

## **Give a Girl a Chance**

Stories of the challenges facing young women in our world—and what we can do to help  
(these stories are intended to be ready sequentially during one presentation)

### **Sweeper (young girl enters with broom in hand, sweeping as she goes. She doesn't look up as she talks.)**

I was born in the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar, one of the poorest countries in the world. I work for a family in the city, many miles from my own family who lives in the southeastern delta area of our country. My parents sent me her when I was 12. They told me they couldn't take care of me anymore, and besides, the woman who came to our village said if they sent me with her, I would go to work for a wealthier family, but she would be sure I would be able to go to school. That made my mother very excited, as she would never have been able to send me to school past sixth grade. She herself only went to third grade, and could barely read and write. So, the woman gave my mother and father forty dollars for letting her take me, I packed the two dresses I own in a small bag, and went off with this woman to the city. I had never been there before, but had heard many things about it—some good, some not so good.

When we arrived at the home where I would be living, the couple for whom I would be working gave the woman sixty dollars, and showed me my room—a very small room with a mat on the floor located just beside the kitchen. At first, the husband and wife seemed very nice. But soon that changed—I guess they just wanted to make a good impression. It wasn't long until it was clear I wouldn't be going to school—when I brought it up with them after I had been there for several weeks and school was starting, they beat me—and told me never to mention it again. Now I get their children ready for school, packing their lunch, making sure they don't forget their books, and even walk the youngest one to her school—but then I return to the house—a full day of work is waiting for me. It has been two years since I saw my family—I hope they have not forgotten me...

### **Water carrier (this girl walks up an aisle or otherwise enters through the crowd as she begins talking)**

I live in the African country of Sudan. Maybe you have heard of it—we have had many years of war here. For now, there is peace, but we are never sure when the peace may end and the fighting begin again. My father was taken away by the war—we have not seen him for five years—or is it six, I cannot remember, as I was very young then.

In our village, there is one school—it is under the large mango tree. We sit on benches—it is sometimes nice to be outside, except in the rainy season or when the sand storms come. Then on some days we do not even have school.

School is over for me, however. As my father was not with us anymore, my mother needed my help around the house—planting the garden, gathering the wood, carrying the water. So she took me from school after fifth grade. One of my brothers is now in

secondary school—when there is little money, it is the boys who continue in school. Besides, I'm afraid my mother is thinking to marry me off to an older man in our village. He already has two wives, but he has many cows, and if he offers some to my mother in exchange for marrying me, what will she do? She is poor; will she not have to take the cows...?

### **Mother of Sudanese girl**

I am the mother of this girl. I know you think the decisions I have made about my daughter are not good—so do I! But what else can I do? With no husband to work the fields or bring home income, I have had to turn to making home-brew, an alcoholic drink that I sell to the men in town and the soldiers stationed nearby. I am a Christian, and I don't like to see the drunkenness, but it is one thing I can do to provide even a little something for my children.

I am hoping things will change for me—and for my daughter. I have heard that sewing classes are being offered by the local Girl Child Development Association. If I could learn to sew, and then find a way to purchase a machine, I could get out of this cycle of poverty—and help my daughter escape it too.

### **Girl at computer (turns toward audience as she speaks)**

I live in the South Asian country of Nepal. Perhaps you've heard of Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain? It is here in my country. We have many high mountains, but also lush green valleys and many rivers to water our fields—although my parents say the rivers are not flowing as they did in the past. Something called “global warming” is causing the snows on our mountains to go away, leaving us with less water in our precious rivers.

Ours is a very poor country, and many children suffer from malnutrition and lack of education. Girls have an especially hard time—in fact, there is a saying here in Nepal: “To be born a daughter is a lost life.” Girls here are seen as not as valuable as boys, and are treated harshly in the home and in society. But I am a very lucky girl. My mother felt it was very important that I receive an education, even though only 1 out of 3 women like my mother can read and write. She is poor, but a group in the United States works with a Nepali women's group to help girls like me go to school and have a better chance in life—and even learn how to use a computer!

Many of my friends were not so lucky. They no longer live in this village. Traders from India, the country next door, come looking for young girls to take with them. They offer our parents a little bit of money, and say the girls will have jobs in the entertainment industry or clothing factories, but we hear that they are sometimes locked up in houses and made to do bad things.

As I said, I am lucky. But I want to grow up to help other girls be lucky too, so I am planning to become a teacher and give special attention to girls getting an education—so that their lives will not be “lost”, but “found!”

### **NCP and girls' education**

The New Community Project is committed to giving girls and women the chance they need and deserve to have a more fulfilling life—the life God intends for all of us. NCP gives grants to its partners to provide assistance for girls to attend school, including scholarships, school supplies and personal hygiene items. For women, NCP supports literacy classes and skill training such as sewing classes and backyard gardening projects. All told, NCP's grants average \$50,000 per year for girls' education and women's programs. As with all its Special Funds, NCP passes on 100 percent of contributions designated for these projects to the programs themselves. NCP's core budget is funded by individual donations, honoraria for leading events, and grants from congregations and other groups.