

Thousands of Girls in Asia Saved From Possible 'Fate Worse Than Death'

Marking International Day of the Girl Child, October 11, mission agency Gospel for Asia spotlights 'crisis of abuse' facing girls in Asia

Toowoomba, QLD -- Tens of thousands of girls at risk of being sold into prostitution or slave labour have been saved from a possible "fate worse than death" by GFA World Inc (formerly Gospel for Asia) a mission organization, and its field partners working in poverty-stricken slums and villages.

To mark International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, GFA World, www.gfaau.org revealed tens of thousands of girls are enrolled in 600-plus GFA-supported Bridge of Hope centers across Asia - providing safety, free schooling, medical care and meals for at-risk children living in extreme poverty.

The 2019 Day of the Girl Child draws attention to critical issues facing millions of girls around the world, including education inequality, gender-based violence, and forced child marriage.

"Some of these girls living in the impoverished communities served by Bridge of Hope are among the most vulnerable in the world, with many of them unwanted and treated by their own families as nothing more than free labor or goods to be sold," said GFA founder Dr. K.P. Yohannan. "It's a crisis of neglect and abuse."

Severe poverty results in parents taking extreme steps just to survive, including forcing their young daughters into slavery-like labor conditions or - worse - prostitution.

Girls "Never Seen Again"

"Prostitution is legal in some parts of Asia so the chances of girls being victimized are drastically increased," said Yohannan. "Many of the poorest families are manipulated into selling their daughters to opportunists who promise a better life for them. But many of these girls are never heard from or seen again. It's a fate worse than death."

In this century, more young women and girls are enslaved in brothels each year than were shipped to slave plantations at the height of the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, according to reports.

"Despite the good work the governments in these nations are doing to combat these issues, so much work still needs to be done," Yohannan said.

Lakshmi's 10-year-old sister worked in bonded labour - security for repayment of a debt - seven days a week, starting at 7 a.m. and finishing at 9 p.m. "(Her employer) treated her very badly," Lakshmi said. "He hit her if he thought she was working slowly; if she talked to the other children, he yelled at her. He came looking for her if she was sick and couldn't go to work. All I wanted was to bring my sister home."

Girls Deliberately Starved

Meanwhile, many impoverished parents deliberately starve their daughters in favor of feeding their sons.

"In some places, girls will be forced to go hungry while their brothers are well fed," Yohannan said.

Supported by GFA, indigenous churches are speaking up for girls in danger.

"This is our opportunity to stand alongside indigenous churches as they raise awareness in their communities, teach girls how to protect themselves, and present a message of hope that emphasizes the value of girls and their tremendous God-given potential," said Yohannan, whose organization has been serving the poor in Asia for 40 years.

For more information about Bridge of Hope, visit <https://www.gfaau.org/press/sponsor-girl-child>.

Contacts

Gregg Wooding

972-567-7660

mailto: gwooding@inchristcommunications.com