

# WorldVision

SPRING 2007

**AFGHAN WOMEN'S  
COURAGE** | Page 12

**AIDS IMPACTS INDIA'S  
GIRLS** | Page 20

**THE GRIM REALITY FOR GIRLS**  
CURSED BY GENDER, CAST OFF BY CULTURE



# open your heart to another child

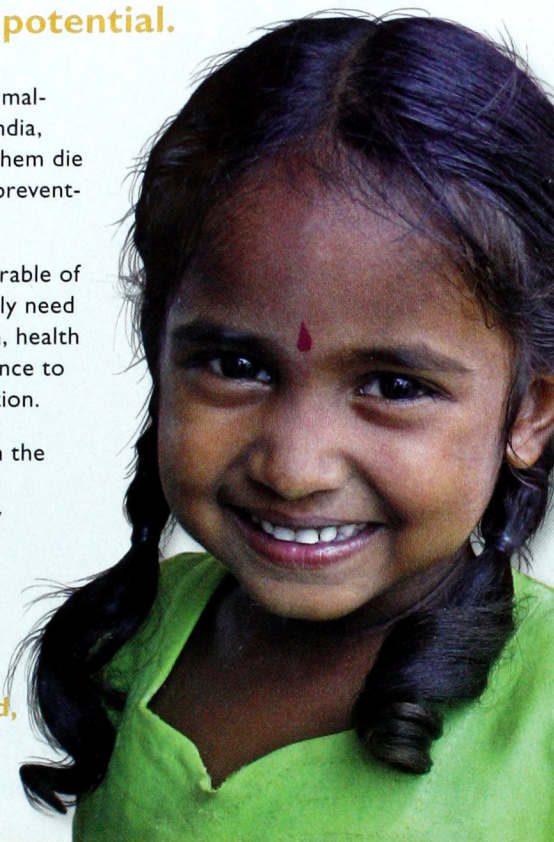
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their God-given potential.

One in three of the world's malnourished children lives in India, and more than 2 million of them die each year from hunger and preventable diseases.

Children are the most vulnerable of India's poor. They desperately need clean water, better nutrition, health care, education, and the chance to experience God's love in action.

You can make a difference in the life of one of these hurting children by sponsoring a boy or girl today!

Sponsor one more child,  
change one more life.  
Each is precious.



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Please send me information and the photo of a child in India who needs my help.

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Date

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World Vision will not rent, sell, or share your personal information with third parties.

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to begin your sponsorship right now!

\*Our promise to you: World Vision reviews the monthly sponsorship commitment on an ongoing basis to maintain the quality of its programs and respond to the needs of the families and communities it serves. As a participant in World Vision's Automatic Giving Plan, you will receive 30 days' advance written notice of any rate changes and will have the option to decline.

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**World Vision**

Building a better world for children

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70147\_1106

**WorldVision**

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3

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## » ON THE COVER

**It's back to school for girls in Afghanistan thanks to an innovative World Vision program. Photograph by Mary Kate MacIsaac.**

**World Vision**, a free quarterly publication, affirms people responding to God's call to care for the poor by providing information, inspiration, and opportunities for action, linking them with children and families in nearly 100 countries where World Vision ministers. In an effort to be careful stewards of our resources, this publication costs less than 35 cents a copy to print and mail.

We welcome your comments and/or address changes. Send them to: The Editor, *World Vision* magazine, P.O. Box 9716, Federal Way, WA 98003-9716 or e-mail us: [wvmagazine@worldvision.org](mailto:wvmagazine@worldvision.org)

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# FEATURES

12

**On the Cover:**

## **AFGHANISTAN: BATTLE-SCARRED COURAGE**

Women and girls hold the key to a war-torn country's survival.

20

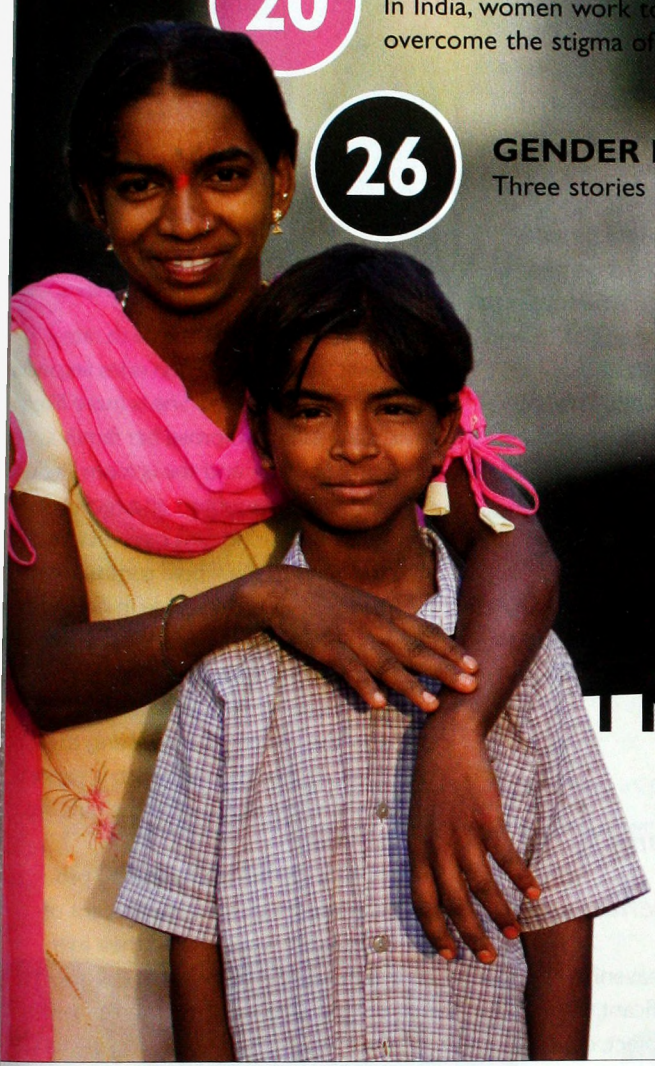
## **AGAINST ALL ODDS**

In India, women work to overcome the stigma of AIDS.

26

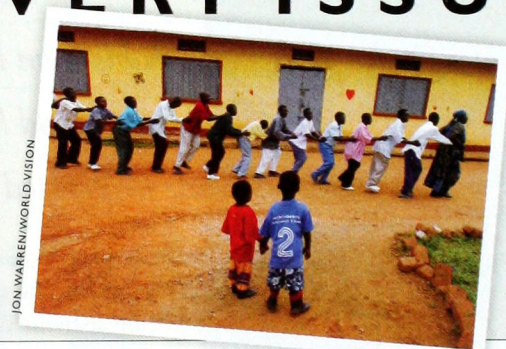
## **GENDER MATTERS**

Three stories of girls' suffering.



MARY KATE MACISAAC/WORLD VISION

## IN EVERY ISSUE



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

4

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Thank heaven for little girls? Much of the world doesn't.

5

### **FRONTLINES**

Food transforms a Kenyan girl; a child sponsor values girls; an Olympic snowboarder's sweet fundraiser; and more.

28

### **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

A former sponsored child fights for women's rights in Ecuador.

30

### **INSPIRATION**

Where are the best and worst places in the world to be a mother?

31

### **RETROSPECT**

Healing and fun for children in Northern Uganda.



## 'Thank Heaven for Little Girls' >>

The lyrics to Maurice Chevalier's most enduring song describe an idyllic view of little girls and the women they become. There is much in our art and literature that romanticizes girls and women and the role they play in our culture. But sadly, in our world today, being female often means being sentenced to a life of poverty, abuse, exploitation, and deprivation.

Compared to her male counterpart, a girl growing up in the developing world is more likely to die before her fifth birthday and less likely to go to school. She is less likely to receive adequate food or health care, less likely to receive economic opportunities, more likely to be forced to marry before the age of 16, and more likely to be the victim of sexual and domestic abuse.

Girls are forced to stay home from school to work. In fact, two-thirds of the nearly 800 million illiterate people in the world are women. Only one in 10 women in Niger can read. Five hundred thousand women die every day from childbirth complications—that's one woman every minute. Girl babies are even killed in countries where males are considered more valuable.

Women are denied property rights and inheritance in many countries. Worldwide, women own only 1 percent of the world's property. They work two-thirds of all the world's labor hours but earn just 10 percent of the world's wages.

*So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. —Genesis 1:27*

Being female, in much of our world, is not "heavenly."

And yet, in my opinion, the single-most significant thing that can be done to "cure" extreme poverty is this: protect, educate, and nurture girls and women and provide them with equal rights and opportunities—educationally, economically, and socially. According to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "No tool for development is more effective than the empowerment of women."

This one thing can do more to address extreme poverty than food, shelter, health care, economic development, or increased foreign assistance.

There is a saying in Ghana: "If you educate a man, you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation." When a girl is educated, her income potential increases, maternal and infant mortality is reduced, her children are more



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

**Rich Stearns in Gbum Gbum, Ghana.**

likely to be immunized, the birth rate decreases, and HIV infection rates (especially in Africa) are lowered. She is more likely to acquire skills to improve her family's economic stability, and she is more likely to ensure that her daughters also receive an education. Educating girls pays dividend after dividend to the whole community.

This year I visited a village in northern Ghana called Gbum Gbum. Women and girls once had to walk five hours each day to fetch water. World Vision drilled a well, and now the women are investing their time making shea butter, which is exported to the United States. And the girls are now in school.

In World Vision's microlending programs around the world, 66 percent of loan clients are women, and their loan repayment rate is 98 percent. A woman I met several years ago in Armenia started with one sewing machine. Now she has 40 employees (all women) and exports tailored suits throughout Eastern Europe. She started with a \$300 loan from World Vision.

In this issue you will learn much more about the challenges that girls and women face. But you will also see that the key to overcoming poverty lies in the hands and hearts of women and girls. ■



Compiled by James Addis

## FOOD Brings Back Fun

Dahabo has always been enthusiastic and outgoing. But when a drought

gift planning

## Are you leaving your legacy to chance?

Creating or updating your estate plan is one of the most important things you'll ever do.

### A plan protects you

An estate plan ensures your loved ones—and the causes you care about—will be provided for as you wish after your lifetime. Without one, you forfeit the right to determine who will benefit from the assets you've worked so hard to build. That's why everyone needs an estate plan. No estate is too small!

### You can create a tradition of caring

Passing along your values can be just as satisfying as providing for your loved ones. The legacy of generosity you foster now can change children's lives for generations.

(over, please)

### FREE Legacy Planner!

Complete the card between pages 28 and 29 to request your copy of our Legacy Planner—a FREE resource for faithful friends like you. Or make your request at [worldvision.org/legacyplanner](http://worldvision.org/legacyplanner).

The plans of the righteous are just . . .  
the house of the righteous stands firm.

PROVERBS 12:5, 7





# FROM THE PRESIDENT

## 'Thank Heaven for Little Girls' >>

The lyrics to Maurice Chevalier's most enduring song describe the plight of little girls who have become

stigmatized girls and, sadly, in our century, are often sentenced to a

Compare the lives of girls in developing and less developed countries, more likely to have adequate food and opportunities, more likely to

Girls are 50 percent of the world's population. On average, one out of every thousand women in developing countries will die during pregnancy or childbirth.

Women in developing countries earn just 10 percent of what men earn.

*So God created man  
in the image  
of male and female*

Being female is a disadvantage. And yet, much can be done to protect and nurture girls and provide them with education and opportunities. According to the United Nations, "Education is the key to development."

This one simple act—providing food, shelter, and foreign assistance—can make a difference.

There is a saying: "It takes a village to educate a child, a school to educate a nation." World Vision's maternal and child health programs



### Easy ways to continue your impact

We are deeply grateful for all you've done to turn despair into hope for children in need. You've made a lasting, life-changing impact!

Did you know there are many ways you can help make a difference like this for even more children and families beyond your lifetime? For example, depending on your unique goals and needs, you could name World Vision:

- In your **will or trust**
- As a beneficiary of your **retirement assets**
- As a beneficiary of your **life insurance policy**

For details, request World Vision's *Legacy Planner* today using the card between pages 28 and 29 or by visiting us online at [worldvision.org/legacyplanner](http://worldvision.org/legacyplanner). This FREE guide is filled with valuable insights you can use in creating or updating your estate plan.

### Let us know of your choice

When you include World Vision in your estate plans, please let us know. You'll allow us to thank you now *and* help us plan more effectively to meet the needs of children and families in years to come.

To speak with a gift planning representative today, please contact us at **1.866.332.4453** or [giftplanning@worldvision.org](mailto:giftplanning@worldvision.org).

Complete the card between pages 28 and 29 or visit [worldvision.org/legacyplanner](http://worldvision.org/legacyplanner) today to receive your FREE copy of World Vision's Legacy Planner.

**World Vision®**

*Building a better world for children*

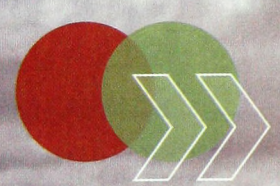
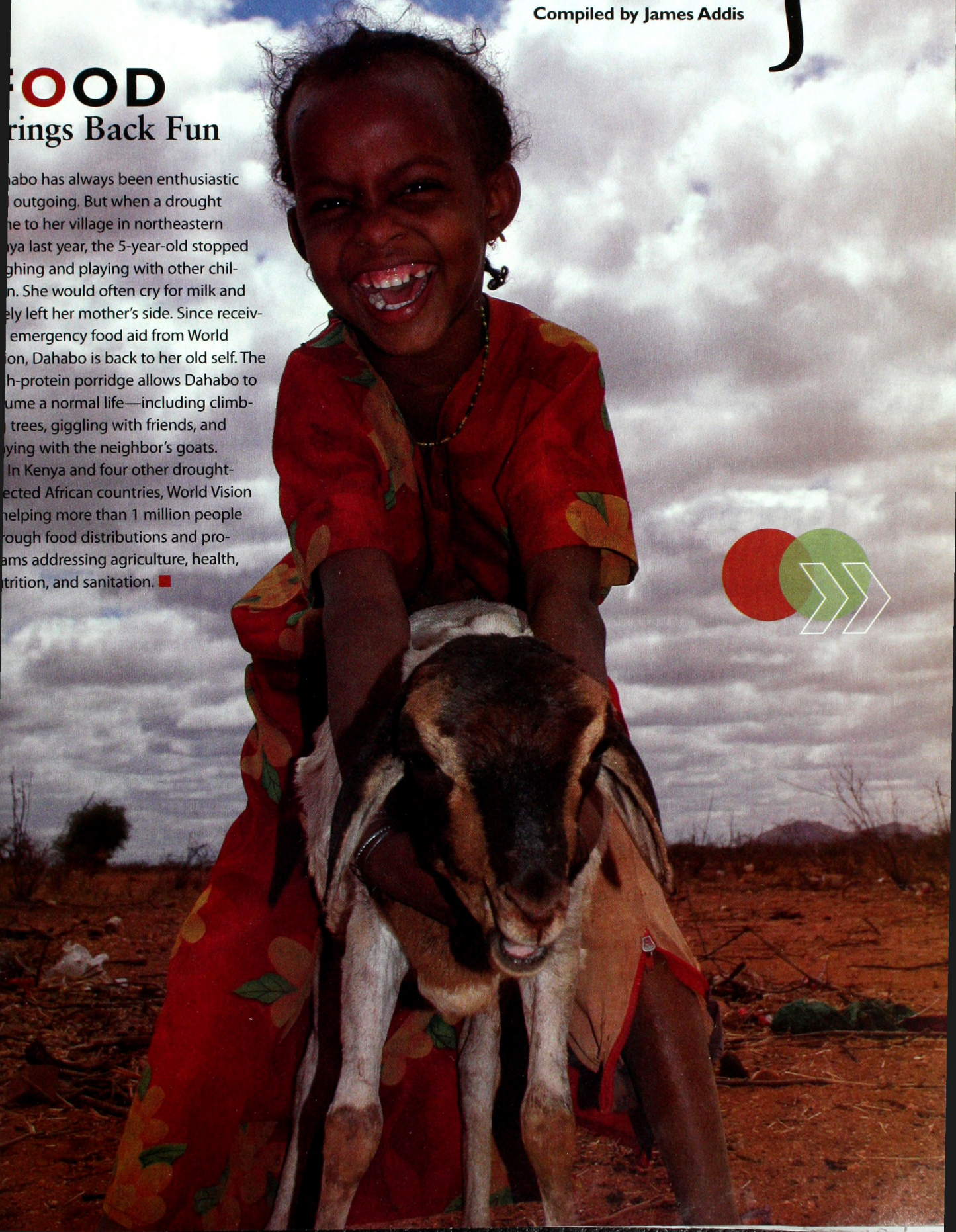
*Nothing contained herein is intended to provide legal advice or services. It is recommended that you consult with independent legal and tax professionals to address your individual needs.*



Compiled by James Addis

## FOOD Brings Back Fun

Dahabo has always been enthusiastic and outgoing. But when a drought hit her village in northeastern Kenya last year, the 5-year-old stopped laughing and playing with other children. She would often cry for milk and huddle close to her mother's side. Since receiving emergency food aid from World Vision, Dahabo is back to her old self. The high-protein porridge allows Dahabo to resume a normal life—including climbing trees, giggling with friends, and playing with the neighbor's goats. In Kenya and four other drought-affected African countries, World Vision is helping more than 1 million people through food distributions and programs addressing agriculture, health, nutrition, and sanitation. ■







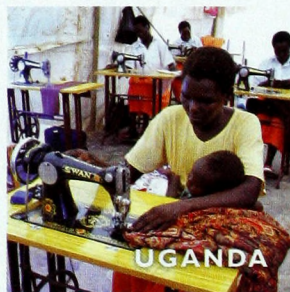
KENYA

JOHN KISHIKI/WORLD VISION

## WORLD WATCH

### KENYA | GIRLS REJECT "CIRCUMCISION" »

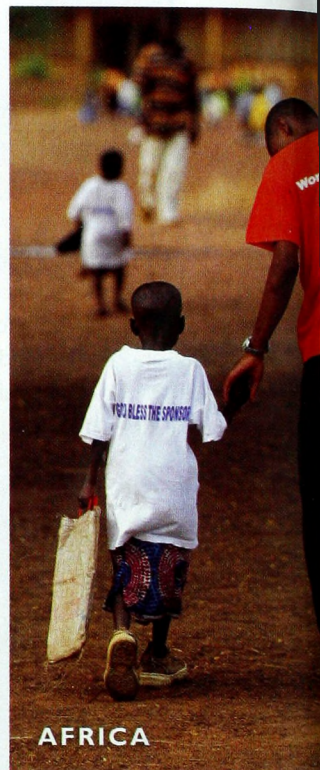
About 150 Maasai girls publicly declared their opposition to "female circumcision," also known as female genital mutilation (FGM), during an alternate rite-of-passage ceremony organized by World Vision's Maasai Anti-FGM project. Member of Parliament Linah Kilimo, who attended, said the cultural practice was a "monster" that destroyed opportunities for girls. The procedure can cause infertility and death.



UGANDA

JOHN WARENI/WORLD VISION

**UGANDA | FREED SEX SLAVES LEARN SKILLS »** Teenage mothers forced into sexual slavery by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are getting vocational training at World Vision's Children of War Rehabilitation Center. More than 30 graduated in tailoring and baking last year and about 100 more are completing courses. Center staff say mothers face major hurdles in returning to society after escaping the LRA.



AFRICA



CAMBODIA



**MOZAMBIQUE | CHILDREN GRILL OFFICIALS** » Youngsters grilled government officials during a "Children's Parliament" convened by World Vision and other child-focused organizations. During a lively question time, delegates demanded to know how the government would help children who look after bedridden parents who are dying of AIDS.

**AFRICA | AIDS BURDENS** » A survey of World Vision staff members in sub-Saharan Africa reveals that, on average, each has more than eight orphans in their extended family. Most workers are providing direct support to at least one orphan and sometimes as many as seven. HIV and AIDS director Martha Newsome said AIDS is not just "out there in the community" but it personally affects staff every day.

**EL SALVADOR | PASTORS ACT ON AIDS** » About 200 pastors have undertaken World Vision's training to help their churches respond to the challenges posed by AIDS. It's hoped pastors will use the training to expand their ministries to better assist people trying to live with AIDS and their families. An estimated four people are infected with AIDS every day in El Salvador.

**CAMBODIA | STOPPING SEX PREDATORS** » A new project to reduce sexual exploitation of children has been launched by World Vision and Save the Children. The project, which will operate in several provinces, will teach children how to protect themselves and educate community leaders in how to safeguard children from predators.

**PAKISTAN | HEROIC TEENS BACK IN CLASS** » Teenagers who cleared debris and dug out friends and neighbors following the devastating earthquake in northern Pakistan have been saved from permanent school expulsion. Authorities recommended expulsion after the teens displayed aggressive behavior and poor academic performance—symptoms of stress induced by the October 2005 quake. More than 100 teens were readmitted to school after taking World Vision-sponsored catch-up classes. ■



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

**FASTFACT** » Each year, more than 4 million newborns die in their first month—equivalent to the number of babies born in the United States annually.

Source: Save the Children

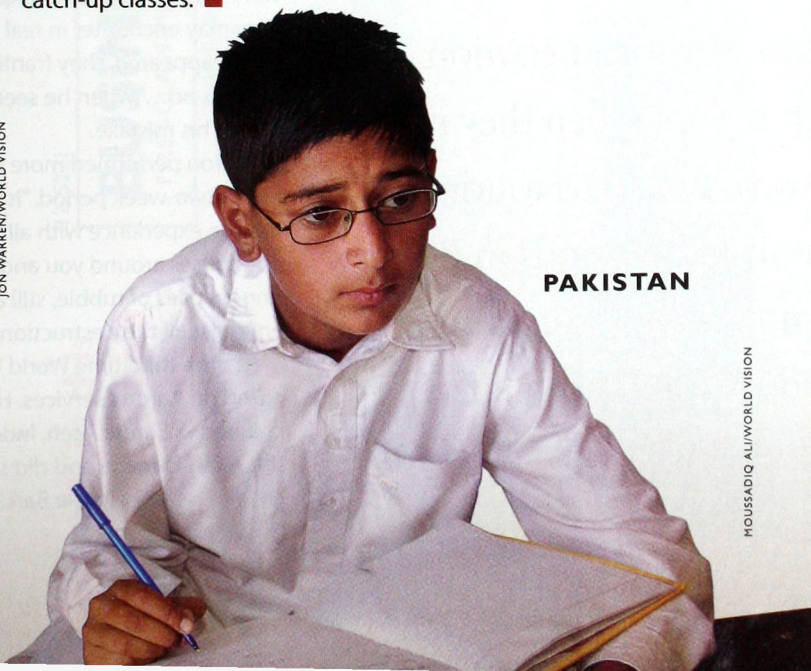
## 12 LEADING WOMEN

**Current female heads of state:**

- BANGLADESH** » Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister
- CHILE** » Michelle Bachelet, President
- FINLAND** » Tarja K. Halonen, President
- GERMANY** » Angela Merkel, Chancellor
- IRELAND** » Mary McAleese, President
- JAMAICA** » Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister
- LATVIA** » Varia Vike-Freiberga, President
- LIBERIA** » Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President
- MOZAMBIQUE** » Luisa Diogo, Prime Minister
- NEW ZEALAND** » Helen Clark, Prime Minister
- PHILIPPINES** » Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President
- SOUTH KOREA** » Han Myeong Sook, Prime Minister



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



**PAKISTAN**

MOUSSADIQ ALI/WORLD VISION





**FASTFACT** » Up to  
**1 million cluster bomblets**  
**remain unexploded in southern**  
**Lebanon.** Source: United Nations

World Vision employed Elvo—aka New Zealand actor Aaron Ward—to educate children to stay away from unexploded ordnance left behind by the recent conflict.

It's estimated that more than 40 percent of the bombs dropped on Lebanon in the latter days of the war failed to explode and remain a lethal menace to curious children.

Happy-go-lucky Elvo demonstrated just how lethal by coming across a dummy bomb as part of his act. Children were appalled when he foolishly picked up the strange object and appeared to get his arm blown off. Then children were shown pictures of explosive devices they may encounter in real life. When Elvo reappeared, they frantically shouted "No, no, no..." when he seemed about to repeat his mistake.

Aaron performed more than 20 shows over a two-week period. "It was a pretty intense experience with all these bombed-out houses around you and children sitting on piles of rubble, still able to laugh amongst all the destruction," he said.

It's the third time World Vision has called on Aaron's services. He entertained children in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the Asian tsunami and did similar mine-awareness work in the Balkans following the war in Kosovo. ■

## Serious Fun

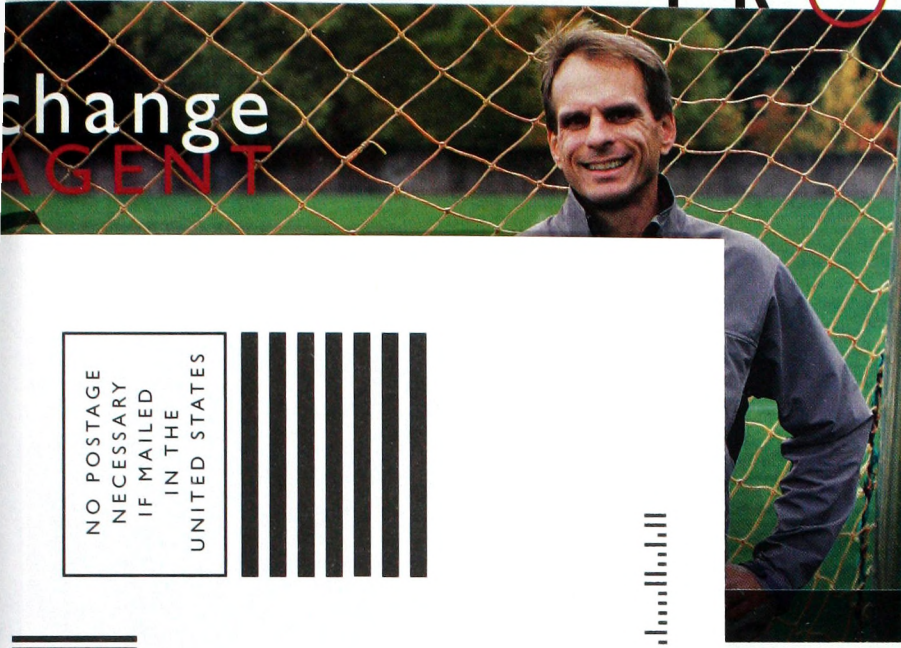
*A clown helps Lebanese children avoid unexploded bombs.*

Children from war-torn Lebanon shouted with delight when they met Elvo the Clown, who was touring bombed-out neighborhoods in Beirut and southern parts of the country.

But behind the fun and hilarity Elvo generated, there was a serious purpose.

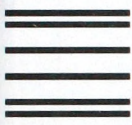


change  
AGENT



MIKE NICHOLS/WORLD VISION

**Name:** Ted Mittelstaedt, 45  
**Home:** Bellevue, Wash.  
**Occupation:** Community Services Supervisor  
**Program:** Get a Kick Out of Sharing  
**Buzz:** Ted used his position in the Bellevue Parks and Recreation department to coordinate the collection of more than 5,000 soccer balls from around Washington state. The new and lightly used soccer balls will be sent overseas to children who otherwise have to improvise with balls made out of plastic bags and string. ■



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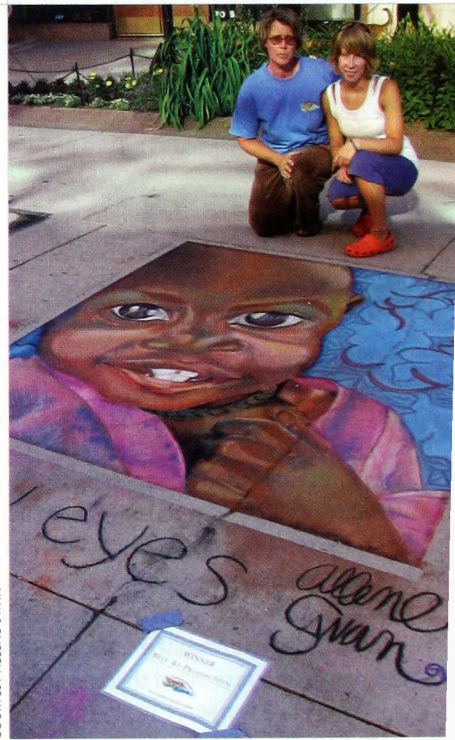
**Your gift in this envelope can help a child in crisis. See details on the insert between pages 24 and 25.**

OR  
 s now 7. Dora  
 ves a letter from  
 sored girls.  
 r-old Priyanka  
 ad up on the  
 r family has 10

**INA HALL,**  
 Y, PENN.



JEFF RAYMOND/GENESIS PHOTOS



COURTESY ALLENE SWAN

➤ **EYES OPEN HEARTS**  
 Allene Swan drew inspiration for a chalk drawing from a photo in *World Vision* magazine. Her art, entitled "Hungry Eyes," won honors in the Utah Foster Care Foundation's Chalk Art Festival. "I've always had a heart for Africa," says Allene (pictured above with her mother, Karen), explaining why she chose to reproduce the photo. ■





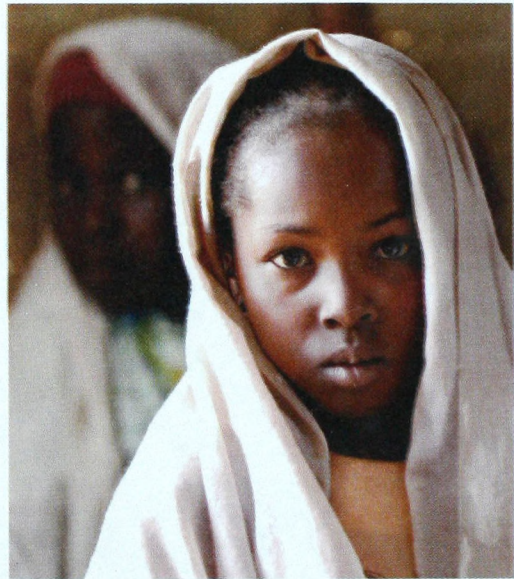
## Serious Fun

*A clown helps Lebanese children cope with the aftermath of unexploded bombs.*

Children from war-torn Lebanon shouted with delight when they met Elvo the Clown, who was performing in a bombed-out neighborhood in the north and southern parts of the country.

But behind the fun and laughter that Elvo generated, there was a serious purpose.

World Vision



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



CORINA IORDANESCU/WORLD VISION



ALBERT YU/WORLD VISION

**You** can help  
**keep girls safe,**  
**in school—**  
**their dreams intact.**

See the insert between  
**pages 24 and 25** for details.



## change AGENT

As a soccer parent, it sends a strong message to our participants that we have it very good. This is a painless way to give back to many people around the world."  
—Ted Mittelstaedt



MIKE NICHOLS/WORLD VISION

For more ways to change your world, visit [www.worldvision.org/change](http://www.worldvision.org/change).

**Name:** Ted Mittelstaedt, 45  
**Home:** Bellevue, Wash.  
**Occupation:** Community Services Supervisor  
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## why I love BEING A CHILD SPONSOR

In March of 2005, I chose to sponsor Dora from Guatemala, who is now 7. Dora has written to say that she becomes very excited when she receives a letter from me. It's the same for me whenever I receive a letter from one of my sponsored girls.

In February 2006, I decided to increase my "family" and I chose 12-year-old Priyanka from India. Someone asked why I chose another girl instead of a boy. I read up on the country profiles and saw the differences between boys and girls. If a poor family has 10 kids and two of them are boys, those two boys are the only ones who go to school and get jobs. The girls are seen as nothing more than mothers or housewives; their sole job is producing babies. Through child sponsorship, I can put them through school and give them a chance at accomplishing their dreams.

In June I decided to sponsor 9-year-old Rose in Kenya. I'm constantly telling my friends, family, and co-workers about my "kids." I think of them as my own kids and see them as part of my family. Their love for me has been such a blessing on my own life, not to mention what I'm able to do for them.

Some might say they can't afford to sponsor a child. I see things in a different way. I can't afford not to. I feel compelled to share my wealth with those who need it most. ■

**LEEANNA HALL,  
MUNCY, PENN.**



JEFF RAYMOND/GENESIS PHOTOS



COURTESY ALLENE SWAN

### ▲ EYES OPEN HEARTS

Allene Swan drew inspiration for a chalk drawing from a photo in *World Vision* magazine. Her art, entitled "Hungry Eyes," won honors in the Utah Foster Care Foundation's Chalk Art Festival. "I've always had a heart for Africa," says Allene (pictured above with her mother, Karen), explaining why she chose to reproduce the photo. ■

### ▶ TELL US YOUR STORY

Why do you love being a child sponsor? Write the editors at [wvmagazine@worldvision.org](mailto:wvmagazine@worldvision.org).





**Barbra Kim  
and her mother,  
Kyung Ja.**

# Truant's Transformation

When Beverly Hills High School student Barbra Kim, 17, decided to ditch school in favor of having a fun day out with friends, it ended up changing her life. Things started to go awry when Barbra's mom, Kyung Ja, found out

about the escapade, which resulted in a full-blown parent-teenager row. At one point Barbra yelled, "God, Mom, did you never have a day when you just could not take it anymore?"

They proved heartbreaking words in a way Barbra could never have anticipated. Kyung Ja sat her daughter down and told Barbra for the first time about her own childhood—about life as an orphan in South Korea during the aftermath of the Korean War.

World Vision funded the orphanages Kyung Ja attended, but there was no spare cash for luxuries. Kyung Ja recalled children at school laughing at her because she wore the same clothes every day.

The teasing got so bad that Kyung Ja left school and took up World Vision's offer of vocational training in textile design. By the time she reached Barbra's age, she was hard at work in a textile factory—missing out on the high school education she longed for.

Today, Kyung Ja remains intensely grateful to World Vision for supporting her during the most painful period of her life, but she told Barbra she wanted things to be different for her daughter.

"For the first time," says Barbra, "I realized how much mom was sacrificing for me—so that I did not have to go through the things she went through."

Barbra wept when she heard her mother's story, but the conversation did not simply end with a tearful apology. Barbra promised her mother she would visit Korea and spend time working in the orphanages where her mother grew up. In 2005, Barbra visited Oh Soon Zul orphanage, spending a month working with babies and toddlers. Last year

she spent the summer at the Shin Mang Ae Yuk orphanage, teaching older orphans how to speak English. Due to economic development in Korea, the

orphanages are now primarily funded by the government, but World Vision still provides some support.

Meanwhile, to acknowledge the role World Vision played in helping her mom during the difficult postwar period, Barbra established a World Vision club at her high school, which sponsors children in Africa and Asia. Barbra also took on the role of Child Ambassador for World Vision, to seek more sponsors for children around the world.

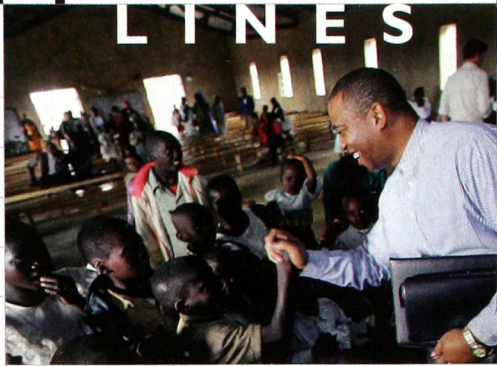
Barbra says her mom's story completely changed her outlook on life. Now they are best friends and never fight. "Many of my school friends are really envious of the close relationship I can have with my mother." ■

## » FOR MORE INFORMATION

on the **Child Ambassador program**, visit [www.worldvision.org/change](http://www.worldvision.org/change).



**PRAYER POINT** » Give thanks to God. More than a million people who might have died of AIDS are living healthy lives after receiving anti-retroviral medicines. Funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has dramatically improved access to the drugs.



KARIE HAMILTON/WORLD VISION

# heart OF GOLD

Winning the Olympic gold medal in the women's half-pipe last year as only partial fulfillment of a dream for snowboarder Hannah Teter.

The Vermont athlete's other goal is to make a difference in a hurting world.

"If you go into something with greedy intentions, then the results often reflect that. I would love to use the opportunity of doing well in my sport to help out in the world and try to make positive changes," she says.

So when a Vermont syrup manufacturer wanted to issue a special bottle of maple syrup to celebrate Hannah's win, Hannah was eager that profits go to World Vision to support its work caring for orphaned and

vulnerable children, particularly in Africa.

She also hopes to donate earnings from future competitions to charity.

"Now I know doing well will not just mean doing well for me. Doing well will mean feeding hungry families," she says.

Hannah says she first became aware of World Vision because her family sponsored a child for many years. She appreciates the organization's broad-spectrum approach to countering poverty. ■

» **TO TRY A BOTTLE** of Hannah's Gold, go to [www.hannahsgold.com](http://www.hannahsgold.com).

**Hannah on the half-pipe at the 2004 Winter Olympics.**



OLIVIER MAIRE/EPICORBIIS

## LOOKING FOR COURAGEOUS CHURCHES

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## what's on

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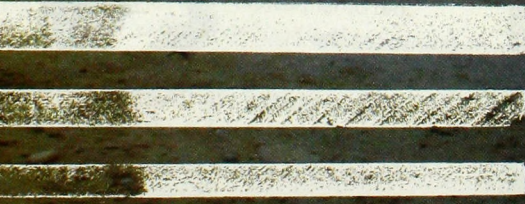
NIGEL MARSH/WORLD VISION





*Afghanistan*

**BATTLE-SCARRED**

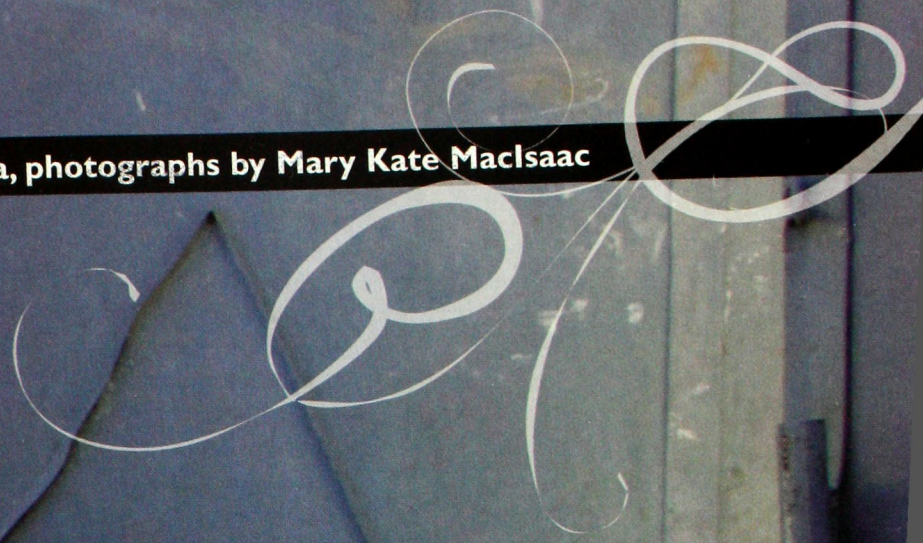


**COURAGE**

Back in school and learning new skills, women and girls are making strides to



by Kari Costanza, photographs by Mary Kate MacIsaac



ress.



# A

AFTER BREAKFAST ONE MORNING, Sara decided she couldn't take it anymore. She doused herself with gasoline and lit herself on fire. With the strike of a match, Sara became one of hundreds of women who decided last year that self-immolation was preferable to life in western Afghanistan.

Unlike most of these women, Sara survived. Her mother got her to the hospital in the city of Herat where doctors, skilled in caring for burned women or anaesthetizing their last painful days, treated Sara's wounds and prepared her body—burned from torso to thumb tips—for a skin graft.

Sara's husband visited the burn unit. "What was the matter?" he asked. When Sara told him that she couldn't bear the fighting—all the bitter arguments with her mother-in-law—he reminded her that this was just part of life in Afghanistan. But he also assured his young wife that he would stay by her side during her treatment and pay her hospital bills.

Sara's lot is typical of an Afghan woman. She doesn't know how old she is (she guesses 18) or when she was married—maybe at 12. She has a 3-year-old son. She lives with an extended family of 20—none of whom have steady work. Sara has never been to school. She rarely leaves home.

## FIVE YEARS AFTER 9/11

It has been more than five years since U.S.-led forces routed the Taliban in their hunt for Osama bin Laden after Sept. 11. Afghanistan has a president, Hamid Karzai, elected in 2004, a National Assembly, and a Supreme Court. Yet democracy has not erased the scars left by years of drought, civil war, and the Soviet occupation—a decade-long bloodbath that killed more than 1 million Afghans and sent millions of others fleeing.

Today, more than half of Afghanistan's 30 million people live in poverty. Electricity, sanitation, and clean water are rare. Unemployment is high. Professionals such as doctors and teachers barely eke out a living, earning just \$50 a month.

The misery is compounded for women. Fifty-seven percent of girls are married before the legal age of 16. Nine of every 10 women cannot read or write. The death rate for women in childbirth is the third-worst in the world, behind Sierra Leone and Angola. Life expectancy for a woman in Afghanistan is 43 years.

Amid this suffering, World Vision is committed to bringing hope to families in Afghanistan, including improving life for women and girls. Relief work initiated five years ago has progressed into development projects aimed at restoring families through health, nutrition, clean water, agriculture—and maybe the most life-changing of all—education.

## EDUCATING NAJIBA

In Qala-i-Naw, 100 miles northeast of Herat, the morning rush to Naswan Girls School is underway. Birds sing and motorbikes scatter the sunlight with dust as hundreds of girls—looking like miniature women in tunics, slacks, and head scarves—bounce down the road, their bookbags or satchels slung over their shoulders. Burka-clad mothers accompany the little ones, their high-heeled sandals clicking along the rocky road. Such shoes, forbidden during the Taliban years because the sound was considered attractive to men, are now back in vogue.

An armed soldier stands outside the school, his Russian-made Kalashnikov rifle loaded. "The target is the school," says Qasim Wahdat, a World Vision Qala-i-Naw manager. The school has been guarded since last March, when someone fired a rocket



Early marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, high maternal and infant death rates, and the lack of education and job opportunities contribute to a bleak life beneath the burka. But for school-age girls (facing page), there's hope.









A recent Oxfam report finds that just one in 20 Afghan girls goes to secondary school.



Special Issue!



# Hope for Girls and Women

Gift Catalog

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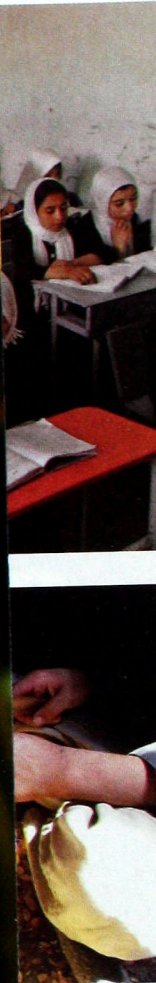
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# Your gift can transform lives.

A girl or woman in a developing country faces overwhelming barriers to experiencing the fullness of life that God intends. She may be sexually exploited or denied an education. She may receive poor quality health care. She may be widowed by AIDS and unable to provide for her children. **Here's a simple way you can help.**

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that just  
goes to





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My mother sold me to the brothel owner [to] who was required to serve eight to 12 "clients" and brought to a World Vision-supported shelter for assistance such as medical care, nutritious food, vocational training, compassionate counseling, and integration into a loving family environment. My innocence has been damaged through sexual ex-

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A recent  
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goes to



from a nearby mountain, hitting an empty classroom.

Still, Qala-i-Naw is considered a safe zone in Afghanistan, making it ripe for change. Thousands of girls attend Naswan Girls School, with their parents' blessing. Every few months, their mothers and fathers line up outside school with wheelbarrows ready to cart home oil, rice, lentils, and school stationery. The food supplements are provided as part of World Vision's Food for Education program, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Najiba, 13, started at the girls school after the Taliban fell. "My father and mother told me I must go to school," she says. "They said illiteracy is bad."

On this day, one of the schools' 77 instructors is absent. So Najiba, who wants to be a teacher, fills in, reviewing the lesson. The topic today is roses. "Roses come up in the spring," she reads aloud, demonstrating extraordinary poise for a teen. She asks for a volunteer to practice writing on the chalkboard. Crammed into 30 metal desks in the small classroom, the girls must scramble over their desktops to reach the chalkboard.

Najiba lives in Qala-i-Naw with her parents, a sister, and six brothers. Her father is unemployed. After school, she and her mother and sister use small hammers to break open pistachio shells. The country exports \$130 million in pistachios every year. They are shelled, one by one, in homes across Afghanistan by women and children. Najiba knows that an education is all that separates her from a lifetime of pistachios. Her family knows it, too.

"My family told me, 'Please go to school. World Vision gives you things. If not—you'll have to go back to breaking pistachios.' If there wasn't anything from World Vision, I would have to stay home," says Najiba.

## FARISHTA'S PRINCIPLES

Naswan Girls School's principal, Farishta Mahmoud Yawar, 27, held classes during the Taliban era. "Families sent their children to my home—boys and girls. It was all secret." Farishta comes from a family of teachers. Together, they created a school that covered all subjects, from math to geography. They believed that education could lift the veil of ignorance that held their country hostage.

"During the 30 years of war, there were two kinds of people—literate and illiterate," she says. "[The illiterate] became thieves and robbers. They have nothing else to do. It's education that makes the difference. If people are educated, they can think about the progress of their country. They can decide right from wrong."

A visionary, Farishta believes that education breeds stability. "With peace comes security," she says. "When there is peace, people can learn. They can pass this knowledge on to their children."

When World Vision began the Food for Education program in Qala-i-Naw, attendance skyrocketed from about 500 to 2,700. Farishta says that number will plummet if the program ends. With so many hungry, food has served as a powerful incentive to get girls to school. "If World Vision stops funding, poor families will marry off their young girls to get an income," she says. "Other girls will become pistachio breakers. Enrollment will drop."

World Vision is dedicated to educating both girls and boys in Afghanistan through programs that build schools, train teachers, and provide backpacks and school clothes. There is a school for boys next to Naswan Girls School that also benefits from the Food for Education program.

In addition, World Vision funds literacy classes for women who never learned to read, write, or do math. Mothers such as Bibihoor, who married at 12 (and her daughter



**Najiba (top) credits World Vision's Food for Education program for keeping her in school instead of shelling pistachios (above) for a living. Afghan families earn less than a dollar a day by breaking pistachios.**



As part of their training, midwives care for premature infants in the World Vision-supported neonatal unit in Herat—the first in western Afghanistan. The midwives live and study in a new dormitory. Midwife-in-training Zahara (below, at left) looks forward to returning to her village to use her new skills.



did the same), are now able to see their role in a brighter future. Bibihood wants the government to put an end to forced early marriages and polygamy. She dreams of being part of the process.

“I want to work hard for my people and give to needy people,” says Bibihood. “I will make roads. People need water, electricity, hospitals, clinics, and schools.”

While literacy classes are empowering a lost generation of Afghanistan’s women, World Vision goes a step farther by training midwives—tackling two critical issues: women’s lack of health care and poor social status.

## CREATING JOBS AND JOY

“You should have come earlier,” says Yalda, looking through Fatima’s white health card that details her monthly checkups. “You should take your folic acid regularly.” She pulls out a blood pressure cuff to take Fatima’s pressure, continuing to counsel the pregnant 17-year-old whose burka gently bulges around her midsection.

Yalda is a World Vision-trained midwife in Dinau village, outside Herat. She’s been on the job for just five months, but exudes the confidence of a seasoned health-care professional.

In contrast, Fatima’s young face is both frightened and shy. Behind her stands Hagar, 35, the first wife in this family. Hagar brought Fatima, the second wife, to the clinic specifically to see Yalda. Her husband—their husband—waits outside.

A mother of eight and a traditional birth attendant, Hagar knows the importance of prenatal care. She wants Yalda’s expertise for Fatima and her unborn child. “I wanted her heart checked and I wanted her to be examined,” says Hagar. “This is so important. If we don’t have midwives, the mother could die.”

Yalda is the daughter of educated Afghans. But by all rights, she shouldn’t be here, working outside her home without a burka. Her husband is from Kandahar, the present-day scene of fierce fighting between the Taliban and NATO coalition forces in southern Afghanistan. Six years ago, when she was first married, she was a virtual prisoner there, kept at home by her husband’s family.

“I couldn’t go outside. I couldn’t go shopping; I couldn’t go to the bazaar,” she says. “I explained to my husband that we should move. That life was too difficult.”

She credits her persistence (“I worked hard on him”) and her husband’s temperament (“He has an enlightened mind”) with her success in persuading him to move to Herat. She was accepted into law school, but when she saw alarming reports of women dying in childbirth, she dropped law and enrolled in World Vision’s midwifery program.

## WOMEN STAND IN THE GAP

Since 2004, 82 midwives have graduated from World Vision’s Midwifery Training Program and are at work throughout western Afghanistan. Another 60 students are now in training. Dr. Ghulam Ahmed Hanifi, 40, directs the midwife program. At first, he says, it was difficult to convince village men to let the women come to Herat for training. Ghulam went to the village leaders with a choice—let women work or watch them continue

to suffer. “When they saw that women die during birth,” he says, “they chose to let the women work.”

Ghulam selected the first class of midwives, but now they apply, he says. “They want to have jobs and an education.” Once in Herat, the women live together in a beautiful new dormitory, studying in a library with Internet access. Everything is paid for.

After two years, graduates return to their villages trained in global health practices and with a new lease on life. “They feel like the best person in the village—the VIP,” says



Ghulam. Their impact is both immediate and long-term in villages where male doctors are not permitted to examine women or assist in delivery. “The change will permeate her family, her community, and generations to come,” says Ghulam.

Yalda is part of the change, working alongside Dr. Malouk Seif, 35. He’s worked with midwives before, but none like Yalda. “She’s better than the others,” he says. “She has better knowledge. She can do examinations and prescribe medicine. We already have more patients.”

Malouk credits Yalda’s presence among several factors that have increased traffic to the clinic. There are also public-service announcements on radio and television created by nongovernmental organizations about three years ago, which have been effective in delaying pregnancy among young wives until it is safer for them. Education has also helped. “Going to school has kept girls from getting pregnant early on,” says Malouk.

He sees change inside his clinic—and out. “There are a lot of differences for girls and women,” he says. “Before, there was no school. Before, people didn’t allow women to work. Now they can.”

Still, with continuing civil unrest, poverty, and a feeling of uncertainty about the future, Afghanistan teeters between possibility and utter despair. Malouk believes that women stand in the gap. “We’ve improved a little, but if we stop the momentum of girls going to school and women working,” he warns, “we will become poor and miserable. If women participate in their communities, it brings peace.”

Yalda worries about her country, that the Taliban might again take power. But it will not stop this determined young woman. If the Taliban comes back, she says, “I will work,” transferring to a private clinic in the village.

“Afghanistan needs help,” says Malouk. “It’s like one of my patients. If we treat him but then stop his medicine, he will die. If you stop your support, Afghanistan will die.”



# “If women participate in their communities, it brings peace.”

## SARA ON THE BRINK

At the burn unit in Herat, Sara awaits her skin graft. Her 3-year-old son, Ramin, plays the gracious host for his mother’s visitors. “Have a seat,” he instructs, patting the bed next to her blanket-covered legs. Ramin’s presence clearly brings his mother joy.

“I want a happy future for him,” she says. “I want him to grow big, go to school, and get an education.” Sixteen days after her self-immolation attempt, she seems to have a new lease on life. Her smile is a glimmer of hope amid the misery of the clinic. She’s even thinking of having another child—this time, a girl.

“If I have a daughter, I will try to make for her a good life,” she says. A good life that includes education and a good job—things Sara dreamed of and was denied. Perhaps her children will realize those dreams in an Afghanistan that women help to change. ■

**Hagar (top, left) brings her husband’s second wife, Fatima, for a pregnancy check-up. Fatima says that if she has a girl, she will send her to school and discourage her from marrying young. Sara (above) awaits a skin graft at the Herat burn unit with her son, Ramin. She’s fortunate—80 percent of the women here die of their burns.**

*Mary Kate MacIsaac is the communications manager for World Vision in Afghanistan.*

**PRAYER POINT**  
 Pray for the continued progress of World Vision’s assistance to children and families in Afghanistan despite escalating violence. In the past year, four local World Vision workers were tragically killed, prompting some activities to be suspended.





# Against ALL ODDS

Indian women and girls bear the brunt of a burgeoning AIDS crisis

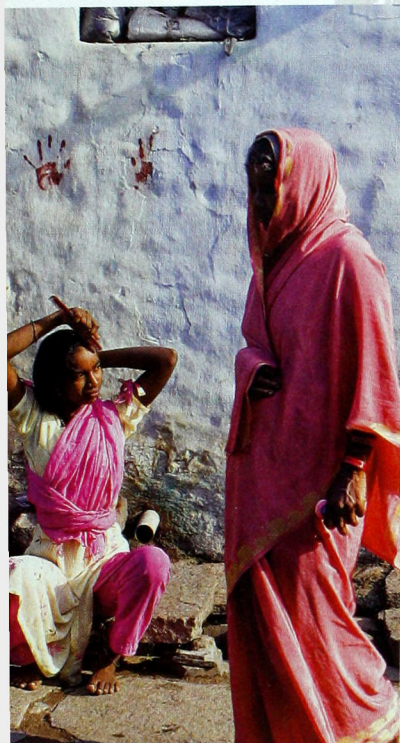
by Dean Owen, photographs by Jon Warren





मोना





**Just a teenager, Sudha bears the responsibilities of an adult, working full-time and keeping house for her two brothers. She's also haunted by memories of her dying mother's last days.**

SUDHA'S HOME IS SPARSE—even by the standards of India's dense, dirty, and disease-ridden slums. There's no two-burner propane stove; no television. The only reminder of electricity is a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling, its wires protruding from a cracked, unpainted concrete wall.

In the adjacent room, three blackened bricks surround a small hole in the floor. Nearby, there are a bundle of dry twigs and a few tin pots. This is where Sudha will cook dinner tonight.

The home is reminiscent of those in countless villages in sub-Saharan Africa. But here in Bellary, a city of 350,000 about 200 miles northwest of Chennai, there is a more compelling comparison to life in Africa.

Sudha and her two brothers are living on their own— orphaned by AIDS.

The disease has established a deadly foothold in this nation of more than 1.1 billion. According to the United Nations, upward of 9.4 million Indian children and adults are infected with HIV, eclipsing South Africa as having the most people in the world carrying the virus. Without a comprehensive prevention program, that number is expected to exceed 20 million cases by 2010 and kill 11 million within the next two decades.

Those statistics do not worry Sudha. What does worry her is getting to work on time at a nearby cotton mill, where she earns the equivalent of 90 cents after an eight-hour day, and making sure her younger brother, 11-year-old Guru, who is HIV-positive, keeps up with his studies. And of course, there's always cleaning the home, laundering their clothes, and preparing meals.

Quite a challenge for a 13-year-old girl.

Fortunately, the family came to the attention of World Vision. The organization has been helping Sudha, Guru, and 17-year-old Hulaganna for about a year and a half, providing nutrition supplements and regular checkups with a local physician. Last spring, World Vision added running water and a bathroom to the children's home.

How did Sudha end up running their household? Her deep chestnut-colored eyes moisten with tears as she relates her story.

"My mother, she worked hard and earned money for our family," she says. "She took care of us so well. But I cannot forget the last month of her life. That picture will not leave my mind."

Five years ago, Sudha bore the burden of caring for her dying mother, who was a *devadasi*—a temple prostitute (see sidebar, page 25). As a result, all three of the children have different fathers and they don't know the men's identities.

"What my mother did was not right," Sudha says. Her voice trails off into awkward silence. Then she regains her composure, adding, "But my mother loved us and we loved her."

Such stories of orphaned children are all too familiar to Heather Ferreira, World Vision's HIV and AIDS program officer in Mumbai. Her staff of 12 conduct prevention, care, HIV-testing, and advocacy programs, and she also oversees a volunteer 10-member troupe of street theater performers, who sing, dance, and perform sketches





## Women must be empowered to reduce their vulnerability to AIDS.

to press home to Mumbai residents the importance of HIV-prevention.

It's not just the *devadasi* system that makes women especially vulnerable to AIDS. Their low social and economic status puts them in a weak position to insist on safe sex in any context, according to Dr. Nafis Sadik, U.N. Secretary-General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

Women must be empowered to reduce their vulnerability to AIDS, Nafis contends, "through greater commitment by leaders at all levels to protect women from violence, improve their access to education, prevention, treatment, and reproductive health services, and increase support for women caregivers."

It is common in India that when a husband dies of AIDS, the wife is frequently ostracized by her parents and in-laws for supposedly infecting her spouse.

In reality, says Heather, the overwhelming majority of HIV-positive women are married and monogamous. They contract the virus from their husbands, who often were infected by other partners, including prostitutes.

"If I can make [an HIV-positive] woman stronger, if I can get her medication, if I can help her keep her children in school, then there's hope," says Heather, who has worked for World Vision for 16 years.

She adds that discrimination, while once prevalent throughout the nation, has



**"This family's situation was quite pathetic when we first met them," says World Vision's Samson Tangod. Living conditions are still basic—Sudha uses discarded rope as fuel (above). But the food and health assistance World Vision provides is essential for Guru (top), who is HIV-positive.**



diminished—at least in urban communities. She recalls taking an HIV-positive woman to six Mumbai hospitals in 1998, all of which refused to admit her. “I fear that what I experienced years back is still happening in rural and remote places,” she says.

Whether urban or rural, many women and families affected by AIDS resign themselves to poor treatment. “The common words are, ‘It is our destiny.’ ‘God wanted it this way.’ ‘Maybe I deserve it,’ or, ‘It is our lot as we are poor,’ ” says Heather.

But one who refuses such admonishments is World Vision volunteer Jyotsna Kamble, 44, an AIDS counselor in Mumbai.

Jyotsna knows intimately the pain experienced by those she helps. She contracted HIV from her husband, who died of AIDS in 1995. And—true to the pattern Heather outlined—she was devastated when her in-laws and neighbors shunned her.

“After my husband’s death, my in-laws wanted me to leave the house along with my two children,” she says. “But I fought back. Today I am able to live in my husband’s house, but initially it was a big problem.”

Partly because of these experiences and partly because of her Christian faith, Jyotsna

“If I can make [an HIV-positive] woman stronger, if I can get her medication, if I can help her keep her children in school, then there’s hope.”

In Mumbai, World Vision runs an AIDS education workshop for teen girls (below) and trains volunteers such as Jyotsna (bottom) to care for AIDS-affected families.



was inspired to dedicate her life to helping others facing similar persecution. She admits to some hesitation at first, fearing further rejection, but her prayers strengthened her resolve. For the last six years she has delivered food and other necessities to AIDS-shattered families, but just as importantly, she dispenses comfort and encouragement.

Among her “clients” is 12-year-old Dinesh Sonawane— orphaned by AIDS and HIV-positive himself. She visits him regularly in an eight-story building known as a “vertical slum.”

The boy sits against the one bed in the apartment he shares with his paternal grandmother Satyabhana. His small physique and thin black hair resemble those of a 5-year-old.

The child’s frail voice becomes a bit stronger when he’s asked about school and his hopes for the future.

“I want to work in an office, a big office,” Dinesh says proudly. He opens a Winnie-the-Pooh backpack to show visitors several textbooks and completed written assignments, most with good grades and few corrections highlighted in red pen. His school’s third grade curriculum includes English, penmanship and, his favorite subject, math.

Jyotsna offers a warm embrace and heartfelt smile to Dinesh and his grandmother as she leaves their small apartment. “I help them to cope with the disease,” Jyotsna explains. “Whatever the problem may be, we have to face it and live life to the best.”

Living life to the best, for India’s women and girls, ultimately means having a role in developing policies that affect them—especially now in the era of AIDS. The United Nations’ Global Coalition on Women and AIDS promotes initiatives providing women with leadership training and advocacy skills, equipping them to make their voices heard. Meanwhile, women aren’t shying away from the hard work of combating a killer disease close-up. Any doubts? Just ask Heather, Jyotsna, and young Sudha. ■

—Dean Owen is a media relations director for World Vision.







World Vision



In a world where **women and girls** are often **second-class citizens**, she needs **special assistance**.

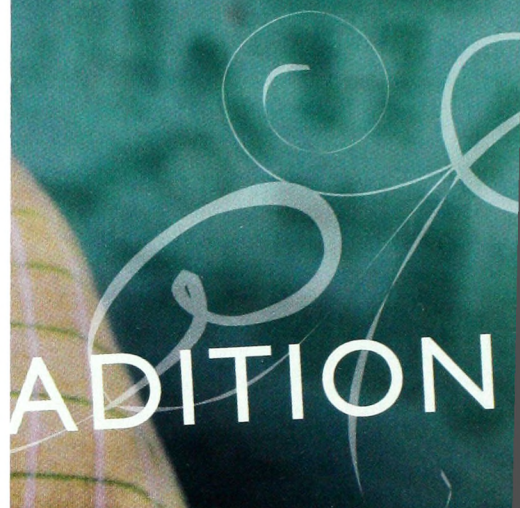


JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

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...cting devadasi (above) is resigned to her lot. ...tion could save Mani (left) from following in ...other's and grandmother's footsteps.

...the world's oldest profession. ...day, despite several state and national ...prohibiting the *devadasi* system, this form ...stitution continues. "Weddings" are usu- ...performed at odd hours in private ceremo- ...to escape detection. Humanitarian organi- ...s estimate that as many as 5,000 Indian ...become *devadasis* each year.

...the state of Karnataka, World Vision em- ...former *devadasis* as peer counselors, to ...void HIV infection and offer skills training ...ative employment.

...onvince a working temple prostitute to ...*fasi* can earn as much as 5,000 rupees ...sexual favors compared to a couple of dol- ...s or more as a seamstress.

...peer counselor Ningamma, who is herself ...deterred. "We've learned lessons, and we ...e have learned," she says. "Why should girls ...atized?" ■

—Dean Owen



diminished—at least in urban communities. She recalls taking an HIV-positive woman to six Mumbai hospitals in 1998, all of which refused to admit her. “I fear that what I experienced years back is still happening in rural and remote places,” she says.

Whether urban or rural, many women and families affected by AIDS resign themselves to poor treatment. “The common words are, ‘It is our destiny.’ ‘God wanted it this way.’ ‘Maybe I deserve it,’ or, ‘It is our lot as we are poor.’” says Heather.

But one who refuses such admonishments is World Vision volunteer Jyotsna Kamble, 44, an AIDS counselor in Mumbai.

# YES!

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Please use my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to support children in crisis.

I want to sponsor a child for \$30/month.

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 MIDDLE EAST  WHERE MOST NEEDED

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 if I can get \_\_\_\_\_  
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In Mumbai, World Vision runs an AIDS education workshop for teen girls (below) and trains volunteers such as Jyotsna Kamble (bottom) to care for AIDS-affected families.



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# A Tragic TRADITION

Seven-year-old Mani lost her mother to AIDS—nowadays a major occupational hazard for a *devadasi*, otherwise known as a temple prostitute. Her grandmother, another *devadasi*, is also dead.

The carefree girl now lives with her 80-year-old great-grandmother, Mogamma Sakhi.

The pair benefit from World Vision's orphan and vulnerable children program, which provides monthly food rations plus school supplies and tuition for Mani.

But Mani's future remains in doubt. Despite the obvious risks, Mogamma remains noncommittal about whether the girl will be forced to follow the family's Hindu tradition into the religious sex trade.

Originally *devadasis* were celibate dancing girls used in temple ceremonies and to entertain members of the ruling class. But about the sixth century, the practice of "marrying" girls to Hindu gods became prevalent. Typically a poor couple who could not afford to arrange a conventional marriage for their daughter would find a patron willing to sponsor the temple marriage—thereby purchasing the right to have sex with the girl. The girl might then be beholden to that sponsor for life, though she could also be made available to others for sexual favors. What was once a socially respectable occupation degenerated into another vari-



**A practicing *devadasi* (above) is resigned to her lot. Education could save Mani (left) from following in her mother's and grandmother's footsteps.**

ant of the world's oldest profession.

Today, despite several state and national laws prohibiting the *devadasi* system, this form of prostitution continues. "Weddings" are usually performed at odd hours in private ceremonies to escape detection. Humanitarian organizations estimate that as many as 5,000 Indian girls become *devadasis* each year.

In the state of Karnataka, World Vision employs former *devadasis* as peer counselors, to help current *devadasis* avoid HIV infection and offer skills training to help them find alternative employment.

But it is not easy to convince a working temple prostitute to get another job. A *devadasi* can earn as much as 5,000 rupees (about \$120) a day for sexual favors compared to a couple of dollars for working 10 hours or more as a seamstress.

Former *devadasi* and peer counselor Ningamma, who is herself HIV-positive, remains undeterred. "We've learned lessons, and we want to pass on what we have learned," she says. "Why should girls be sacrificed and traumatized?" ■

—Dean Owen



# Gender Matters

IN MANY PLACES around the world, being female is a cradle-to-grave curse. These stories represent a few of the ways millions of women and girls suffer simply because of their gender.

JOHN KISHNER/WORLD VISION

## INFANTICIDE

**W**hen Kalaivani was born in rural India, her mother, Yashoda, was very worried. This was the third time she'd given birth to a girl. She would now be branded as "unlucky" for her husband and might be driven out of her home along with her three daughters. After hours of agonizing, Yashoda felt that the only option was for the newborn baby girl to die.

In India and many other developing countries, boys are valued more highly than girls. Girls are less likely to help support their families economically, and when a girl marries, her parents must pay a dowry to the husband's family in addition to paying for the wedding. The boy's family gains wealth, while the girl's family often spirals into debt. Facing this dilemma, many families kill or abandon daughters after birth. An estimated 39 million women and girls are "missing" in India alone due to infanticide and sex-selective abortions.

**NOTE OF HOPE »** Had it not been for World Vision's intervention, Kalaivani likely would have wound up among the "missing." But local World Vision workers knew that Yashoda was a high risk to commit infanticide and visited her shortly after her baby was born. They counseled her and her husband to let Kalaivani live. They also connected Yashoda with a group of 25 other women that pools resources to take out loans and provides a consistent income for the members so they can help provide for their whole family—and especially, their girls.





RYAN SMITH

## MALE GENITAL MUTILATION

"I was only 7 years old when five women grabbed me by the hands and my legs and placed me on the table. The cutting was not very painful, but the needle they used to stitch me up was terrible. As I screamed and called for help, the women encouraged me to remain calm. They kept saying that the same thing had been done to my mother and that I had to act bravely like her."

Saphia (name changed to protect her identity) experienced male genital mutilation (FGM), sometimes called female circumcision. The process involves trimming or removing the clitoris and, in some cases, stitching the vagina closed, leaving only a small opening for fluids. The tradition has been passed down for many generations in Somalia, where Saphia lives, and in other African countries. Those who perform the "surgery" view it as a rite of passage into adulthood. But FGM at the least causes pain, infections, childbirth complications, infertility, and at worst, death.

**NOTE OF HOPE »** World Vision is working to create awareness of the dangers of FGM. In Mali, where 93 percent of women have undergone FGM, World Vision is working with women who perform FGM, convincing some of them to give up the practice, develop alternate rites of passage for girls, and educate the public about the risks caused by FGM.

## PRAYER POINT

**Pray that families and societies around the world—in rich and poor countries—come to appreciate the value and special qualities God gave girls, leading to equal treatment and opportunities for all children.**

## SEX TRAFFICKING

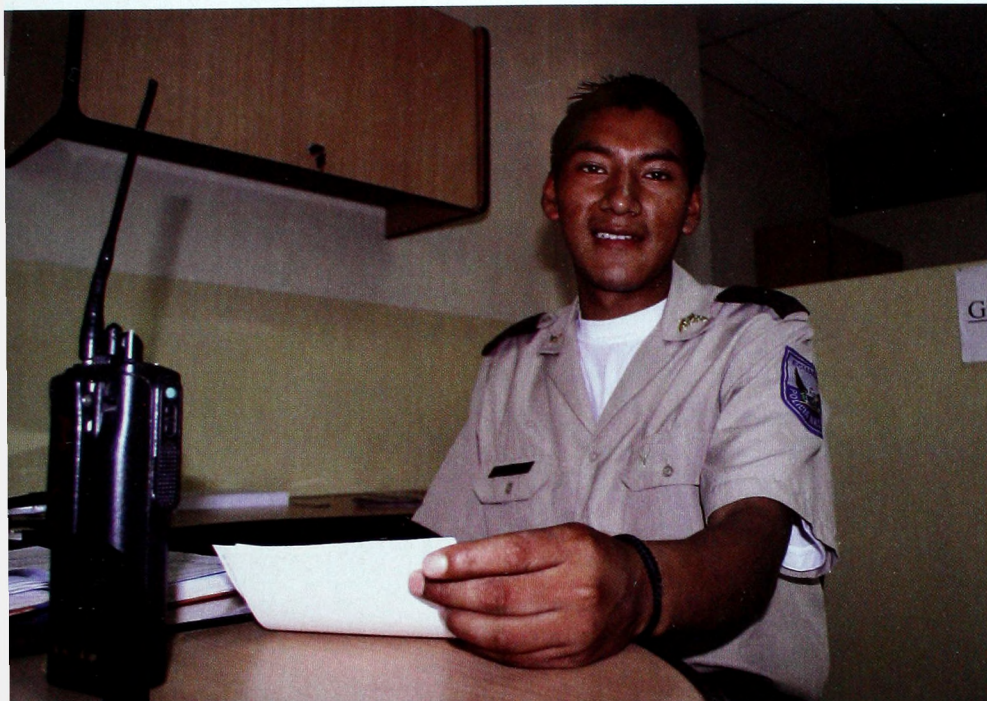
The ruse worked. The Norwegian authorities believed Nora's story of leaving Albania after her parents' deaths. Nora (name changed to protect her identity) was allowed to stay in Norway for six months and find a job. But her story was a lie given to her by her handlers, who already had work lined up for her—the same job she'd done in Italy, France, Germany, and Sweden since she'd been forced into a sex trafficker's car in Tirana, Albania.

Nora told authorities that she was 22, but in reality she was 17—a child, like half of the 1.39 million people trapped in the global sex trade every year, according to the International Labor Organization. Human trafficking nets an estimated \$15 billion per year worldwide.

**NOTE OF HOPE »** When Nora returned to complete some paperwork, she told Norwegian authorities her real story, and they helped her escape her captors and return to Albania. She and others who escaped the sex trade receive counseling, shelter, and protection at a World Vision clinic. The organization's main emphasis, however, is to prevent the victimization in the first place. Through education, vocational training, and advocacy, World Vision is working to eliminate the poverty that forces many girls into the sex trade and to improve laws and enforcement against trafficking.

—With reporting by Reena Samuel, John Kisimir, and John Schenk





## The Man for the Job »

*A former sponsored child found a rewarding career in helping women.* By Wilmer Simbaña and Ryan Smith

**G**rowing up with six sisters, Julio Quilumbaquin spent a lot of time with women. Now he's putting that experience to good use as he promotes and defends women's rights through the Women and Family Police Station in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

His work is important in Ecuador, where 90 percent of the victims of violence are women. "I feel privileged to work in this office," says the 23-year-old. "It is a risky job, but I like it because I help people."

But working as a policeman in the hot coastal city of Guayaquil is far from what Julio pictured as a child. Born and raised in the cool highlands of Ecuador, nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, he was mainly concerned with taking care of cows and tending barley and potato crops. He never imagined that one day he would leave the small community of Cajas Jurídica.

Yet rural life was difficult. "Everyone who lived there had many struggles," he says. "A lack of resources forbid us from going to school. Many times, there was no food at home. You didn't have anyone to help you."

But that changed when World Vision began working in the com-

**Julio's father, who died when Julio was 12, hoped his son would become a professional. Julio believes his job with the police would make his father proud.**

munity. At age 7, Julio was sponsored. "When I got a gift from my sponsor, I would send a letter back. That is how I thanked my sponsor for everything done for us," Julio recalls. "I remember clearly that I would draw things like a landscape where I put my house, my family, or my community. At Christmas, I would draw the manger in Bethlehem or a Christmas tree."

As a young boy, Julio didn't realize all the ways that sponsorship helped him, but looking back, he can see how important the things he received were: new school supplies, school fees, and frequent medical checkups.

"Thanks to the support of the World Vision staff, I felt encouraged to keep studying. They always told me to study," he says. "Studying is very important to become someone in life."

The assistance became even more important after his father passed away when Julio was 12. "The most difficult thing during my childhood was my father's death," Julio says. "I thought that I wouldn't be able to keep up with school, but thanks to my mother, my sisters, and World Vision, I could finish my studies."

Rosa Cuascota, Julio's mother, is grateful for World Vision's community development programs in the area. "I was part of a women's group," Rosa says. "We had a bakery and sold bread to the community." The bakery profits helped the family through hard times, allowing the children to stay in school.

After completing high school, Julio struggled to find consistent work. He knew that education was his passport to a better life, so he decided what he had to do. He told his mother, "I am going to

WILMER SIMBAÑA/WORLD VISION



Thanks to the support of the World Vision staff,  
I felt encouraged to keep studying.  
They always told me to study.”

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**WHO WE ARE** | World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to helping children, families, and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

**WHOM WE SERVE** | Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed—regardless of a person's religion, race, ethnicity, or gender—as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people.

**WHY WE SERVE** | Our passion is for the world's poorest children whose suffering breaks the heart of God. To help secure a better future for each child, we focus on lasting, community-based transformation. We partner with individuals and communities, empowering them to develop sustainable access to clean water, food supplies, health care, education, and economic opportunities.

**HOW WE SERVE** | Since 1950, World Vision has helped millions of children and families by providing emergency assistance to those affected by natural disasters and civil conflict, developing long-term solutions within communities to alleviate poverty and advocating for justice on behalf of the poor.

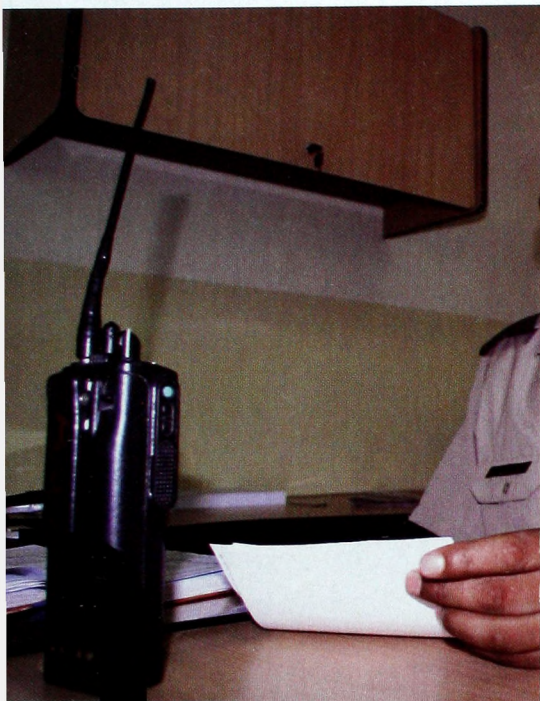
**YOU CAN HELP** | Partnering with World Vision provides tangible ways to honor God and put faith into action. By working together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of children and families who are struggling to overcome poverty. To find out how you can help, return the envelope found between pages 8 and 9, or visit [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org).



WHERE ARE THEY

NOW?

Julio's father, who died when Julio was 12, hoped his son would become a professional. Julio believes his job with the police would make his father proud.



But the man of honor makes good plans, and he stands for what is good.

ISAIAH 32:8 (NLV)

Dear Friend,  
My wife, Renee, and I—like you—care deeply about both our own family's future and the futures of children living in poverty. So we were thrilled to learn how gift planning can help us make a significant difference for many others beyond our lifetime. Please send in the card below today to request your copy of World Vision's Legacy Planner—and make this exciting discovery for yourself!

Rich Stearns  
Rich Stearns  
President

## The Man

A former sponsored child in helping women. By

Growing up with six sisters and a lot of time with women. Now he uses his experience as he promotes Women and Family Police Stations.

His work is important in Ecuador where acts of violence are common. "I feel that the most vulnerable are women." "It is a risky job for the 23-year-old."

But working as a policeman in a rural area is far from what Julio pictured. He grew up in the highlands of Ecuador, nearly always concerned with taking care of his family and crops. He never imagined that he would be in the community of Cajas Juridica.

Yet rural life was difficult. "There were many struggles," he says. "A lack of resources. Many times, there was no one to help you."

But that changed when World Vision came to

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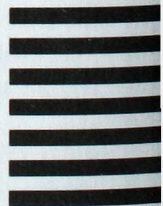
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*Thanks to the support of the World Vision staff,  
I felt encouraged to keep studying.  
They always told me to study.”*

police training school.”

His mother and sisters didn't want Julio to leave—the school was 10 hours away—but they sold the family's livestock to raise enough money for his bus fare. It was a sacrifice to sell the animals, but they knew that it was important to Julio to get the training.

With the gift from his family, Julio boarded the bus for Guayaquil. At first, he struggled with loneliness and the dramatic shift from the cool highlands to the tropical city, but he persevered and completed his police training.

After graduating, he landed a job at the Women and Family Police Station. Julio processes and investigates claims of violence against women. Sometimes the work can be difficult, but it is also very rewarding. Recently he helped a desperate mother whose newborn son had been taken away by the father. Julio found the

10-day-old boy at a remote mountain location and brought the baby back to his mother. “It is a great memory because we were able to rescue that innocent child,” Julio recalls.

Julio recognizes that sponsorship was very important in shaping the man he has become because it enabled him to stay in school and showed him the importance of getting an education. “I would like to meet my sponsor, because he has been like a second father to me, giving me support from abroad,” Julio says. “I would be proud to know personally the man who gave me a hand when I was a child.” ■

*Wilmer Simbaña is a communications officer for World Vision in Ecuador.*

**Rosa Cuascota feels motherly pride for Julio—but she also misses him.**



WILMER SIMBAÑA/WORLD VISION



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## Motherhood's Joys and Sorrows >>

There's nothing like the joy of finding out that you're going to be a mum. For me, the shock was almost overwhelming, and I did a pregnancy test more than twice to convince myself. Now, 10 years on and three children later, the joyful feeling of being a mother hasn't left me. When I look at my children, I feel grateful that, so far, my mothering is working. But I'm not sure they wake up every morning "calling me blessed" as the children of the mother in Proverbs did.

In March, we celebrate Mothering Sunday in the United Kingdom. I enjoy Mothering Sunday not so much for myself but for my children. It brings them so much joy in creating gifts and making me breakfast in bed, showing me that I matter to them. Children are precious gifts—nothing beats seeing that first smile, watching them take that first step, or sending them to their first day of school.

Women worldwide have the same hopes and dreams for their children. When I spend time with my husband's family in Kenya, my sisters-in-law dream the same dreams for my nieces and nephews as I do for my children. Mothers everywhere pray for the best for their children. In this respect, we are all equal.

Motherhood is also a bitter pill to swallow. We may all wish for a better future for our children and long lives to see them fulfill that future, but that may not necessarily happen. Last year dur-

*"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. ..." —Genesis 3:16*

ing a family holiday in Kenya we went to the funeral of Njoki, my husband's cousin. She died a day after giving birth. If she lived in the West, she would be alive. She is now a statistic. More than half a million women in developing countries die each year during pregnancy or childbirth. Njoki's children have a loving father and extended family who will care for them, but many children who lose their mothers aren't so lucky, and they easily fall prey to poverty and exploitation.

Mothers play a major role in children's lives. It is vital that we invest in them. "Investing in mothers is key to child survival and well-being," states Save the Children's report, "State of the World's Mothers 2006." The report, which ranks the status of mothers and children in 125 countries based on 10 indicators pertaining to health and education, ranked Sweden as the best place to be a mother (the U.S. and U.K. tied at 10th), while countries in sub-



**Sophia Mwangi and her family.**

Saharan Africa are at the bottom, with Niger in last place.

Compared to a mother in the top 10 countries, a mother in the bottom 10 countries is 28 times more likely to see her child die in the first year of his or her life and more than 750 times more likely to die herself in pregnancy or childbirth. One out of every seven children in Somalia dies before his or her first birthday. In Niger, one in seven women dies in childbirth, and 84 percent of all newborns are delivered without the assistance of skilled health personnel.

When I send my children to school, I take it for granted that they have access to free education, but there are more than 115 million children of primary-school age not in school right now. Most of them are from poor households, whose mothers have no formal education. Also, children of uneducated mothers are more than twice as likely to die or suffer malnutrition than those whose mothers who have gone to secondary school.

Motherhood can be a wonderful experience, wherever we are. Let us not forget, however, that we are called to support those women for whom motherhood is quite literally a life-or-death journey. ■

**Sophia Mwangi is a communications officer for World Vision in the U.K.**



# RETROSPECT



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

## U G A N D A

It looks like a conga line, but for these former combatants of northern Uganda's brutal civil war, it's a game that encourages much-needed fun and healing. World Vision's Children of War Rehabilitation Center nurtures boys and girls who have escaped forced participation in the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group—and shelters the abductees' children (two shown here in the foreground). Meanwhile, on this side of the Atlantic, the plight of northern Uganda's children is a hot topic on Capitol Hill. In October 2006, more than 700 people lobbied members of Congress, demanding U.S. action on the crisis. And thousands have signed "Children Should Never Be Soldiers" ([www.worldvision.org/nochildsoldiers](http://www.worldvision.org/nochildsoldiers)), World Vision's declaration to the U.S. government pressing for an end to northern Uganda's conflict. ■



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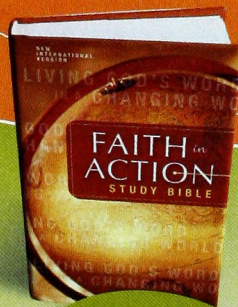


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Published by  
World Vision Inc.  
P.O. Box 701172  
Tacoma, WA  
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