



FEBRUARY 2006
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Dear Friends,

Well, I had an exhilarating experience last month. I traveled with some of our staff to the Dang District in west Nepal, to be present at the “festival” at which the young girls of the Tharu ethnic community are bonded away by their parents. They are sent to work in the homes of strangers far away for an average of \$50 a year paid to the father.* We have been trying to eradicate this custom for six years; our efforts have been more successful than we could have dreamed. From the first 32 girls rescued in January 2000, the number has risen to almost 1300, plus another 800 girls rescued by another non-profit under our direction.



A few weeks ago, we went out to see for ourselves how this success was achieved. We saw colorful street plays created and acted by the returned girls themselves at which large numbers of villagers intently watched dramatic performances describing their mistreatment by their employers. We saw hundreds of returned girls marching in a parade, holding banners and chanting slogans against the practice. We saw the walls in the area plastered with anti-bonding posters and groups of girls singing traditional songs with untraditional lyrics opposing the practice. And finally - we saw hundreds of young girls, former bonded laborers, in their light and dark blue school uniforms, attending classes with the lucky children whose parents never had to sell their daughters.



Before we began this effort six years ago, hundreds of young girls were bonded away every January in the area where we were working without any question about the practice. NYOF and its Nepali partner NGO, Friends of Needy Children, are responsible for this impressive transformation of the hearts and minds of the community.

Since we have all but defeated the custom in the Deukhuri Valley of the District, where we have worked for six years, this year we moved on to the adjoining valley, the Dang Valley, to do the same thing. There, we initiated our effective awareness program, and rescued hundreds of additional children.

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That's the good news. Now for the not-so-good news. It is estimated that 20,000-25,000 young girls in the Tharu ethnic community in five western districts of Nepal are subject to this practice. So there is much work left to do. More immediately, in our target area in the Dang Valley where we began working last month, some girls who wanted to join our program had to return to work because our budget was not sufficient to allow them to enroll. It was distressing for all of us, to say the least.

We need your help in eradicating this inhumane custom. Please give as generously as you can and specify that your contribution be used to free these Indentured Daughters from bonded labor. Together, we can eliminate this heartless and appalling practice so that we will never again have to turn away any young girls.

Warm regards,



***Most of you know about this program. In short, we provide the family with a piglet or a goat, which they raise on food scraps and can sell for about the same amount they received for their daughter's labor. Then we place the girl in school and pay the cost of her education. Simultaneously, the mother is enrolled in an income-generating program so that within about three years she can earn enough to pay her daughter's school costs. A full circle!**

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Changing the world...one child at a time.