think about the drugs.

"That's what I want my business to be. A training ground for these young people. Something for them to look forward to when they kick the drugs," Bolivar says. "This is something I want the whole world to know about." ☉

Brian Bird is a journalist and screenwriter in Ontario, Calif.



FASHIONABLY LATE

When I visited Somalia recently, a reporter asked me a difficult question. It carried the hard edge of accusation: "Where were you 18 months ago?" The implication of that question was clear: World Vision was seen as a "Johnny-come-lately" to Somalia. The early morning laborers to that starving vineyard had come from other employment pools, and our late arrival coincided with the tidal wave of media interest that ultimately jarred a distracted world into a response.

The question made me instantly defensive. "Hey, you ought to be glad we're here at all. We've been slugging it out in Mozambique, Angola, southern Sudan. This isn't the only place people are starving, you know!"

But it was a fair question, and it got right to the heart of the tensions that all international relief agencies face: multiple disasters, razor-thin budgets, pre-occupied donors, long and badly stretched supply lines.

As I reflected on the reporter's question, I remembered that Jesus was once put under the same penetrating strobe light. Lazarus had been dead for days, and Martha and Mary greeted Jesus with words that must have hit him right

between the eyes: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

"Jesus, where on earth have you been?"

We sometimes forget that Jesus didn't heal everybody. Not everyone got fed. Not every dead body got a second crack at life. Much of the delivered compassion seems to come at random, good ministry taking place at points of interruption.

With Lazarus, of course, things appear to be different. Jesus was uncharacteristically calculating, intentionally waiting a few days to hype his arrival. This disciplined approach vanished, however, when he got to the grave. All the conflicting tensions were felt.

Painfully, Jesus was forced to acknowledge the finite resource of time. What happened this day would be the last straw for the Pharisees who sought his life. Jerusalem beckoned, and a final divine appointment with Golgotha had already been carefully scripted. All of this produced humanity's deepest emotions. Jesus broke down in tears.

Jesus didn't solve everyone's problems on the spot, but Lazarus bears witness to Christ's all-encompassing potential. Likewise, in Somalia, where migration to the feeding centers continues, not everyone survives the trip, but we were privileged to see the hope in the faces of new arrivals.

Asha Gure is one of those who made it. Her husband's death put the entire family burden squarely on her young shoulders. She began the trip a widow, eight months pregnant, with two sons, Mohammed, 8, and Nu, 7. She walked for two months, 300 miles, giving birth along the way.

She arrived exhausted, her baby already severely malnourished, her two sons pock-marked with measles, every bone in their pencil-thin bodies protruding. They appeared to be disoriented, not realizing their journey was over, not remembering how long it had been since a smile had been allowed on their faces.

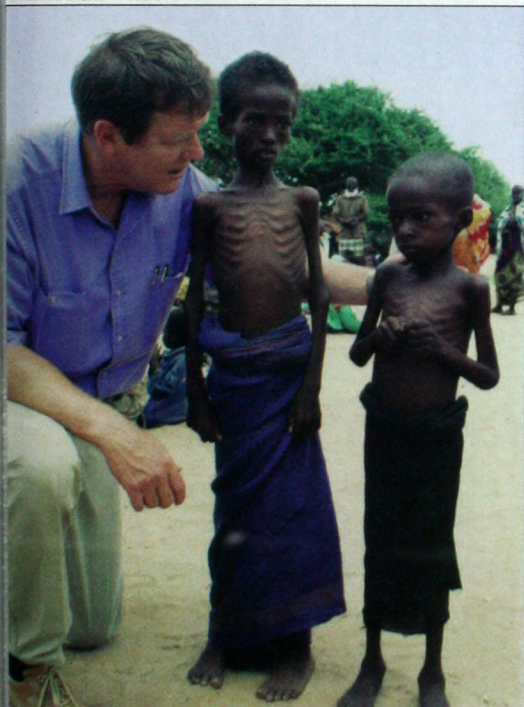
We were profoundly grateful to be there to greet them. As physically vulnerable as they were, they could be saved. Hallelujah!

But back to the reporter's question: Jesus told a liberating story just before entering Jerusalem. It's about hired laborers. Chosen at different times during the day, all received the same wages. World Vision's work in Somalia may have much in common with those late hires. Seeing Asha Gure and her family have a second chance at life, we certainly felt the joy of a full wage.

Asha Gure didn't ask about our work 18 months earlier, or where we had been when her husband had died. Her two-month saga was over, and she could begin to rebuild her life. But what about those who perished along the way? How will our own competing tensions be resolved? What do we do with the realization that not everyone makes it, and we can't make everything right? Humility is a good place to begin. And then, gratefulness, because of a sovereign God who still has the power to call life from the grave. ☉

We were profoundly grateful to be there to greet them.

PHILIP MAHER / WORLD VISION



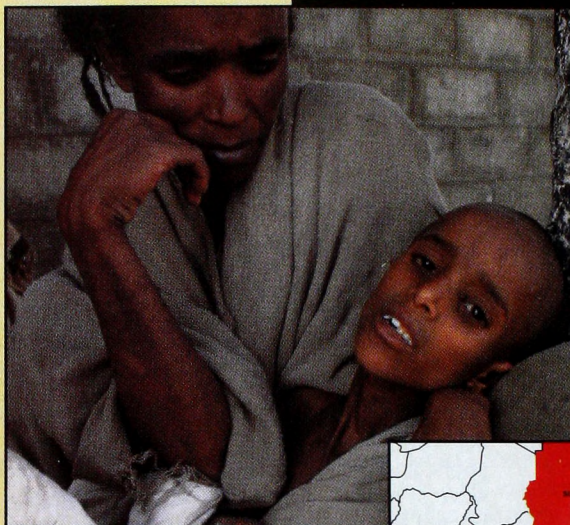
Asha Gure's two sons: Mohammed, 8, and Nu, 7.

Published by
World Vision Inc.
P.O. Box 1131
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But there is hope—if we act quickly. World Vision staff is working around the clock at feeding centers to help those who are in the greatest danger.

Please help get food to children and families in Africa before starvation and disease claim them.

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