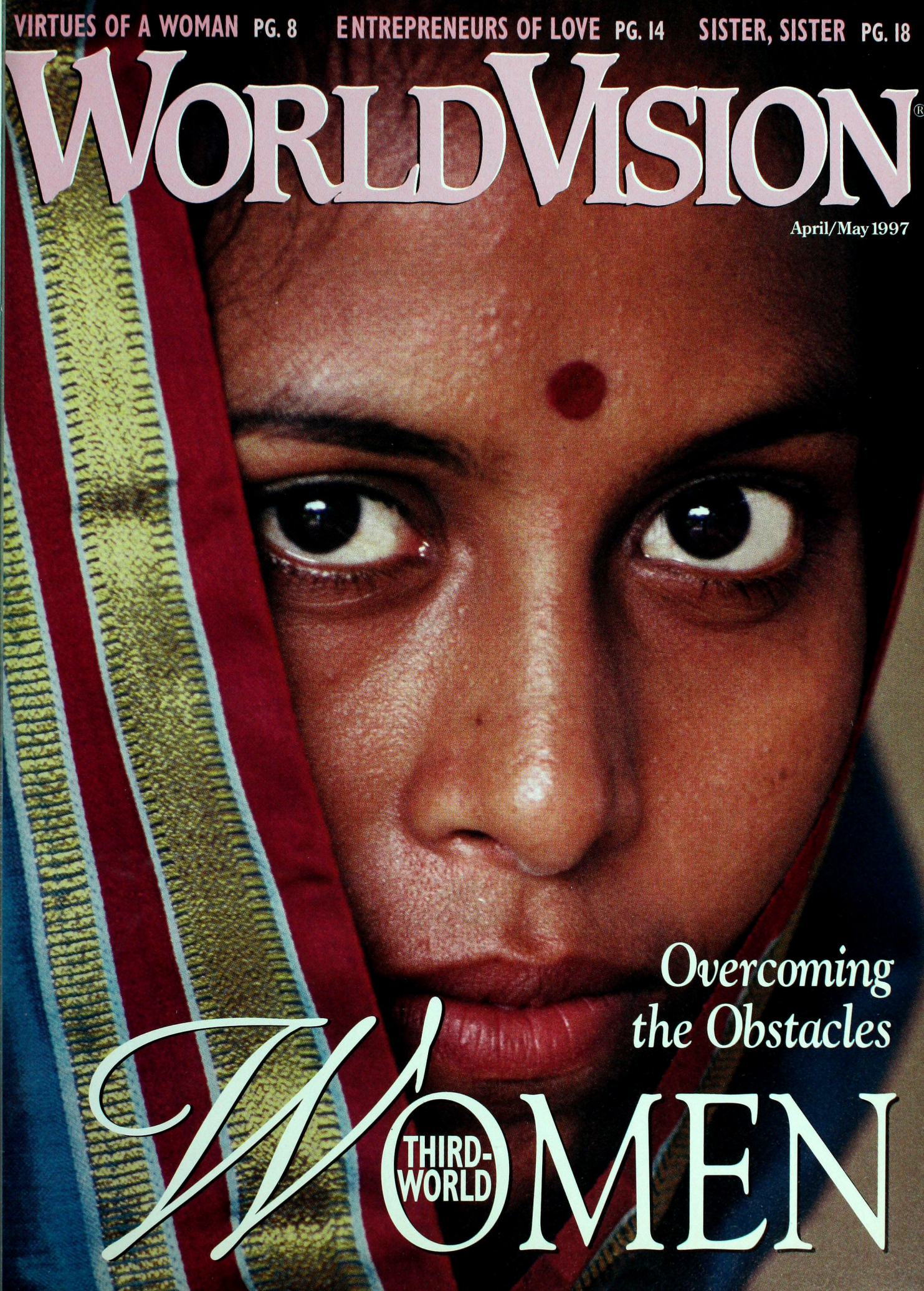


VIRTUES OF A WOMAN PG. 8 ENTREPRENEURS OF LOVE PG. 14 SISTER, SISTER PG. 18

WORLD VISION®

April/May 1997



Overcoming
the Obstacles

WOMEN

THIRD-WORLD



FIVE BARRIERS FACING WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES

BY SHERYL WATKINS

THE NOTION IS ARCHAIC IN MODERN SOCIETY, BUT OCCASIONALLY WOMEN STILL ARE THOUGHT OF AS SECONDARY TO MEN. YET A LOOK AT THE ROLES WOMEN PLAY AROUND THE WORLD—PRODUCING FOOD, RAISING CHILDREN, HELPING SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES AND COUNTRIES ECONOMICALLY, EVEN FIGHTING AND DYING IN WARS—BELIES THE NOTION AS NOT ONLY DATED BUT ABSURD.

WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD ARE USING THEIR STRENGTHS TO OVERCOME MANY OF THEIR OWN AND THEIR FAMILIES' PROBLEMS: ILL HEALTH, DISCRIMINATION, ILLITERACY, AND POVERTY. YET WOMEN REMAIN MOST VULNERABLE TO THESE AND OTHER DIFFICULTIES. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES, THEIR ROLE AS MOTHERS AND, MOST OF ALL, POVERTY MAKE THEM SO.

DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TARGETED AT WOMEN—SUCH AS ADULT LITERACY CLASSES AND REVOLVING LOANS—ARE HELPING THEM ADDRESS MANY OF THEIR PROBLEMS, AS ARE CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY. MUCH MORE, HOWEVER, REMAINS TO BE DONE.

MATERNAL MORTALITY

THE AFRICAN WOMAN'S NAME HAS BEEN LOST IN THE RETELLING OF HER STORY. BUT NO MATTER. EVERY MINUTE, A WOMAN LIKE HER DIES FROM COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH. MOST OF THOSE DEATHS ARE ANONYMOUS, TOO, EXCEPT TO THE CHILDREN, HUSBANDS, PARENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS THEY LEAVE BEHIND.



Bawiri Juma holds her 10-day-old son, Kashindi Sango, in a transit center at Kigoma, Tanzania, for refugees from 1996 warfare in eastern Zaire. The baby was born while the family fled from their former home. At left is her 11-year-old son, Lutombo.

She lived in a rural village in the African country of Niger, some 115 miles west of its capital city, Niamey. Her chances of surviving pregnancy seemed good. Yet Niger, the world's least developed country, has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world: 700 of every 100,000 women there die each year from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. This rate is 140 times higher than that of the United States. The grim statistics caught up with this woman.

When the time came for her baby's delivery, it became clear to her family and neighbors that things were not going well. She needed a caesarian section. Yet the village had no way of transporting her to the local government health clinic. Her family begged and borrowed enough cash to hire a donkey cart to take her there. But clinic staff said the case was beyond their competence. She needed to be transferred to a hospital in Niamey.

The clinic had an ambulance, but it was out of gas. Clinic staff had no cash to fill the tank. They hadn't received their salaries for the previous three months. As the expectant mother's family frantically tried to raise more cash, she died. "This woman's life could have been saved for the price of a tank of gas," says American Nurse Marci Stoterou, who manages World Vision Niger's Child Survival Project.

Each year, nearly 600,000 women worldwide die of causes related to pregnancy or childbirth. More than 140,000 die of hemorrhaging; some 75,000 from botched abortions; 75,000 from brain and kidney damage resulting from convulsions caused by pregnancy; 100,000 from blood infection due to an unhealed uterus or retained pieces of placenta; as many as 40,000 from obstructed labor; and others from anemia related to pregnancy.

For every woman who dies, 30 more incur injuries, infections, and disabilities. That equals 15 million women each year suffering life-affecting damage in pregnancy and childbirth. Over a generation, the cumulative total is conservatively estimated at 300 million, more than a quarter of the adult women now alive in the developing world.

The Niger project has successfully trained traditional birth attendants in eight villages. These women, chosen by their communities, have been trained in pre- and post-natal care and safe delivery techniques. Worldwide, thousands of

traditional birth attendants are being trained through World Vision projects. In many projects, the agency also is helping establish birthing rooms at clinics, where women can deliver their babies in a clean environment. World Vision also is creating contingency plans for transporting women to more sophisticated medical facilities in emergencies.

In Malawi, World Vision has provided automobile and bicycle ambulances for government-operated hospitals. The agency also gave bicycle ambulances to traditional birth attendants in project areas.

VULNERABILITY

Women are left vulnerable to violations of their legal and human rights by social traditions and customs, legal restrictions, their physical size, and their role as caretakers for the family.

This vulnerability begins in the womb. In India, China, and elsewhere boys often are preferred and girls are aborted or abandoned shortly after birth. Baby girls are not breastfed as long as their brothers. In many societies, girls and their mothers eat only after the men and boys are fed. An estimated 450 million women in developing countries are physically impaired due to childhood malnutrition. This can threaten their health and lives as young mothers, and endanger the next generation of children.

Every year, some 2 million girls, most in Africa and the Middle East, suffer the dangers of female genital mutilation. The traditional practice cuts away some

or all of their genitalia, usually under unsterile conditions and with no anesthesia. The tradition is not required by religion but is designed to preserve virginity, ensure marriageability, and control sexual behavior. Conse-

quences can include prolonged bleeding, infection, infertility, and death, as well as increased risks during childbirth.

The issue of genital mutilation now is confronting Western countries as immigrants seek the operation for their daughters. World Vision has joined other child welfare organizations, women's groups, human rights organizations, and professional organizations to discourage the tradition. Still, says a researcher measuring the prevalence of the practice, "It looks like women in most countries [where it prevails] are nearly as likely to undergo these procedures as their grandmothers."

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Each year as many as 1 million children—girls and boys—are forced into the flesh trade, often by their parents. Abuse of children through prostitution and pornography is not a phenomenon restricted to the developing world; as many as 300,000 children in North America are involved in prostitution, which now is a global, multi-billion-dollar industry.

Foreign "sex tourists" from Australia, Japan, the United States, and other countries have increased demand for young prostitutes, which already was growing in many countries due to the mistaken assumption that they were less likely to have AIDS.

Perhaps nowhere is child prostitution more evident than in Thailand, where the local sex industry went international during the Vietnam War.

The workers are young girls and women from throughout the country, especially impoverished northern areas. Girls also are brought from Myanmar (Burma) and other neighboring lands. Many are lured from their homes with the offer of work in restaurants or factories, then trapped into prostitution. Some are sold by their parents, often unwittingly, to pay debts or buy necessities or luxuries for the family. Thai culture views supporting parents as honorable, no matter how the money is earned.

"When girls enter the flesh trade and return later with nice clothes and money, their presence encourages others to do the same," says Napaporn Sangprong, 28, a volunteer with World Vision's girl-child project in the northern Thailand city of Phayao. Napaporn and her partner, Supaluck Chaikaew, operate a small sewing business. The two women visit families in the community. "We explain the necessity of school and the importance of children learning a vocation," she says.

Education can seem like a luxury to many families in the community. Project coordinator Pisarana Samphantawong says local people "are always faced with financial problems. Children are encouraged to assist financially and the trend in the poor areas has been to sell the girls."

Prapai Kaewkoon, 18, and her sister, Kamonwan, 16, fit the profile of girls who drop out of school to work or become prostitutes. They have lived with their grandparents in a small house 28 miles from Phayao since their parents divorced 15 years ago. They have not heard from their mother since.

Their 56-year-old grandfather, Thawee, works seven days a week, earning about \$3 a day. His wife earns a little money selling vegetables. Their income is never enough and they frequently borrow money from a local money lender at high

THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST BRIDES ARE IN BANGLADESH, WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE OF WOMEN AT THEIR FIRST MARRIAGE IS 16.7 YEARS.



Maria Angela Sanchez stands with her son, Helan, beside the family home at Yamarranguila, a rural community of some 18,000 people in Honduras. Maria holds a pottery plate used for cooking tortillas. She makes and sells the plates to supplement the family's income.

Village women in India learn to read in a World Vision adult literacy project.



SANJAY SOJWAL / WORLD VISION

interest rates. World Vision staff recently discovered the family owed \$400, and the lender was trying to foreclose on their property, valued at \$4,000.

The girls were able to stay home and Thawee kept his property when World Vision arranged to repay the loan and set up the family with an additional small business loan. The second sum, from a World Vision revolving loan program, allowed the girls to build a chicken coop and buy 80 chickens. Selling eggs in local markets, they earn \$3 to \$4 a day. They also remain in school. "Although we are still very poor," said Prapai, "at least now there is hope for us."

More than 600 girls and their families have been helped by the World Vision project to date. Project staff estimate that the number of girls sold into prostitution in the area has been cut by as much as 80 percent.

FEMALE LITERACY

Historically, girls have been given less access than boys to education. Statistically, it's getting easier for a girl to gain education, but in the developing world a girl still is twice as likely to be out of school as a boy.

In 1970, 38 percent of girls in developing countries were enrolled in school. By 1992, combined primary and secondary school enrollment for girls in developing countries rose to 68 percent. In the world's least developed countries, however, the figure remains far smaller.

Poverty is the main factor that keeps girls out of school. Even free education can be costly for poor families who pay for uniforms, books, and bus fare. When funds are limited, most parents keep sons in school rather than daughters. Families sending daughters to school also lose their help in cleaning, cooking, collecting wood and water, and looking after younger siblings. Especially in large families, parents often depend on daughters to assist with economic survival.

Whatever keeps a girl out of school, the decision has long-reaching impact on the woman she will become, as well as on her children and her community. Education gives her the skills, information, and self confidence she needs to become a better parent, worker, and citizen. It allows her to be more productive at work and better paid.

A woman who has been educated is likely to marry later and have fewer children. Her children have a better chance of living to adulthood. A study in India showed that children of mothers who received primary education are

twice as likely to survive as those of illiterate mothers.

For Hadas, a single mother in the East African country of Eritrea, illiteracy also had humiliating social consequences. She had to use her fingerprint for her signature and depend on neighbors to help her with correspondence. After attending literacy classes organized in her village by World Vision and the Ministry of Education, she is proud that she no longer blackens her thumb to place her mark on documents. Now she can sign her name.

Her newfound literacy also "helps me follow my children in their studies," says Hadas. "And I can read and write my own letters. It is also helpful to know the news in my country

by reading the newspaper, though I do it slowly." Hadas now supports her family with a small business. As her reading skills improve, she hopes to secure a job with regular, reliable income.

World Vision is helping tens of thousands of women like Hadas worldwide through adult literacy classes.

POVERTY

Women make up half the world's population. Yet they own just 1 percent of its wealth. According to United Nations estimates, 70 percent of the estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women. Females also are the most rapidly growing group among the impoverished.

Most of the estimated 100 million homeless people around the world are women and children. As many as 600 million women and children live in inadequate, unhealthy shelters. Every day, some 50,000 people, mostly women and children, die because of poor shelter, polluted water, and bad sanitation.

Women have few avenues out of poverty. Though they represent the majority of the world's food producers and contribute significantly to economic life everywhere, women are largely excluded from economic decisions. In most societies, they lack equal access to, and control over, various means of production, including land, capital and technology. Their work is nearly always paid and valued less than men's.

Over the past two decades, small-business loan programs have been successful around the world in improving the income of women and their families. Bangladesh's Grameen Bank pioneered

the concept, and now reaches 2 million women. The idea has spread widely, gaining various names: village banking, small enterprise development, poverty lending. These programs provide women with more than just capital. They also offer business advice and support from program administrators and other women in the community.

World Vision is using this concept on four continents. Bosnian refugee women have received loans to produce mush-

rooms, honey, eggs, vegetables, and other goods. In Ecuador, women who received loans to buy sewing machines supplement their families' income by making shirts. African women are using the loans for businesses or to grow cash crops.

The confidence these programs engender often is more important than capital or business advice. When the Rupali Mohila Women's Savings Group began in 1993 in Bangladesh's Chittagong Province, none of the 23 women involved knew where to begin, said member Nur Begum. "I thought to myself, 'How can I save anything when I have so little to begin with?' But we soon discovered small amounts can add up."

Each of the women in the group set aside a handful of dry rice as they prepared their meals. By the end of the week, together they had saved more than 13 pounds of rice. Week after week, the women set aside rice, pooled it, and sold it at the market, putting the proceeds into a fund. Soon, they also were weaving floor mats for sale at the market. Since then, loans from their fund have helped members buy cows, goats, and chickens, which are boosting family incomes.

"We do earn profits," said Nur, "but now we want to expand. For this we need to discuss and plan with our World Vision committee and find what would be most beneficial for us."

The women would like to buy a plot of land to grow rice and other crops. They could repay the loan for it within a few years and have added profit to share. The World Vision program, said Nur, has "taught us how to work together, save together, and learn together. We gained confidence in these past few years, and all of us have seen how we have improved our lives." ☉

Written with the aid of Karen Homer in Dakar, Senegal; Mikel Flamm in Bangkok, Thailand; and Ghennet Bokretzion in Asmara, Eritrea.



El Salvador

AS WE APPROACH THE NEXT CENTURY, women worldwide are beginning to show what they can achieve when given the resources and opportunity. Indeed most international aid organizations now recognize women as a key to Third-World development. In many agricultural countries, women do most of the crop harvesting and processing, and they make up a large and growing portion of the world's nonfarm labor force. And as more rural men leave their families to find jobs in the cities, women now head between a third and a half of all households in the developing world.

With the help of loans, training, technical aid and moral support, women who once spent six hours a day fetching water now have running water and can use their time to make and sell clothing, handicrafts, or pastries. Women who once labored in other people's fields are now purchasing land and raising livestock. And women who were once afraid to leave their homes are joining seamstress collectives, milk cooperatives, and garbage-collection agencies.

Where World Vision and other aid organizations are targeting women, the poor are developing. Slowly, perhaps, and often painfully. But it is happening. Village by village, women in the developing world are gaining the tools and confidence to provide for their families and make their communities healthier places to live.

Yet this new focus on the energy and creativity of women is truly an old idea. Three thousand years ago a wise Hebrew writer wrote a poem (Proverbs 31: 10-31) praising the wisdom and value of women, paraphrased on the following pages.

PHOTOS BY JON WARREN
TEXT BY LARRY WILSON

Recognizing the Worth of Third-World Women



virtues of a Woman



Mozambique

She is worth more than jewels! ...

She brings home food from out-of-the-way places, as merchant ships do.

She gets up before daylight to prepare food for her family and to tell her servant girls what to do.

She looks at land and buys it, and with the money she has earned she plants a vineyard.

She is a hard worker, strong and industrious.

She knows the value of everything she makes, and works late into the night.

She spins her own thread and weaves her own cloth.

She is generous to the poor and needy.

She doesn't worry when it snows, because her family has warm clothing.

She makes bedspreads and wears clothes of fine purple linen. ...

She makes clothes and belts, and sells them to merchants.

She is strong and respected and not afraid of the future.

She speaks with a gentle wisdom.

She is always busy and looks after her family's needs.

Her children show their appreciation, and her husband praises her. ...

Charm is deceptive and beauty disappears, but a woman who honors the Lord should be praised.

Give her credit for all she does. She deserves the respect of everyone.

(Today's English Version)

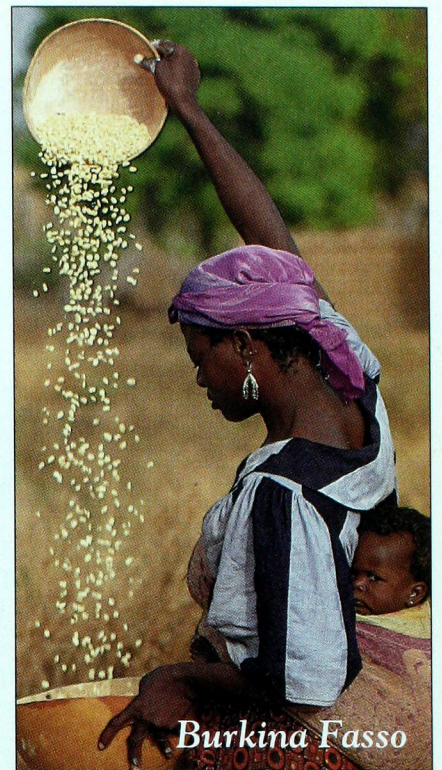


Vietnam



Bolivia

Nepal

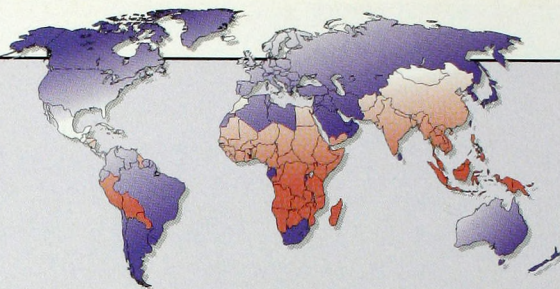


Burkina Fasso

Pakistan



WORLD VISION NEWS



250 MILLION CHILDREN USED AS LABORERS

More than 250 million children between 5 and 14 years old are used as laborers, according to the United Nations International Labor Organization. Half of them work full-time, the agency says.

The global figure includes 153 million children in Asia, 80 million in Africa, and 17.5 million in Latin America. In southern Asia and West Africa, children sometimes are sold into bondage. Youngsters commonly work as street vendors, factory employees, and farm laborers. In some areas, more children die from pesticide poisoning than from childhood diseases.

The U.N. agency also reports a rise in child sex trafficking. Latin American children are sold in Europe and the Middle East, South Asian children go to Northern Europe and the Middle East, and children from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine are sold in Hungary, Poland, the Baltic States, and Western Europe.

World Vision operates projects to provide youth with marketable skills that keep them at home.

The agency also rescues young prostitutes with vocational training. In one project, World Vision has arranged for payment of family debts to free young bonded laborers.

A child scavenges for salable junk at the Inayawan dump near Cebu City in the Philippines.

GIFTS-IN-KIND ADD TO WORLD VISION GIVING

Clothing for Ghana, Kenya, Swaziland, and Zaire; medical supplies for Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Tanzania; Chinese chicken dinners for a day care center in Phoenix, Ariz.—merchandise donated through World Vision is as varied as it is far-reaching.

World Vision's gift-in-kind program received more than \$80 million in donated goods in 1996, including Bibles for Kenya and Zambia, garments for Nicaragua, books for Armenia and Mongolia, and boots and eyeglass frames for Swaziland. When a Tacoma, Wash., candy manufacturer found 40,500 pounds of used clothing in a repossessed warehouse, World Vision rounded up volunteers, sorted and packed the clothes, and shipped them to Malawi.

Ten thousand counterfeit designers' jackets confiscated by U.S. Customs agents went to World Vision for shipment to Bosnia and Croatia. The agency also sent Disney toys to refugee children in the small African country of Lesotho.

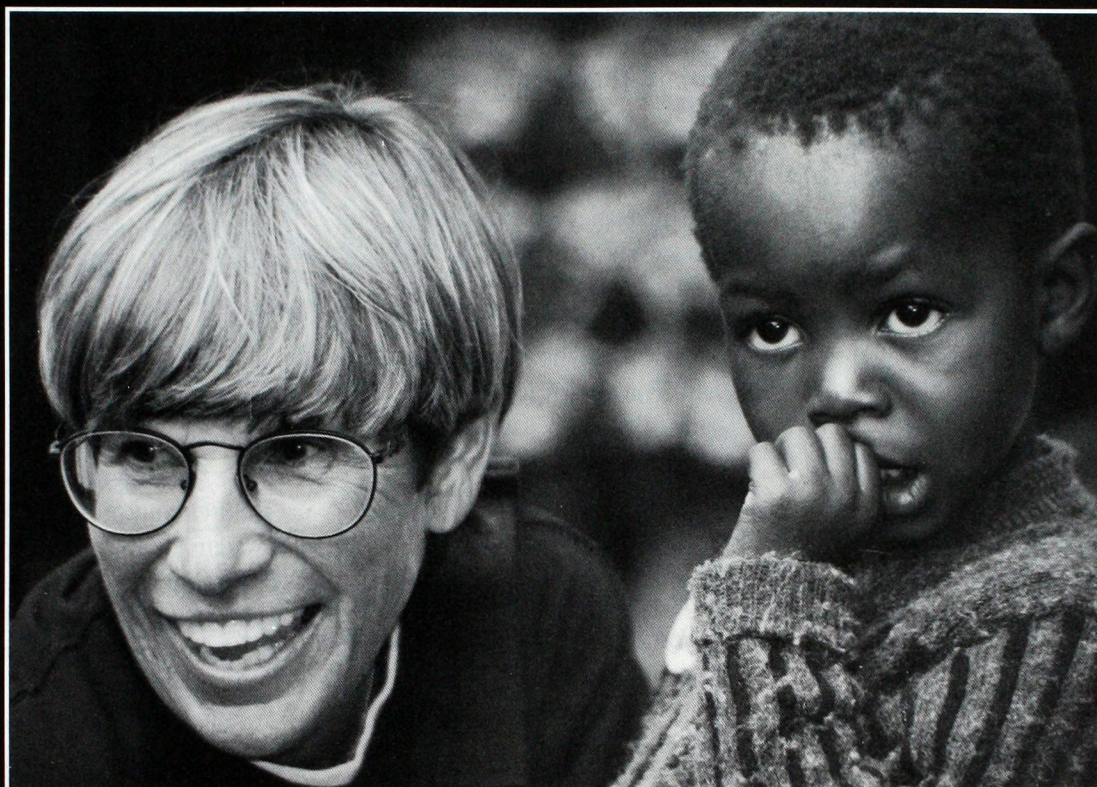
Any large donations of useful goods are welcome, says Tom Konjoyan, World Vision's corporate relations officer for gifts-in-kind.

WAR-RAVAGED ERITREA REPLANTING FORESTS

The more we train, the more we produce," declared tree nursery worker Sheka Asmerom, 65, praising World Vision's expert assistance to nurseries throughout Eritrea.

Working with the East African country's Ministry of Agriculture, World Vision assembled 35 nursery managers from all over the country in the capital, Asmara, for an instructional program in raising seedlings. Chris Palzer, an Australian volunteer and expert in arid lands forestry, led the session.

ARE YOU A WOMAN OF VISION?



IN 1991, I WENT TO KENYA WITH WOMEN OF VISION TO HELP WOMEN IN NEED THERE. I WAS NOT PREPARED FOR SOWETO, HOWEVER, A SPRAWLING NAIROBI SLUM FILLED WITH DISEASE, DIRT, DESPAIR, AND RIVERS OF URINE AND EXCREMENT. I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE THE VAN.

When we stopped, two young women, Jane and Christine, took my hand and guided me through the streets of their world. As we walked and I gazed into their lovely faces, they told me about their love and faith in God, and suddenly I knew that God was present with us in the midst of that horrible slum. Because of Jane and Christine, I committed myself to helping Soweto's women, and to return every year to visit my new friends.

In 1993, during my third visit, I learned that Jane and Christine had had children. Jane introduced me to her newborn Suzanne, and

Christine introduced me to Paulson. Suzanne and Paulson—my name!

When I asked World Vision Kenya to let me sponsor these children, they said I couldn't because there was no program in place. Yet I refused to give up.

Finally, last year, my dream came true. Suzanne and Paulson are now my sponsored children. And my fellow Women of Vision have committed themselves to find sponsors for 400 other children living there! That's what Women of Vision is all about!

—Suzanne Paulson



WOMEN SEEKING CHANGE

Many women in the world today have no options. They fight an uphill battle against disease. They trudge miles for filthy water. They hold dying children in their arms. Illiterate and unskilled, they try to earn a living for their families. They work 16-hour days, constitute 60 percent of the world's food producers, yet receive only 10 percent of the income. They are old and worn out at 35.

Some women in the United States fare little better. Homeless and unskilled, they cannot provide for themselves and their children.

There are other women, however. Women who care. Women who long to help, and who have the means to help. They listen to poor women and learn from them. They have a clear calling from God—and they are changing the world. They are called Women of Vision.

WOMEN CHANGING THE WORLD

Women of Vision is a life-changing program operated by World Vision to educate and motivate Christian women to become women of action—to share their faith and God-given resources to help meet the needs of suffering women and their

families worldwide. Since 1990, more than 300 Christian women across the United States have participated in Women of Vision to raise more than \$1.5 million to help impoverished, oppressed, and persecuted women and their families.

Their faith, efforts, and money are providing education and economic opportunities for women in Kenya, Palestine, Guatemala, Bosnia, Romania, and Ecuador. They are also supporting counseling programs for women and children in Bosnia and Palestine who have been traumatized by violence. And they are supporting a Romanian program that enables single mothers to keep their children rather than give them up to orphanages.

In a Hispanic neighborhood in Orange County, Calif., Women of Vision have supported a project to make the community safer for its children and provided students with academic and spiritual guidance by becoming tutors and mentors. Women of Vision in Dallas, Texas, minister to women recently released from prison. And in Colorado, Women of Vision support a Christian tutoring program for at-risk children in poor communities.



DALE HANSON BOURKE
Chevy Chase, Maryland

“Women of Vision are ordinary women who believe in an extraordinary God; women who may be afraid and overwhelmed by the needs of the world, but women who care enough to stop and listen to the whispers and whimpers of women and children who have no advocates, no forums, no voices except their cries for help.”

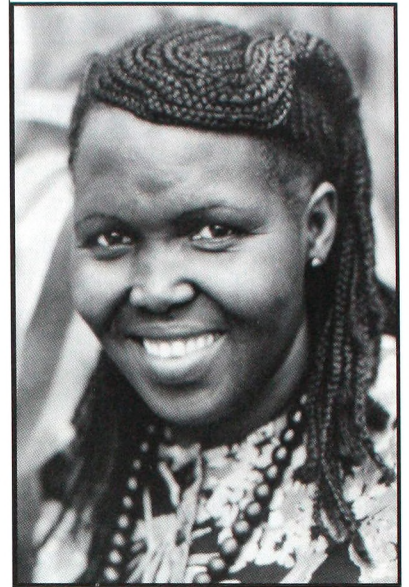
ANN MILLER (Left)
Dallas, Texas

“The women-to-women outreach of Women of Vision is especially powerful in war-torn Bosnia where we are supporting women in rebuilding their lives. I believe the relationships we are building with these women—one on one—is both the foundation of the progress we are seeing and the reward of our work.”



WOMEN OF VISION INVITES YOU TO:

- ATTEND CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY GROUPS ON WOMEN OF POVERTY.
- PARTICIPATE WITH A VOLUNTEER FORCE OF WOMEN TO HELP THE POOR WORLDWIDE.
- SHARE YOUR FAITH, TIME, MONEY, TALENT AND ENERGY WITH NEEDY
- HELP WOMEN OF VISION RAISE MONEY FOR WORLD VISION PROJECTS.
- ENCOURAGE WOMEN LIKE YOURSELF TO BE SERVANT LEADERS.
- DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR WOMEN TO ENCOURAGE, CHALLENGE, MOTIVATE, AND TRANSFORM ONE ANOTHER AS



REBECCA CHERONO
Jerusalem, Israel

"Poor people are not so much in need of money as they're in need of dignity and self-esteem. They need to feel valued as individuals—not based on education, economics, or effectiveness. You in the fast world need to learn to accept gifts from people in the developing world. They have so much to offer in relationships, values, and simplicity in their Christian way of life. So to be a Christian Woman of Vision does not require one to be Wonder Woman. It requires only commitment and deep insight into God's call on our lives."

By placing a 32¢ stamp on the envelope you can help World Vision save money it will use to help the needy.

8724/H47-L00

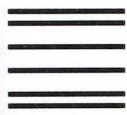
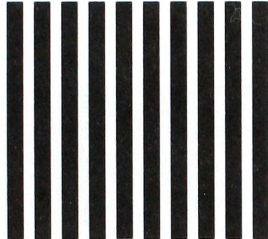
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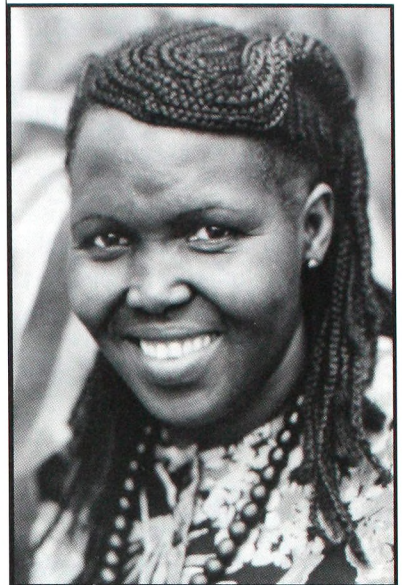
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With your gift, World Vision can help girls and women in poverty realize their worth and potential as creations of God.

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REBECCA CHERONO
Jerusalem, Israel

Yes, I want to help women around the world who struggle to survive. 8724H47-L00

Yes, I want to sponsor a child. I prefer to sponsor a boy a girl, living in Africa Asia Latin America Middle East where most needed. #47-02

ENCLOSED is my check made payable to World Vision for my first monthly sponsorship payment of \$20 and/or my one-time gift to assist women. \$ _____

BILL my monthly sponsorship to my credit card.

VISA MasterCard American Express Discover

No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Please tear off and return this portion.

“We are no longer Jews or Greeks or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same—we are one Christians; we are one in Christ.”

—Gal. 3:28, TLB



ROBERTA AHMANSON
Corona del Mar, Calif.

... something Christian men have done for others—helping other men in their daily lives. The best gift people need is the gift of our lives. Women of Vision offers an opportunity for ourselves to others in many kinds of ways they have dreamed of, and reap the rewards they never dreamed of.”

“Poor people are not so much in need of money as they're in need of dignity and self-esteem. They need to feel valued as individuals—not based on education, economics, or effectiveness. You in the fast world need to learn to accept gifts from people in the developing world. They have so much to offer in relationships, values, and simplicity in their Christian way of life. So to be a Christian Woman of Vision does not require one to be Wonder Woman. It requires only commitment and deep insight into God's call on our lives.”



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Their faith, efforts, and money are providing education and economic opportunities for women in Kenya, Palestine, Guatemala, Bosnia,



DALE HANSON BOURKE
Chevy Chase, Maryland

"Women of Vision are ordinary women who believe in an extraordinary God; women who may be afraid and overwhelmed by the needs of the world, but women who care enough to stop and listen to the whispers and whimpers of women and children who have no advocates, no forums, no voices except their cries for help."

ANN MILLER (Left)
Dallas, Texas

"The women-to-women outreach of Women of Vision is especially powerful in war-torn Bosnia where we are supporting women in rebuilding their lives. I believe the relationships we are building with these women—one on one—is both the foundation of the progress we are seeing and the reward of our work."

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*With
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Women—Valuable Creations of God

From their day of birth, females in many parts of the world face incredible odds against survival. Some countries of Africa and Asia favor males so greatly that female newborns are often killed.

Girls who survive sometimes face abandonment or a bleak existence in ill-equipped orphanages. Adult females can expect to endure culturally accepted deprivation such as limited education and professional opportunities or even kidnapping and sale into the sex industry.



Despite this degradation, World Vision's commitment is to mirror God's esteem for women. We share that Christ loves all people equally and came to die for the redemption of both women and men.

World Vision recognizes that women often hold the key to transformation in their communities. For example, literacy projects in Africa focus on educating women who then teach their families and neighbors to read.

Most World Vision programs throughout the world focus on enabling women to overcome obstacles and enjoy the fullness of life emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Your gift today will create a world of opportunity for women and girls trapped in poverty.

WOMEN OF VISION INVITES YOU TO:

- ATTEND CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY GROUPS ON WOMEN OF POVERTY.
- PARTICIPATE WITH A VOLUNTEER FORCE OF WOMEN TO HELP THE POOR WORLDWIDE.
- SHARE YOUR FAITH, TIME, MONEY, TALENT, AND ENERGY WITH NEEDY WOMEN.
- DEVELOP AS A LEADER.
- HELP WOMEN OF VISION RAISE MONEY FOR WORLD VISION PROJECTS.
- ENCOURAGE WOMEN LIKE YOURSELF TO BE SERVANT LEADERS.
- DEVELOP A PROGRAM FOR WOMEN TO ENCOURAGE, CHALLENGE, MOTIVATE, AND TRANSFORM ONE ANOTHER AS YOU BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

WOMEN CHANGING THEMSELVES

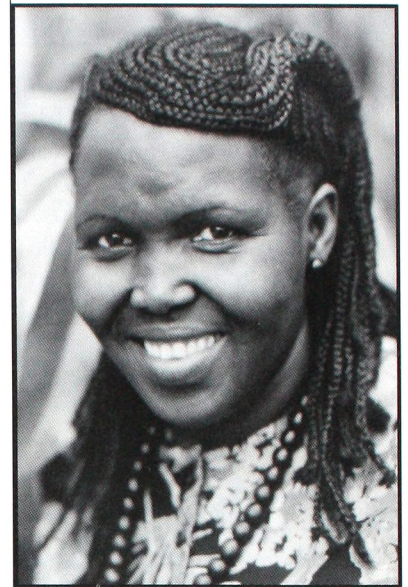
Women of Vision understand that to change the world they must first be learners, allowing God to open their eyes, transform their hearts, and give them a vision for what is possible through him. Through group studies, national conferences, and trips to World Vision projects overseas, Women of Vision introduces American women to the needs and challenges of poor women worldwide, and shows them how they can use their God-given resources to make a difference.

The special trips overseas are particularly important. When women—rich and poor—unite to confront the problems facing women and families worldwide, relationships develop. And it's these relationships, with each other and with God, that will overcome the barriers facing women and families today. As Susan Baker, wife of the former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, said at a recent Women of Vision conference, "A wonderful thing happens when women get together with their hearts to find ways to help those less fortunate."



ROBERTA AHMANSON
Corona del Mar, Calif.

"This is something Christian women have done for centuries—helping other people in their daily lives. The greatest gift people need from us is the gift of ourselves. Women of Vision gives women an opportunity to give themselves to others in all kinds of ways they never dreamed of, and reap all kinds of rewards they never dreamed of."



REBECCA CHERONO
Jerusalem, Israel

"Poor people are not so much in need of money as they're in need of dignity and self-esteem. They need to feel valued as individuals—not based on education, economics, or effectiveness. You in the fast world need to learn to accept gifts from people in the developing world. They have so much to offer in relationships, values, and simplicity in their Christian way of life. So to be a Christian Woman of Vision does not require one to be Wonder Woman. It requires only commitment and deep insight into God's call on our lives."

JOIN WOMEN OF VISION

on Sept. 18-20 at their national conference at the Sheraton Park Central Hotel in Dallas, Texas! The theme is "Hope for Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow." Speakers will include Susan Baker, wife of former Secretary of State James Baker; Abuna Elias Chacour, founder of Prophet Elias College in Israel; Phyllis Kilbourn, advocate of children's rights group Rainbows of Hope; Peter Kuzmic of AGAPE; and Dean Hirsch, President of World Vision International. For more information call 714-547-9570.

ARE YOU A WOMAN OF VISION?

Today Women of Vision are meeting and working together in Orange County, California; Dallas, Texas; Evergreen, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and northwest Washington. Their faith and efforts, however, expand worldwide. That is what Women of Vision is all about—women sharing dreams of hope, then uniting to make those dreams reality. It is a process marked by contrasts: pain and love, joy and sadness, poverty and the power to help.

Women of Vision have a strong Christian commitment to the poor, a spirit of adventure, and a firm belief

that God's abundant provision to them can help other women not just survive but thrive.

Does this sound like you? Are you a woman of vision? If you are interested in joining a growing movement of Christian women devoted to helping suffering women and families worldwide and would like to find out more about what God wants to do through you, please contact:

*Penny Wood, Director
Women of Vision National Office
1651 East 4th Street, #229
Santa Ana, CA 92701
Phone: 714/547-9570
Fax: 714/547-9571*



DR. ROBERTA HESTENES
Solana Beach, Calif.

"It takes more than tears to change the world. It takes courage. Courage is the bridge that moves us from tears of compassion to the fierce desire to change things. Women of Vision provides an opportunity for me, as a woman, to directly express my care and concern."

I WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW I CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS GROWING MOVEMENT CALLED WOMEN OF VISION.

- Please send me more information about Women of Vision near me.
- Please send me information about starting a study group in my area.
- Please send me information about the Women of Vision National Conference coming up September 18-20, 1997.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Mail to: Penny Wood, Director, Women of Vision National Office,
1651 East 4th St., #229 Santa Ana, CA 92701



Frequent drought combined with overuse of timber diminished forest cover in Eritrea from 30 percent in 1900 to less than 1 percent today. The deforestation left the already poor country bleak and infertile.

After 30 years of war with neighboring Ethiopia led to independence in 1993, Eritreans set to work building a new nation. They are enthusiastically



WINNIE OGANA / WORLD VISION

Eritrean high school boys and girls terrace fields and plant trees to curb environmental degradation during compulsory summer work camp.

mending ruined roads, rebuilding clinics, and reconstructing cities block by block.

Says U.S. Ambassador Robert Houdek, "I'd characterize their prospects for development as excellent. The dedication of these people, combined with an incredible honesty and a capacity for hard work, augur well."

Bringing green back to the denuded countryside, World Vision and the government ministry are rehabilitating 29 nurseries that will produce more than 4 million seedlings annually.

"Previously no one was assisting the nurseries and did not even know of their existence," said nursery worker Sheka. "With the help of World Vision and the Ministry, we are full of optimism to cover the land with forest."

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WOMEN OF VISION IN ROMANIA:

Entrepreneurs of LOVE

TEXT BY SHELLY NGO PHOTOS BY KARI COSTANZA

“It’s a transformation for women to build relationships with women who are struggling against odds that we’ve never experienced in the United States.”

For two decades, Jeanie Hunter threw herself into the traditional role of stay-at-home mom, fixing school lunches for her two children, driving a car pool in the upper-middle class community of Evergreen, Colo., and shuttling her kids from soccer practice to football games. So when her youngest child left for college, Jeanie wondered how to fill her time.

“I was 48 years old. I felt young, and I really wanted to be involved in something,” Jeanie said. “I prayed, ‘God, what can I do?’”

An answer came in the form of an invitation to join Women of Vision, a ministry that educates and motivates women to assist women in the developing world. Jeanie responded, hardly suspecting that her involvement with the group would call her and nine other women to Romania, or to Maria Otvos, a seamstress in a clothing manufacturing company in the northern city of Cluj.



Women of Vision member Jeanie Hunter (right) speaks with Maria Otvos, who works at a clothing factory in the Romanian city of Cluj. While unemployment runs rampant as the country shifts to a free-market economy, World Vision’s micro-enterprise program helps start and expand businesses such as the clothing plant.

Among the stacks of vests being prepared for export in the sewing factory, Jeanie met Maria, a 19-year-old Romanian woman who nimbly formed shapeless material into garments as the woman talked. Maria told Jeanie that she lived with her father and grandmother. Her mother had left the family years before. Shyly, Maria asked Jeanie if she was a Christian.

Jeanie responded, "Yes, I was going to ask if you were."

"I used to be a Christian," the young girl answered. "But I'm so bad and have so much sin in my life that God would not accept me the way I am."

"I told her this was why Jesus came and died, to forgive her and that she did have hope through Christ," Jeanie recalled.

The chance to share their faith, to build relationships with other women, and to discover ways they could assist World Vision's work was what compelled the Women of Vision group to travel to the former communist country.

"We were not just money bags, there to give thanks for our comfortable lives," Jeanie said. "We went to build relation-

ly, then we really know what courage is, what perseverance is.

"The women on this trip had a vision and desire to travel to Romania knowing that it wasn't some light, little vacation. And they had their eyes opened to what it must have been like to live under a communist regime. It's a transformation for women to build relationships with women who are struggling against odds that we've never experienced in the United States."

Building trusting relationships is particularly hard in this former communist country where dictator Nicolae Ceausescu ruled for 45 years until his execution in 1989. Under his harsh regime, neighbors were encouraged to spy on neighbors, family members became informants on each other, and even church leaders were controlled by the state. People starved as food and crops were exported from the country, part of Ceausescu's efforts to reduce a \$10 billion foreign debt. The dictator's plan to increase the nation's labor force made birth control and abortions illegal; a woman could be jailed for using a contraceptive.

As a result of Ceausescu's draconian policies, more than 150,000 children were surrendered to state-run orphanages and institutions by parents too poor and burdened to care for them. In the wake of Ceausescu's execution, the world was horrified by media images of Romania's neglected children languishing, malnourished and diseased, in institutions reminiscent of concentration camps.

International aid flooded into the country along with hundreds of people promising assistance. But along with good intentions, Romanians were subjected to promises of help that went unrealized with the passage of time.

"When you think of Romania, you have to think of long-term friendships," said Charles Dokmo, national director for World Vision Romania. "Americans are perceived as having many acquaintances, whereas Europeans, especially Romanians, have a few deep relationships. If we're committed to going to all the world to bring the gospel to people, we need to learn to adapt. In Romania it means that you have to make a long-term commitment to develop trust."

World Vision made that commitment years ago, working in the country and quietly hosting leadership conferences for Romanian pastors even before the revolution. In 1990, World Vision was able to open an office in Romania, hiring local people to work alongside expatriates to

operate five orphanages where children could receive maximum attention and care in a clean and healthy environment. Now orphanage social workers counsel parents to keep their children instead of placing them in institutions, but they work against years of conditioning when parents were told that their children were better off in the care of the state. And the shift to a free-market economy has left families financially devastated. Unemployment has soared, while those still employed earn an average of \$75 to \$100 a month. Yet, prices for food and staples like toothpaste or shampoo are equivalent to United States prices. Instead of children in state-run institutions decreasing, the numbers are going up.

In response, World Vision is working to improve the economic picture for families who are attempting to start new businesses. It's a struggle for Romanians to find credit for small enterprises, those with fewer than 25 employees, and most business owners are inexperienced about how to operate in a free-market economy. World Vision extends small loans to these businesses with lending capital provided by the Romanian American Enterprise fund, a U.S. government-supported agency set up to stimulate economic development in the country. But more than just extending credit, World Vision provides business training and ongoing consulting to help small business owners succeed.

Women entrepreneurs are encouraged to apply for training and loans as several studies of microcredit programs in other developing countries have found women to be better credit risks than men, usually spending more of their profits on improving their families' and communities' lives.

"It's exciting to be involved with women in economic development," said Mano Kamaleson, operations manager for World Vision Romania. "There's that machismo atmosphere in this male-dominant society, so there are a lot of hurdles for women to get over. Communism also [dictated] certain kinds of roles for each person so breaking that cultural taboo is difficult for women to do. We have businesswomen who have done very well, and we're excited about working with them."

On a rainy September afternoon, a dozen Romanian women gathered in a restaurant in Cluj to meet the Women of Vision from Colorado. Over lunch, they conversed through translators, sharing stories of their lives.

Lucretia Bumb, 39, labored in a government-owned clothing factory for 17 years. When government factories



Pharmacy owner Adriana Cracium (left) receives loan assistance and business training from World Vision to produce nasal sprays that can substitute for expensive imports.

Removal of government subsidies on medicine is driving up prices 60 to 100 percent, since there are few pharmaceutical factories in the country.

ships, to say 'We love you, we care about you. We are human beings created by God, and we are sisters in Christ.'"

Penny Wood, director of Women of Vision in Santa Ana, Calif., believes it's crucial for the members of Women of Vision to be in relationship with women in other countries. "We're so accustomed to having all kinds of opportunities in the United States. When we see women challenged, when we get a feel for what it's like to be unable to provide for your fami-



Women of Vision member Linda Smith (left) meets Comanescu Constanza, an orphan who survived a life of deprivation in a state-run institution under Romania's former communist government. Now she joins many wards of the state making the transition from institutions to independent living. World Vision supports them with skills-training programs.

project income, and how to determine cash flow.

Claudia Tarnita, who produces pasta and bread in Cluj, attended the classes as well. Trained as an economist, Claudia says that her formal education did little to prepare her to run a business.

"They taught her how to do a business plan and helped her maximize her skills which her whole edu-

cation as an economist hadn't done," said Women of Vision member Linda Smith, founder of Homestead House, Inc., who visited with Claudia over lunch. "The loan program is key to Romania's recovery because the prices of goods have increased so much and government salaries have not. Outside of this program, there are very few chances, few opportunities for these women to succeed."

When Claudia began describing a typical day in her life—in the office by 7:30 in the morning to do paperwork,

then in her bakery to supervise employees, and working into the evening—Linda could fully empathize.

"When you're in retail or manufacturing, the hours are long and the work is all-consuming," Linda said. "It's hard to find time for things, and it's a strain on relationships. Without her putting it all into words, I knew in my gut what she was saying about the struggles and demands.

"These women entrepreneurs are the hope for Romania," Linda said. "As their businesses grow, they'll be able to employ more people and have a growing impact on the economy."

Very impressed by the micro credit program, the Colorado Women of Vision are devoting themselves to fundraising efforts to support small loans for women like Lucretia and Claudia.

And like other Women of Vision groups that revisit projects to renew friendships, they plan to return to Romania.

"I have gone to Armenia with my husband who is Armenian many times," explains Women of Vision member Cheryl Touryan. "The first time was a look-see tour. A year later we went back and stayed for three months. One Armenian man told me, 'The first time you came, I thought *She must love her husband to do this*. The second time you came, I thought, *She must love us*.'

"I think it's the same thing here. We would love to return to Romania. Our first priority as Christians is to reach out to other Christians, and I feel that this a wonderful way to build the Christian presence in Romania." ☉

began selling old, outmoded equipment in the wake of the revolution, Lucretia decided to purchase 12 broken-down sewing machines with her life's savings and risk going into business for herself.

The first two years were difficult. First, she had to find someone to repair the machines. Then it was up to Lucretia to persuade other women to give up the security of their government jobs to join her, sewing out of her home where they often ran into problems operating the high-current machines from household electrical outlets. Eventually she was able to rent factory space and acquire additional sewing machines, but still she couldn't afford to purchase a specialized buttonhole machine or much-needed ironing presses for her factory.

Only large businesses typically qualify for loans from regular lenders. The lenders who deal with smaller groups often require that families put up their land, homes, and cars in addition to the purchased equipment as collateral for a loan, which then is offered at exorbitant interest rates.

Instead, Lucretia was able to turn to World Vision for a \$10,000 loan, which she'll pay back at 12 percent in three years. The equipment and Lucretia's car are listed as collateral. To qualify for the loan, she attended training courses where instructors discussed business ethics and taught prospective business owners how to analyze markets, how to



Women of Vision member Joyce Long (right) swaps stories with Florina Capus at a clothing factory in the city of Cluj. Building relationships is one of the most important aspects of a Women of Vision trip.

SISTER, SISTER

Jewish and Palestinian Christians cross the wall of fear amid tensions in the Holy Land.

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY VIRGINIA
WOODWARD



Palestinian Rana Ishaq (left) welcomes Israeli Lisa Loden at the West Bank village of Beit Jallah.



ON SEPT. 25, 1996 MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE PALESTINIAN WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP ERUPTED INTO CLASHES BETWEEN THE ISRAELI MILITARY AND PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. GUNFIRE RAGED FOR SEVERAL DAYS, KILLING MORE THAN 60 PALESTINIANS AND 15 ISRAELIS AND INJURING ANOTHER 1,600 PALESTINIANS.

RANA ISHAQ'S PHONE RANG AS ISRAELI TANKS ROLLED INTO HER WEST BANK VILLAGE. "RANA, I LOVE YOU," SAID LISA LODEN, A JEWISH ARTIST WHO LIVES IN ISRAEL. BREAKING INTO TEARS, SHE CONTINUED, "YOU ARE MY SISTER. YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE IN MY PRAYERS."

Vivid images of bus bombings and violent clashes characterize the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East. Over the years this struggle has raged in wars, military occupation, and terrorist actions, resulting in brutality and death. With prospects for real peace bleak, fear festers on amid suffering and oppression.

Despite the turmoil, two courageous women have crossed the lines of separation dividing their communities and forged a deep friendship. Together they are building bridges of understanding between Palestinian and Israeli women through the World Vision-supported Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation.

Lisa Loden, 50, lives with her husband, David, and their 14-year-old daughter, Nava, in the modern Mediterranean city of Netanya, near Tel Aviv. Rana Ishaq, 27, comes from the village of Beit Sahour on the West Bank. Although Beit Sahour is only a 10-minute drive from West Jerusalem, few Israelis dare to venture through military checkpoints dividing the West Bank from Israel. How did Lisa and Rana, living in different worlds divided by culture and conflict, develop such a special friendship?

AN AFTERNOON IN NETANYA

Sipping tea in her elegant artist's home in Netanya, Lisa Loden shares what brought her to Israel. "Before, my Jewish background wasn't relevant for me. But after we came to faith, I began to really read the Bible and see that God had worked with the Jewish people for many centuries." She continues, "Then I saw that this heritage was important and had relevance for me today."

Originally from Michigan, Lisa and her husband, David, emigrated to Israel in 1974. After undergoing the rigors of immigration and establishing a home, Lisa and David supported themselves as musicians, performing throughout Israel and teaching music to other new immigrants.

David set Hebrew scriptures to music. "Our desire was to create an indigenous musical expression for the Hebrew scriptures as a tool to reach out to our people Israel," says Lisa.

Through a long process of faithfulness, the Lodens co-founded a congregation of Messianic Jews, people who remain Jewish in faith but believe in Jesus as their Messiah. For years the group meeting in their living room remained small. Now the *Beit Asaf*—or House of Gathering in Hebrew—has more than 100 members.

Lisa also stays busy serving on many committees—often as the only woman—in a society where male leadership prevails. She says with a twinkle in her eye, "I think that God created us all with gifts and abilities. We are not serving him fully unless we are letting him use all that he has made us to be." She adds, "It doesn't matter if we are men or women, or Jews or Palestinians. I am not willing to sit back and be quiet simply because I happen to be a woman."

This philosophy led to Lisa's involvement with reconciliation efforts. "Over the years there have been meetings between Arab Christians and Jewish believers in Jerusalem," says Lisa. "Every time we would hear about it we would go, because our heart is that God's people will come together." Through these contacts, the Lodens built friendships with Palestinian Christians. When a representative of the Bethlehem Bible College, the only Bible training center in the region for Arab Christians, approached her husband to organize a

choir for the school, Lisa says, "I knew this could be costly, but it didn't take long for us to make the decision."

During the *intifada* Palestinian uprising, travel in Palestinian areas was dangerous for Israelis. Yet David regularly went to Bethlehem, often with Lisa, to teach at the Bible College and direct the choir.

AN AFTERNOON IN BEIT SAHOUR

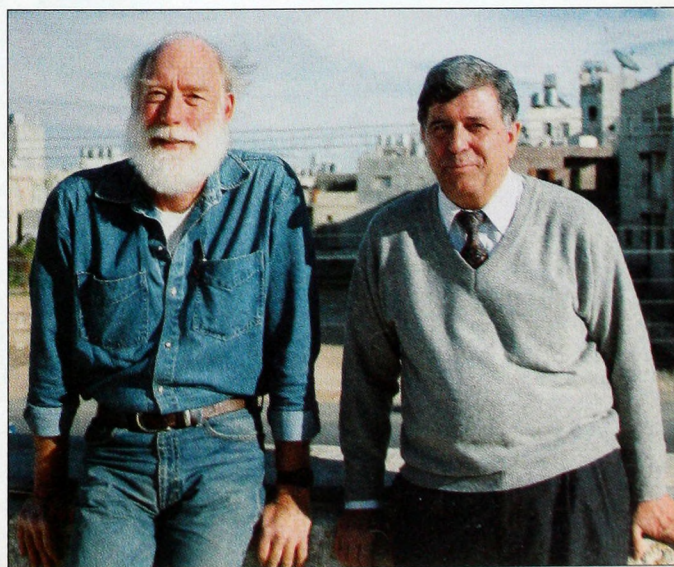
The spacious Ishaq family home lies in the middle of Beit Sahour, the ancient Palestinian Christian village of the "Shepherds' Fields" near Bethlehem. Noting that most Western Christians are "clueless" about the ancient heritage of Christian Arabs in the Middle East, Rana Ishaq laughed. "Our people were the first to hear the Good News here in Beit Sahour, and we still have the gospel after almost 2,000 years."

By Arab custom, Rana will live at home with her parents and siblings until she is married. Her grandfather is mayor of Beit Sahour, which brings her family high respect in the community.

"This is the land of my parents, their parents, their parents' parents ... this is our heritage," says Rana. Growing up under Israeli occupation, she has struggled for her rights. "Suffering humiliation, the indignity of being treated as less than human, is the hardest part of being here," Rana declares. "The Jewish immigrant has more rights than I as a Palestinian Christian."

A talented musician, Rana studied music and business at Clearwater Christian College in Clearwater, Fla. After graduation Rana joined the Bethlehem Bible College choir. When David Loden asked her to take over the choir two years ago, Rana accepted. "It's a big responsibility,"

David Loden (left), a Messianic Jew who lives in Israel, directed a world-traveling choir for the Bethlehem Bible College led by Bishara Awad (right), a Palestinian Arab Christian.



says Rana about leading the choir in concerts all over the world. "Those who listen to us are being introduced to Palestinian Christians."

Rana met Lisa through David after a choir concert. Sharing a common love for Christ and music, they became friends.

BLESSED PEACEMAKERS

Aided by World Vision, the Musalaha ministry of reconciliation brings Messianic Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Christians together through meetings, conferences, and trips to the desert where the two groups learn to depend upon each other. "We need to take seriously the command of Jesus to love our enemy," asserts Salim Munayer, the director of Musalaha, "and ask God to help us apply it to our everyday lives."

Two years ago, Salim approached Lisa Loden to begin a women's ministry for Musalaha. Lisa immediately sought out her friend Rana to bring together Messianic Jewish women with Palestinian

Christian women. They began the ministry with a conference in December 1995 called "Getting to Know You."

Only 20 women showed up for this first joint effort. That was discouraging, says Lisa. "I must have sent out over 30 invitations. It really hurt me to see the limited response!"

"This happened on the Arab side as well," Rana adds. "They all had excuses, like working or family responsibilities."

Lisa and Rana find bringing Israeli and Palestinian women together is always difficult. Choosing a time to meet is a big issue. Saturday is the Jewish Shabbat, their holy day, but for Palestinian women it is a normal work day. Sunday is the Christian day of worship, but for the Israelis it is like Monday.

Picking a place to meet also is complicated. "You would have only two or three Jewish women willing to go to the West Bank for a meeting," says Lisa.

Rana adds, "Many Palestinian women had a hard time attending conferences at Tantur just across the Israeli border, because they have to enter Jerusalem illegally."

Women in both communities are tied down with family responsibilities. While Rana nods her agreement, Lisa says with a sigh of exasperation, "Husbands just don't seem to be able to stay home and take care of the kids for one day."

Despite these obstacles the most recent conference in October 1996 drew 60 women. Entitled "Walking on Common Ground," the event stressed their similarities as followers of Jesus and as women.

"Peter speaks about pain and suffering," Rana told women gathered at the conference. "We are different colors and different heights, but we have one thing in common—our tears are the same, whether we are Christian, Muslim, or Jewish."

An Israeli woman approached Rana after her talk. "I shared that we all have the same security system: that God is watching over us," Rana says. "The woman broke down in tears, saying how afraid she had been in the past week, but now God had used the words of a Palestinian sister to show her

that she doesn't have to be afraid."

Lisa adds, "With the women's conferences we simply wanted to provide a framework, to create an atmosphere where women could talk with each other." In small groups divided equally between Palestinians and Israelis, each woman was asked to speak about her identity as a woman and the importance of her faith. "People who had never seen each other sat and talked about their kids and problems with school," continued Rana. "Women can really come together. They want to share."

PLANTING SEEDS

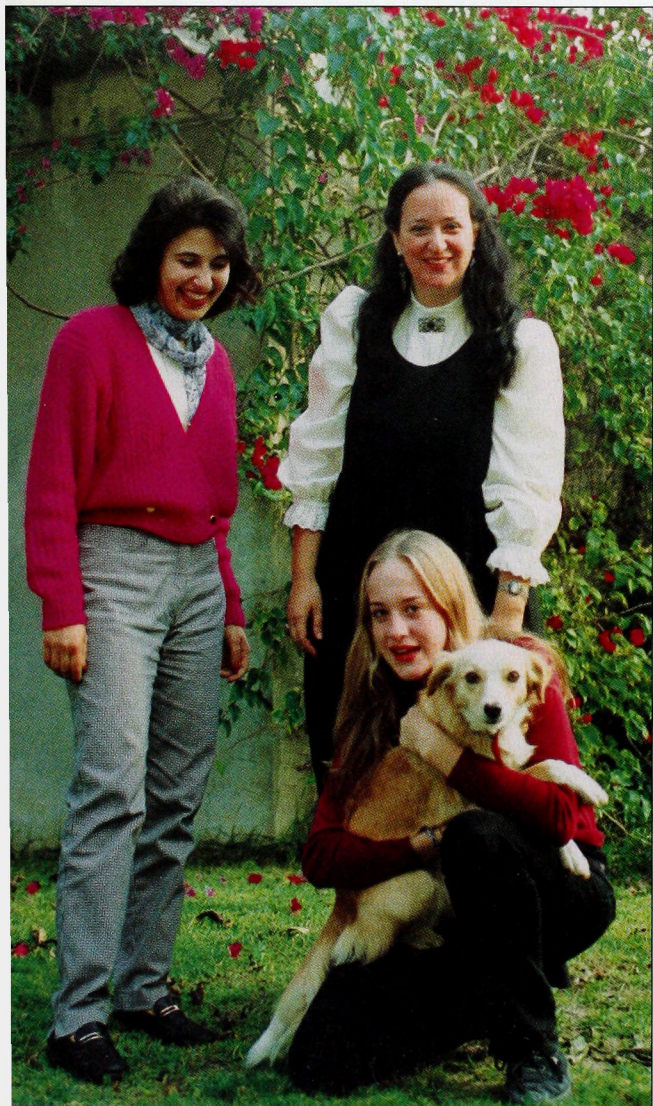
Now Rana and Lisa are excited with the results of the conferences. "One Jewish believer had it on her heart for a long time to see a prayer meeting that included Palestinian and Jewish women," says Lisa. "She sat and talked about it with a woman from the Bethlehem Bible College. She told me, 'I've waited long enough, but no one else is doing this. I guess I will.'" Now once a month Palestinian and Jewish women gather at the Bible College to pray.

Prayer is the key. "If we can pray together and feel one another's hearts and burdens, then I think other things will fall into their proper place," says Lisa. "If a Palestinian woman in a prayer meeting wants me to pray for her son who is detained by the Israeli authority unrighteously and is suffering in prison," she asks, "how am I going to feel? How am I going to pray? What is God going to do in my heart for my sister and her situation?"

FRIENDSHIP AND FAITH

Working together on the Musalaha ministry has deepened the friendship between Rana and Lisa. "We may differ in our theology and politics," Rana says, "but we have Jesus in common, and music, and love for the ministry." Lisa adds, "I think getting to know Rana has made me more appreciative of the distinctives of her culture. There are things that have shaped her that have given me compassion and understanding for her position as a very gifted woman standing very much alone—alone in a man's world, alone in a world where women are married or they're nobody, alone as a committed Christian living out her faith in an alien, secular, radicalized society."

When a bus bomb exploded one kilometer from the Loden home in Netanya in January 1995, the following weekend Rana rode a bus there to stay with her friends. "I'm a Palestinian and they're Israelis," says Rana. Some Palestinian exploded a bomb and killed all these Israelis. Even if I didn't have the right words to say, I wanted to be there to identify with their pain—to show them I



Rana Ishaq (left), a Palestinian Arab Christian, visits Lisa Loden, a Messianic Jew, at her home in Netanya, Israel. Lisa's daughter, Nava, 14, holds the family's dog.

MUSALAHA MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

The Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation, founded in 1990 by Bethlehem Bible College Dean of Students Salim Munayer, is led jointly by Palestinian Christian Arabs and Messianic Jewish Israelis. (Messianic is a term connoting Jewish people who believe in Jesus as their Messiah.) Choosing the Arabic name *musalaha*, which means forgiveness and reconciliation, this ministry seeks to promote reconciliation between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews according to biblical scriptures.

Through Musalaha, Arab Christian and Messianic Jewish leaders organize joint seminars and cultural events. They also publish materials in Hebrew and Arabic on themes of reconciliation.

World Vision supports Musalaha desert trips to bring together Arabs and Jews in a remote environment, allowing the members of both communities to be one group. Travelling together for three days on camels in the Negev desert, they form lasting relationships that spread a peace-making influence through the two communities.

Musalaha also conducts conflict resolution training seminars for Palestinians and Israelis. Learning reconciliation skills through these workshops, members of both groups are able to apply the knowledge in their congregations and communities. ☉

care." Riding the bus from Jerusalem took much courage. "I've never been so terrified in my whole life as during the two-hour ride," she exclaims. "But you have to cross over the wall of fear."

"This is what real reconciliation is about," says Lisa. "You have to cross the line. I think we have to understand, we have to identify with things and hear one another's pain."

During frightening clashes in September 1996 when the Israeli military killed and injured many Palestinians, Lisa could not travel to Beit Sahour, but she could pick up the phone. "Rana was in danger," Lisa says. "She is my sister and my friend. Rana's pain is real. If I validate her pain, then we're tearing down the barrier and building bridges of understanding, of empathy, of trust." ☉

Virginia Woodward is public relations coordinator for World Vision Jerusalem.

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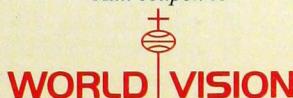
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NEXT TO THE LAST WORD

What would we men do without the women in our lives? Mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, friends, colleagues. This, our first theme issue of 1997, highlights the place of women in the world—the challenges they face because of their gender and the strengths they bring to the family, to their communities, and to the world.

Many of them, I suspect, would agree with writer Charlotte Whitton's wry comment: "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult."

But she, with some of us, may not be familiar with the difficulty of being a woman in the developing world. These daughters of poverty are breadwinners and breadmakers, child bearers and baby sitters, loan takers, business makers, field workers, firewood gatherers, water carriers, educators, gardeners, cooks, and so much more.

I hope you hear their concerns, and with us, help address their needs.

—Terry Madison

WORLD VISION

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SIMPLE GOAL, DIVINE STRENGTH

The Cambodian widow's goal seemed simple: holding her family together. But the task is anything but simple in Cambodia, a country impoverished by decades of war.

Better to say her goal was common, shared by women throughout the world. Holding families together requires great determination and strength, particularly for women in difficult situations. Like so many women I have met in my travels, like the women in my own family, she seemed to have been endowed by God with remarkable strength of character and will.

I met Baek Sim, 38, in November 1996 at her home in the village of Tuol Taria, a 90-minute drive northwest of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. She seemed to have more children than possessions.

The fact that her six children—three boys and three girls, ages 7 to 18—survived at all is testimony to her strength and determination as a mother. She had been pregnant with the youngest boy, 9-year-old Pheng Phirun, when her husband died from malaria. His relatives in a neighboring village, fearing she might ask for help, shunned her. Cambodia already had too many widows.

"I surprised my neighbors," said Sim. "I did everything myself. I survived. They didn't think I could do it."

In times of crisis and loss, the simple act of maintaining and restoring that protective and nurturing unit we call "family" most often belongs, redemptively, to courageous women like Sim.

Sim supports her family by growing rice and making and selling baskets. While Sim and her family still live meal-to-meal, they have hope for the future. "I struggle as a woman alone with so many children, so I'm thankful that World Vision came to my village to help the poor," said Sim. "Now my kids can go to school." With vitamin supplements from World Vision and the food she grows with assistance from its project there, Sim said, "my children can grow more and more."

World Vision's assistance did more than meet her physical needs. Through the witness of project staff, Sim learned of the love of God. The gospel the agency offered, holistic in its combination of word and deed, touched her and changed her life.

"The moment I chose Jesus," she said, "I experienced a profound joy from inside." Jesus Christ became the one she depends on more than a husband, more than a relative, more than a child. She expressed her faith publicly through baptism. Her neighbors can see the manifestation of the gospel in her life. Sim now has divine strength added to her own determination to care for her children.

This strength was not new to me. I've been privileged to witness it in members of my own family.

My wife, Margaret Ann, for example, has continually demonstrated strength and courage. We were married the year before I left for the Vietnam War in 1967. I have an image of saying goodbye to her, six months pregnant, in the rain at the Moline, Ill., airport. We were young and ready for whatever life brought us—we thought. Neither of us realized until that moment the enormity of what the woman of our house was being asked to do: have her first child alone,

and maybe never see her husband again.

Twenty-four years later at another airport, Margaret Ann and I said goodbye to the son she had been expecting when I left for Vietnam. It was January 1991, and Chris was now a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. The United States was preparing for the Gulf War. Margaret Ann did not know if she was sending another young man off to battle. I'm sure if wives and mothers had the final vote, there would be no more wars.

In 1967, my brother, brother-in-law, and I went to Vietnam. The day we left to enter the Marine Corps, we held devotions around the breakfast table with my mother. She read Psalm 91, which begins, "He who dwells in the shelter of the most high will rest in the shadow of the almighty." When Mom got to, "A thousand may fall at your side, and 10,000 at your right hand ...," she burst into tears. My brother and I asked her to stop. I told her, "Mom, that's depressing. Besides, you really look awful when you cry."

For the next 26 months, my mother prayed and waited. My brother and brother-in-law earned three purple hearts between them, and, thank God, we all returned home whole. I hugged my mother on the back porch. "Is it OK to cry now?" she asked.

We stood in the same house three decades later when my father died. My mother contained her emotion. Even after losing the man she loved for 60 years, she was trying to be strong for the sake of her middle-aged children.

Mom was accustomed to getting up each morning at 6 so she could pray for her six children and 22 grandchildren before they started their day. When my dad died, she got up two hours earlier so she could have her cry alone before she prayed for us. She said she wouldn't cry in front of us because she didn't want to put her grief on us. I asked her why she did that. She told me, "That's what moms do."

She is my hero.

Our daughter has carried on the legacy of strength. She has worked in some tough places: an orphanage in the city of Cluj, Romania, and an inner-city school in Chicago. I see the same strength in my female colleagues at World Vision who have risked their lives and health serving in places torn by civil unrest and war.

These images are among the things that convince me that women suffer most, give up the most, sacrifice the most when nations or groups go to war. As widows, mothers, and aid workers, they are left to pick up the pieces. They pay the price for wars chosen by men who think they know what is worth dying for. Might we not receive some insight and wisdom by asking wives and mothers what's worth living for. ☉

Holding families together requires great determination and strength, particularly for women in difficult situations.

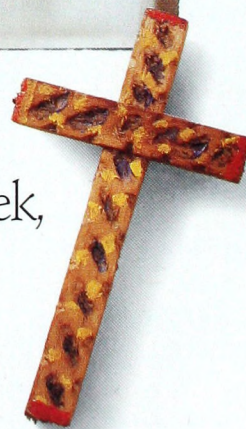
World Vision President Robert Seiple meets the widowed Baek Sim and two of her six children, Pheng Phirun, 9, (left) and Pheng Ngen, 10, outside their one-room home in Tuol Taria village, Cambodia.





First we helped her
through a day, then a week,
then a month.

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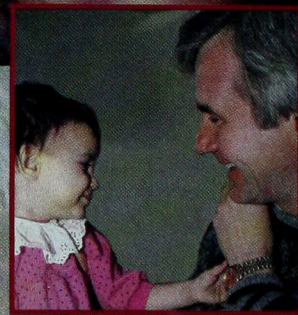

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