

Half the Sky Study Guide

Half the Sky by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

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Summary

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn are partners in life and partners in their quest to make a difference for women in remote and impoverished regions of the world. Women and girls are mistreated, abused, routinely raped, mutilated, sold and trafficked, forced into prostitution and unable to attend school. Kristof and WuDunn have traveled the globe for many years seeking out these abused women in hopes of gaining a better understanding of them and their culture and gently planting the seed that there can be more in life for them. In an era in which mankind has made incredible advancements in science and technology, there is a world of women in developing countries who modernity has not touched. Many are modern-day slaves who are bought and sold and abused and even murdered if they cross a line drawn in the sand by the men who rule them as their masters.

Celebrated journalists Kristof and WuDunn have devoted literally years of their lives trying to help these people on both a personal level and by shining a light on their plight so that others who can help are made aware of the unimaginable existence that these women in remote areas of Africa, Asia, Pakistan, India and the Middle East are compelled to accept these women's situations as reality. Rape is used as a punishment for women who disobey the laws laid down by the village men or by husbands. The men, therefore, blame the women for being raped because it is their disobedience that caused the act. So many women in developing nations have been cowed and intimidated by men their entire lives and are taught when they are little girls by their mothers that the men are in charge with no questions asked. Mass rape has been used as a military strategy as a way of intimidating villagers and striking fear into the women.

The authors discuss other horrors that these women are subjected to including genital mutilation which is a rite of passage for young girls to keep them from enjoying sex and, therefore, intended to keep them from being promiscuous. There are honor killings in the Middle East and India; when a girl is interested in the wrong boy it is considered preferable to kill her than for the family to be shamed. There is bride burning in parts of Asia which occurs when a bride is exposed to have had sex before marriage. Such an exposure leads to the burning of the girl. The health care is so poor it is almost non-existent in these remote backward areas. When there are health care facilities, they serve men first and leave women for last. Many women die giving birth because there are no gynecologists and no facilities for women to turn to. There are complications from births that are unheard of in first world countries.

Kristof and WuDunn describe the many ways that people have already helped these women and the charitable organizations that have save lives and help to educate them. However, the authors stress, there is a long way to go. Kristof and WuDunn bring their book to a close providing ways that the ordinary person can help bring relief to those whose suffering seems endless.



Chapter 1: Emancipating Twenty-First-Century Slaves

Summary

Authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn describe the brothels Forbesgunge in the Indian state of Bihar as mud huts. Kristof and WuDunn write that Meena Hasina is shunned by her village; she had been prostituted in a brothel operated by the Nutt, a low-caste tribe that controls the local sex trade. It is the tradition in the Nutt brothels that prostitutes teach their daughters to sell sex. Kristof and WuDunn write that Meena was eight-years-old when she was trafficked by sex traders. She was from an impoverished family who sold her to traffickers. She was forced into prostitution at age 12. Kristof and WuDunn learned that each girl averaged ten customers a day, seven days a week. Beatings and the threat of beatings kept them in line.

Kristof and WuDunn write that AIDS was running rampant in these brothels. Meena has never been tested for AIDS. Meena had two children while in the brothel; they were both taken from her. The girl was targeted as a future prostitute and the boy was made into a slave. The authors report that there are two to three million prostitutes in India. China has even more prostitutes with estimates as high as 10 million. Ironically, the authors point out, it is some of the most socially conservative nations like India, China and Iran that have the highest numbers of prostitutes. It is acceptable in those countries for young men to sleep with prostitutes because they cannot sleep with their future wives. These societies have no defense for their hypocrisy and look the other way. The prostitutes aren't allowed to use condoms and are at high risk for STDs and the HIV virus.

Kristof and WuDunn have traveled the world studying the plight of women in the sex industry. They have concluded that prostitutes in large part are actually modern-day slaves. The International Labour Organization, a unit of the UN, reported that during any one period of time there are as many as 12.3 million people who are victims of forced labor – prostitution being just one category. Kristof and WuDunn report that Lancet, a British medical journal, estimated that one million children are forced into prostitution each year. Young women forced into the sex trade are often broken by humiliation and intimidated into compliance.

Kristof and WuDunn have estimated that there are three million women and girls and a small number of boys who are enslaved in the sex trade. The number of women and girls shipped into brothels far out distances the slaves that were shipped from Africa to the New World in the 1800s. Globalization has made trafficking from nation to nation easier. The fear of AIDS has driven customers to demand younger and younger prostitutes who are less likely to have been infected.



Kristof and WuDunn describe the many ways that the ordinary person can help fight slavery and sex trafficking. One must be honest about the progress that can be made and the struggle to achieve change. Even though U.S. Senator Tom Harkin's intentions were from the heart by banning imports made in the sweatshops of Bangladesh, tens of thousands of children were fired, many of whom wound up in brothels and died of AIDS. Education, the authors stress, is important for comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the problem.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn grab the reader's attention by providing the stark reality that young women and children face in developing nations in which sex trafficking is running rampant. They rely on the shock value of the topic to engage the reader and want to read on. Including the spread of AIDS in brothels in third world nations is a hook that will further interest readers because everyone in the world is familiar with the AIDS epidemic while not everyone is aware of the horrors of sex trafficking and the extent to which it has grabbed dominance.

Kristof and WuDunn bring more intimacy into the discussion by explaining that they are not just journalists writing about dystopian injustice across the globe; they have traveled there themselves and become involved in the cause for women's rights in third world nations. While the journalists cite stats and studies, they bring the uniqueness of empirical and anecdotal evidence that they learned and experienced first-hand.

By offering themselves as both reporters and observers, Kristof and WuDunn establish the credibility to conclude the chapter by describing ways in which nations and the ordinary person can help these women in distress.

Help for these women, Kristof and WuDunn state, ultimately lies in education. Without education, eradicating one evil just sends them into another bad situation, as exemplified when U.S. Senator Tom Harkin banned imports made in sweatshops from Bangladesh, which sent many of the workers from those shops that closed into brothels and the sex trade. Education offers people an opportunity to move up and out of their current situation.

Vocabulary

brothel, prepubescent, induction, recalcitrant, stigmatized, paradoxically, implicit, hyperbole, impunity

Chapter 2: Prohibition and Prostitution

Summary

After visiting Bihar, Kristof crossed over from India into Nepal. He was required to fill out some paper work at the border office. They were screening for terrorists and smugglers but not for sex traffickers. There are ways to combat sex trafficking and modern slavery but there is no political will to employ them, the authors point out. While Western men make up a small percentage of the prostitution customers in Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka and other locations, most customers or “johns” are local men.

Kristof and WuDunn point out that one reason the modern abolitionist movement has not had significant success is the divisive nature of prostitution. In the 1990s both the left and right politicians passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. The legislation was a milestone in raising international awareness about sex trafficking. However, what represses more progress is the diverse perspective of the left and right. According to the authors, the left sees prostitutes as innocuous “sex workers.” Many on the right are judgmental believing prostitution to be offensive and demeaning. This debate slows progress in fighting forced prostitution and child prostitution.

The legalization and regulation of prostitution could make conditions safer for the prostitutes, but models based on this solution in countries where forced prostitution exists have not had great success because of poor governance and ineffective regulation. Kristof and WuDunn learned that crackdowns on trafficking have had some success. Changing the attitude of law enforcement is key to the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. According to Kristof and WuDunn, some police officers take bribes to turn their heads the other way. High profile arrests can send a chill through the trafficking community and convince traffickers to dabble in other illegal activities.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Anup Patel, a medical student at Yale University, conducted a 2005 study on condom use in Kolkata. He learned that negotiations are between customer and brothel owner. The customer can pay the brothel owner more to allow him to have sex without a condom which the prostitute has no say about. Kristof and WuDunn report that there has been some success in reducing the spread of AIDS in India.

Mumbai brothels were among the worst in the world, but the number of Mumbai brothels declined because of American pressure. While going from 35,000 prostitutes to 6,000 in a decade is a numerical success many girls remain in misery. Kristof and WuDunn write that it is suspected that many brothels went underground and are still operating. Also, traffickers began shipping young girls to brothels other than those in Mumbai where they could make more money.

In 2000, the Netherlands legalized prostitution in hopes of improving health standards and monitoring child trafficking. In 1999, Sweden made it a crime to purchase sexual



services. In other words the john would be vulnerable to criminal prosecution while the prostitute would not. Of the two plans, the Swedish plan was more successful in the reduction of trafficking and forced prostitution. Kristof and WuDunn learned that brothels have been illegal in India and Cambodia for generations; however, the laws are not enforced in either nation.

The U.S. State Department issues an annual report, the Trafficking in Persons report, which ranks nations by their success in coping with trafficking. According to Kristof and WuDunn, those on the bottom of the list are sanctioned. This “shaming” of nations was able to produce the passing of positive legislation and the staging of more crackdowns. Kristof and WuDunn write that after a girl is rescued from forced prostitution, she often winds up returning. These girls are often shunned in their home villages, addicted to drugs, and live in fear of angry pimps coming after them.

Kristof and WuDunn learned that rescuing girls from brothels is a complicated process. Those trying to help must be tenacious and practical in the sense that some problems can be solved for these women but not all and that all girls cannot be rescued.

Analysis

Another example of the direct involvement by the journalists is contained in an account of Kristof’s exchange with a border officer who tells him that they monitor for terrorism but not for sex trafficking. Kristof isn’t surprised when the border agent tells him that there is nothing that can be done about the sex trafficking – something that Kristof and WuDunn vehemently disagree with.

In an effort to further bring home the urgency of sex-trafficking and to attain better understanding by the reader, the authors describe sex-trafficking as a form of modern-day slavery and compare it to slavery that Americans and everyone else in the world are all too familiar with.

And in midst of the political battles that most Americans and others in the world have grown accustomed to, Kristof and WuDunn frame the debate over sex-trafficking in the political backdrop of right versus left. They posit the question: is legalization and regulation the answer or are criminal crackdowns the solution? They provide the pros and cons of each option demonstrating that they are not partisan and are not taking sides. Having no personal agenda, the authors adequately underscore their intentions simply as wanting to help these forgotten women.

The authors also point out how statistics aren't always an accurate portrayal of whether or not progress is being made. They provide the example of Mumbai brothel numbers decreasing greatly in statistical number, however, the authors point out that most likely many brothels simply went underground but are still operating, which means the new “lower” number of recognized brothels in Mumbai isn’t accurate.

By providing examples of what works and what doesn’t as in the cases of The Netherlands that adopted the legalization of prostitution and Sweden that took the



opposite tactic and criminalized it credits the reader with the ability to draw his own conclusions. The authors bring the readers down to earth reminding them that change is slow and ugly and that not all women can be rescued.

Vocabulary

docility, ominous, peripheral, stalwart, empirical, clandestine, ubiquitous, incongruous, volition



Chapter 3: Learning to Speak Up

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn have learned that one of the reasons so many girls are trafficked is that they don't fight back. In many of these developing countries, girls are raised to be subservient to men. The abuse of trafficking and forced prostitution will continue if women allow it to. Traffickers prey on poor, uneducated peasant girls who are less likely to take up for themselves.

Kristof and WuDunn writes about the slums of Kasturba Nagar. The ditches reek and are filled with sewage. The Dalits – or Untouchables – are the residents and live under extremely impoverished conditions. Kristof and WuDunn learned of a young woman who lived there named Usha Narayane who was able to surpass expectations and thrive. Her parents had some education and were determined that their children would have bright futures. All five of the children in the family graduated from university. Usha obtained her degree in hotel management.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Akku Yadav was a mobster and king of Kasturba Nagar. The gang he headed terrorized the village for 15 years. The gang was responsible for robberies, murders and torture but none of the members were ever punished for their crimes. They threatened rape and sexual humiliation to keep villagers in line. Kristof and WuDunn learned that Yadav gave Usha and her family wide berth because he feared their education would give them the ability to bring charges against him. But when Usha reported him to the police for threatening to kill a family, he showed up at Usha's house with a vial of acid. She fought back and was able to fend him off. Her bravery so inspired the village that they revolted against Yadav and burned his house down. He was taken into protective custody and in a court hearing was ambushed by the many women he had raped, and he was stabbed to death. There was dancing in the streets. Neither Usha - who was seen as the leader - nor the other women were prosecuted for his death. Kristof and WuDunn visited her in Kasturba Nagar and were gratified to meet a woman who stood up to abuse and won.

Kristof and WuDunn write that after 12-year-old Zach Hunter learned that slavery still existed in the world he formed a charity group to help the enslaved. The group called Loose Change to Loosen Chains, raised \$8,500 the first year and more in subsequent years. Zach, now a high school student travels around the country on behalf of his charity. He presented a petition with 100,000 signatures to the White House in 2007 that called for more action against trafficking. Kristof and WuDunn describe Zach as part of a growing movement of social entrepreneurs many of whom develop new approaches to support poor and abused women in developing nations.

Kristof and WuDunn point out that social entrepreneurs are important in effecting social change because of the leadership and charisma that they bring to a cause. They add that failure to set up networks for identifying and supporting local leaders can lead to



failures in the ground game. Women like Ruchira Gupta and Usha Narayane are two examples of female social entrepreneurs. Women like Sunitha Krishnan of India is another celebrated activist who rose to fame for closing red-light districts in her country. She was so influential that she recruited a former pimp to work with her. Kristof and WuDunn heard so much about her huge presence in the fight against trafficking that they were surprised to see how tiny she was when they met her. Krishnan's organization is called Prajwala which means an eternal flame.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn share what they learned on their many visits into third world nations where women have virtually no rights. By doing so, the authors describe that they are on a genuine mission to learn so that they can be more effective in retelling their experiences to their readers to attain deeper understanding and to stir emotions and empathy in them that will lead to charitable donations and volunteerism.

The authors point out that girls are raised from birth with the idea that they are subservient to men and must do as they are told. If girls have never been told otherwise, it's far less likely that they will come to the conclusion on their own that any other type of life exists. Why would they fight back if they don't know that there's any other way to live?

Kristof and WuDunn include the physicality of the slums of Kasturba Nagar in India to take the reader there. Readers can smell the raw sewage in the ditches and see the mud hut brothels where forced prostitution takes place. It is easier for the reader to envision the tragedy of the young girls – some not even ten years old – who are kidnapped and forced into this process in conditions that those in West could not imagine. The impassioned and detailed descriptions provided by the authors make the reality all too clear. Adding the corruption of criminal gangs that use rape as a means to intimidate and humiliate women layers more dismay to the situation.

The authors continue to stress that help is needed and than anyone can help. To prove this point and prod others to help, they provide the story of a young high school boy who became involved, raised money and resources and really made a difference. The authors draw a line between donating and helping with interference. Those from the West are viewed with suspicion by people in remote villages in developing nations. Kristof and WuDunn bring clarity what will really bring about change: resources given to local leaders who can help at the grassroots level.

Vocabulary

fetid, impunity, macabre, galvanic, charisma, philanthropic

Chapter 4: Rule by Rape

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn learned from surveys that a third of all women worldwide face domestic violence. The WHO reported that 30 - 60% of women in most countries are the victims of sexual violence by intimate partners. Kristof and WuDunn point out that a rape victim is not only injured, she is humiliated. As such, many do not report the crimes. The first sexual experience that many women in developing nations like Ghana and Nigeria have is rape. Women in Bangladesh face retribution for spurning a man's attention. Kristof and WuDunn write that it has become a common practice in this nation for men to throw sulfuric acid in the faces of women who turned down their sexual overtures.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Woineshet Zebene of Ethiopia lived in a world of sexual predation where kidnapping and rape are the norm and expected. The parents of young girls rarely bring charges against the rapist because it would shine the light of shame on their daughters. Ethiopian law provides that a man cannot be prosecuted for violating a woman or girl he later married. Kristof and WuDunn visited Woineshet and her father to learn about the dire circumstances that face young village girls. Her father told Kristof and WuDunn that stealing a goat resulted in more punishment than kidnapping a young girl.

Zebene shyly described to Kristof and WuDunn how she was kidnapped and raped at the age of 13. She was beaten and raped for two days and escaped when neighbors reported the incident to police. It was a custom for a rapist to marry a victim, but Zebene and her father decided that she would refuse the offer and report the rape to the courts. Kristof and WuDunn learned that she received support from an American organization called Equality Now that fights against the abuse of women worldwide. Kristof and WuDunn learned that even when laws against trafficking or abuse of women are in place, they are rarely enforced.

Kristof and WuDunn discuss sexism and misogyny and why women through the ages and in all cultures have been singled out for sexual humiliation and abuse. The authors believe that change can only come through education and leadership on the local level although outside organizations and individuals can have positive impact. Kristof and WuDunn write that in 2007, U.S. Senators Joseph Biden and Richard Lugar introduced the International Violence Against Women Act. The legislation provides \$175 million annually for the prevention of honor killings, bride burnings, genital mutilation, acid attacks, gang rapes and other abuse against women. The high-profile legislation has had a positive impact around the world.

Kristof and WuDunn tell of the horrors of Mukhtar Mai who lived in a village in southern Punjab. She was sentenced to gang rape to cover up the gang rape of her brother by a heterosexual men. It was expected that she would take her life since such humiliation



often results in suicide, but her parents prevented her from doing so. Kristof and WuDunn write that Mai's humiliation eventually turned to rage which compelled her to report the crime to the police. Surprisingly, the men were prosecuted.

President Pervez Musharraf upon learning of the incident sent Mai reparations of \$8,300 which she used for the construction of a school for her village. Kristof's columns about Mai's ordeal brought her \$430,000 from his readers. Mai continued to face adversity and anger from the people and the state, but she fought on. She became an advocate for other young girls in her village who were suffering from abuse. She faced continued harassment, including death threats, from the government and was ostracized by many Pakistanis who formerly supported her. Her courage inspired other young Pakistani women to follow in her footsteps.

Analysis

As in previous chapters, Kristof and WuDunn mix empirical evidence with statistics like those from the World Health Organization. Including real numbers with their personal experiences lends more credibility to the message they are attempting to send. Writing to a reading audience that is undoubtedly chiefly Western, the writers are aware of the reader's incredulity when reading that practices like a man throwing sulfuric acid into the face of a woman who refused his sexual advances are accepted and common. People in the first world cannot fathom such atrocities and will react in a visceral manner that will compel some to do what they can to help. Bottom line, this book is written as a study in human behavior but above and beyond that it is a call for help.

Kristof and WuDunn portray the lawlessness of societies that allow laws to be broken with impunity – another concept that will jar the minds of those in the West. While nations of the first world order certainly have their own corruption to deal with, the blatant disregard that exists in the small villages of developing nations for the abuse of those without power and voice is a clarion call for help. As alluded to previously, the structure of the retelling of the tragic lives of women at risk is not achieved by accident. The writers develop vivid and granular accounts of the pain and suffering that are an accepted part of the lives of so many women to gain the attention of those who can help.

The authors also provide a bright spot in this chapter as they do throughout their book. There are heroes who challenge the status quo and speak out against the atrocities that have been flung upon them. While these hardy individuals are brave and have the spirit to pull themselves out of the morass and be a shining example to others, Kristof and WuDunn stress that support from the West is vital to support these intrepid souls and create others.

Vocabulary

endemic, predation, mollified, impervious, prurient, misogyny, anomaly



Chapter 5: The Shame of “Honor”

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that killing a girl who doesn't bleed on her wedding night is a religious rite and an accepted practice in some cultures. The Bible advocates stoning girls to death if they don't bleed on their wedding nights. In China starving a woman is preferable to a woman losing her chastity. Kristof and WuDunn explain that this cult of virginity results in the abuse and killing of women for “sexual honor.” There are also honor killings that result when a girl has shamed the family name by sexual behavior or is dating an unacceptable man. Ironically, it is the most conservative cultures with the strictest moral codes that advocate the ultimate crime of murder.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Du'a Aswad, a Kurdish girl in northern Iraq, fell in love with a Sunni Arab boy. She stayed out too long one night leading the parents and community to believe that she had sex with the boy. She was dragged out of the village elder's house by eight men who murdered her in front of the entire village. It took 30 minutes to stone her to death. Kristof and WuDunn learned that the UN Population Fund estimates that 5,000 honor killings take place each year. Kristof and WuDunn believe that number is too low. There are also honor rapes that are perpetrated to humiliate the victim and/or disgrace her clan.

Kristof and WuDunn report that Darfur militias gang-rape women and cut their ears off so they are forever marked as rape victims. In some Islamic nations, a woman who claims rape must have the testimony of four male Muslims who were eyewitnesses to the rape. The authors report that a UN report claimed that 90% of girls over the age of three were sexually abused in Liberia during the nation's civil war. In their research, Kristof and WuDunn learned that the eastern Congo was the rape capital of the world. To intimidate the populace, the militia were known to rape young girls with sticks, knives and bayonets. Their victims have been as young as six. Rape was considered a “weapon of war.” After one young girl was raped, a stick was jammed inside of her ripping her rectum and bladder. The girl believed her case to be hopeless but she was treated by HEAL Africa and recovered from her egregious wounds. After being repaired she lamented that she would just be raped again when she returned home.

Kristof and WuDunn visited Laurent Nkunda, one of the warlords, who was implicated in the mass rapes. Nkunda portrays himself to be a Pentecostal pastor. He told Kristof and WuDunn that he had never raped any girl. His only soldier who raped a girl was executed. A 16-year-old that the authors talked to named Noel told them that it was a soldier's right to rape any girl he encountered. Kristof and WuDunn report that women have suffered grievous abuse in the face of genocide in Rwanda and Darfur. After a slaughter, women are made to collect firewood. They run the risk of being raped while outside but the men in the family will be shot on sight – the lesser of two evils at work.



Kristof and WuDunn advise youngsters who ask how they can help to get out and see the world. It's great to donate to charities, but to fully understand a problem takes a hands-on approach. The authors feel that American students are shortchanged because most graduate college without knowledge of poverty either at home or abroad. The authors feel that college students should be required to visit impoverished communities. While there is an element of danger in traveling into some violent areas, Western visitors are generally treated well in the majority of countries. Kristof and WuDunn note that most of the charities and aid organizations mentioned in this book eagerly accept volunteers.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn are sophisticated and bright journalists who understand that developing nations aren't just unfortunate to be filled with men who were born evil and who prey upon innocent women. There are reasons beyond sheer evil as to why the mistreatment and abuse and even murder of these women occur and why it has in some cases endured for centuries. When a statement that portrays a starving woman as preferable to a woman losing her chastity, it is clear that the causation for the abuse of women runs deeply and is firmly implanted in the very fiber of these cultures.

When a culture can justify the burning of a bride who is suspected of having lost her virginity before her marriage, there is more at work than just mean men. The men of such a culture have been taught that they have a right to punish women for perceived sins. Likewise, women have been taught that they should be punished – but that doesn't ease the pain of being burned to death. A woman in many Muslim nations cannot report a rape unless she has four Muslim men to back up her claim. Since rapes generally occur outside the view of others, this requirement is inane at its foundation, the authors point out.

The authors encourage those who are moved by the tragedy of these women to see this world for themselves. They offer this advice because they have lived it. Kristof and WuDunn understand that when these victims of backward societies are seen as living, breathing women and not as statistics, the abuse they suffer from invades one's minds and crosses way beyond the invisible line of acceptance that each of us have within us.

Vocabulary

chastity, paradox, sanctimonious, genocide, mandatory, maelstrom



Chapter 6: Maternal Mortality

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn believe that the cruelty of indifference ranks up there with the abuse that many women suffer around the world. Most women who are injured or maimed receive no medical help for their recovery. In Ethiopia girls are sold to do manual labor or to become wives. Mahabouba a teenager in Ethiopia was sold to a 60-year-old man who made her his third wife. The first wife beat her savagely. Kristof and WuDunn report that Mahabouba was able to run away when she was seven-months pregnant. The girl tried to have the baby by herself but the baby got stuck in the birth channel and died. Mahabouba was unconscious for days and when she woke, the baby was dead and she couldn't walk and had no control over her bodily functions. Kristof and WuDunn report that the girl was left alone in hut without a door so that hyenas could eat her. She fended off the hyenas and fled to a Western mission in a nearby village where she was treated for her injuries and saved. Catherine Hamlin is the gynecologist who runs the mission hospital and who Kristof and WuDunn came to learn was considered a saint for saving so many girls suffering from fistulas.

Kristof and WuDunn explain that the most at-risk people in the world are those who inhabit sub-Saharan Africa where 11% of the global population suffer 24% of the world's diseases. Women in these regions suffer the most with death during childbirth at a global high. Kristof and WuDunn feel that the U.S. should lead a movement to save mothers in childbirth. Ninety-nine percent of these deaths occur in impoverished nations. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is the most common measure. The MMR in the U.S. is 11 while the MMR in South Asia is 490, 900 in Sub-Saharan Africa and 2,100 in Sierra Leone – the highest in the world. Kristof and WuDunn learned that maternal morbidity – injuries during childbirth – include even larger numbers of women.

Kristof and WuDunn write that they met Simeesh Segaye when she was a fistula patient in the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. After experiencing an extremely difficult childbirth in which her baby died, she was debilitated by fistulae that crippled her and caused the constant leaking of urine and feces. She was shunned by everyone in her village; she was ordered off a bus because of the odor she emitted. Kristof and WuDunn write that her husband left Segaye and her parents built a separate hut for her because of the odor. Kristof and WuDunn learned that 90% of fistula patients commit suicide. She literally laid on the ground for two years when she decided to starve herself. Her parents took her to a hospital where she was referred to the fistula hospital. Kristof and WuDunn write that Segaye suffered many complications from her conditions which had to be addressed before fistula surgery. But finally she had the operation and made a full recovery.

Kristof and WuDunn write that when Allan Rosenfield was a medical student he was appalled at the suffering of rural Korean during childbirth. They sustained horrific injuries that are unimagined in first world nations. Kristof and WuDunn report that Rosenfield



later took a position at a medical school in Lagos, Nigeria, to lead a campaign to assist poor women in family planning and childbirth. Rosenfield spent six years in Thailand in a similar role. Once back in the states, he headed the Center for Population and Family Health at Columbia University in New York where he developed a global network to help impoverished women around the globe. With the help of Bill and Melinda Gates, he founded the Averting Maternal Death and Disability in 1999 which is now saving lives in fifty poor countries. Kristof and WuDunn saw the results of Rosenfield's work first hand when they visited the Zinder clinic in Niger.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn focus on maternal mortality – a condition that in developed nations has been nearly eradicated. The authors stress the indifference and lack of maternity facilities as the root cause of this unnecessary atrocity. It is a further attempt by the authors to draw a comparison in the minds of Western readers between their reality and that of third world nations. The authors want the reader to feel outrage that childbirth in the twenty-first century is one of the major causes of death of women in childbearing years in third world nations.

To support their anecdotal accounts of actual women who suffer from maternal mortality or morbidity, the authors provide statistics that the most at-risk women dwell in sub-Saharan Africa. The authors compare the death rates between the advanced world with those in that region which are aimed at engendering shock and sympathy. Kristof and WuDunn even make the suggestion that the West should lead a movement to save these women.

Kristof and WuDunn provide accounts of women who make it through difficult childbirth – some having babies by themselves – who suffer from fistulae forming in their bladders and rectums causing major damage. The writers underscore the pain and humiliation of this condition which causes a constant leaking of feces and urine unless surgically repaired. Any woman or man in the West will be moved hearing in granular terms what having this condition does to a woman's physical and emotional health.

Kristof and WuDunn intend to plant the image of the suffering women in the minds of their readers in hopes of recruiting help in relieving the misery of these suffering women. The authors stress that this fistula condition would be eradicated if these women had adequate medical attention. The authors are using their voices in place of voices that are ignored or made to be silent.

Vocabulary

diffuse, self-mocking, sacrilegious, galvanized, exasperation, colostomies



Chapter 7: Why Do Women Die in Childbirth

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn list the main physical causes for maternal mortality but point out that there are also sociological and biological factors to blame. In a small hospital in Cameroon, Kristof and WuDunn visited Prudence who was in labor with her fourth child. But there were complications – her cervix was blocked and she needed a c-section. The family didn't have the \$100 that the procedure would cost.

Kristof and WuDunn report that Dr. Pascal Pipi told the authors that Prudence's fetus had died and was rotting and poisoning Prudence. Pipi would only operate on Prudence in an effort to save her life if the family paid the \$100. Kristof and WuDunn agreed to pay the fee and, because Prudence needed a transfusion, to also donate blood. Three days after the surgery, Prudence died. Kristof and WuDunn write that in addition to the ruptured uterus there were other factors that led to the deaths of women like Prudence: biology, lack of education, lack of a rural health system and disregard for women.

In many societies of yore, there were theological or mythological reasons why women should suffer in childbirth. Kristof and WuDunn write that after anesthesia was developed it was years before it was administered to women giving birth, because so many believed they were supposed to suffer. Poverty also has an impact on maternal mortality rates. Sri Lanka has had extraordinary success in bringing down the maternal maternity rate not because of money invested in the effort but because the country made it a priority to do so. Kristof and WuDunn write that in addition to establishing a nation-wide health system, Sri Lanka also trained a large network of midwives. Family planning and delayed marriages also brought mortality rates down. A healthy diet and Vitamin A supplements further improved conditions for successful pregnancies. Kristof and WuDunn write that a new program has been implemented in India that actually pays women to have their babies in health centers.

Kristof and WuDunn write about programs that were not as successful like the WHO finding that the improvement in primary care was key in reducing the maternal mortality rate; however, the focus was on saving the baby with less focus on the life of the mother. Dr. Rosenfield believed that the most important element in reducing the death rate was to provide emergency obstetric services. However, providing these services requires costly facilities and resources.

Kristof and WuDunn write that some facilities place doctors without formal degrees on their staffs and nurses are trained to administer anesthesia instead of hiring doctors. Kristof and WuDunn encountered a woman in Ethiopia who had not attended even elementary school but was successfully trained in fistula surgery. It is common in poor countries for nurses and midwives to perform C-sections. Since there maternal health



has no natural worldwide constituency, there is no direct focus on the issue like there is on AIDS and malaria. Kristof and WuDunn do not advocate the soft-soaping of the costs involved – the estimates are \$9 billion a year to rein in the epidemic of maternal mortality. They underscore that saving lives should be the imperative not the cost consideration.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Edna Adan first shocked people by learning to read. Her pioneering spirit only gathered steam as the years went on until she astonished visitors to the Horn of Africa where she founded an idyllic maternity hospital. Kristof and WuDunn write that Edna grew up in Hargeisa, a desert town that had nothing to offer girls – not even schools. She was at the advantage of having a physician father, a celebrated leader in Somaliland. Despite her higher class upbringing, Edna was subjected to female circumcision while her father was out of town. Kristof and WuDunn learned that he cried when he returned to learn what had happened to his daughter. Kristof and WuDunn write that after retiring from her position as a WHO official, she focused on fulfilling her dream of establishing a hospital. It was quite a challenge but Edna founded the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Somaliland.

Analysis

Authors Kristof and WuDunn use an anecdotal case to underscore the lack of medical ethics in third world nations – ethics that Westerners have come to expect of their doctors and medical facilities. The authors understand that people in first world nations like the U.S. and Europe who are fortunate enough to have outstanding medical care find it difficult to fathom an existence in which one has to barter with a doctor who withholds treatment until he is paid in advance. That is not only unethical in the West it is against the physician's oath. But in third world nations, there is indifference and an every-man-for-himself kind of environment.

The authors are not only informing their readers about the atrocities that exist for women in third world nations, they are educating the readers on the multi-layered barriers to change. They point out that women's suffering has been part of cultures for centuries. In fact, according to some religious beliefs women are supposed to suffer in childbirth. By unpacking the multi-layered obstacles that keep these women from experiencing normal pre-natal care and childbirth, Kristof and WuDunn expose the difficult challenges that those who want to help have facing them. The authors are open about what it would cost to bring the developing nations into the present. Again, the authors more than suggest that it is the West who can save these women with their support and charitable donations. It is their only hope.

Kristof and WuDunn get to one of the roots of the entire problem by focusing on the lack of education for these suffering women. In many of the cultures, even learning to read is a punishable offense for a woman. However, it is the education of these women that will help solve the problems. Having an education gives a person confidence and self-worth. The authors use the example of a woman who broke through many of the taboos to



gain an education and become an inspiration to other women. The authors offer her story up as a beacon of hope.

Vocabulary

eclampsia, excoriated, visceral, audacious, protocol, nomadic



Chapter 8: Family Planning and the “God Gulf”

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that Rose Wanjera a 26-year-old Kenyan who was pregnant came to a maternity clinic one afternoon. Despite her college education, she came to a slum clinic. She was diagnosed with a serious infection that threatened her life and the life of her baby. Kristof and WuDunn write that she was enrolled in a safe-baby program. The clinic had been run by a charitable organization called Marie Stopes International. However, President George W. Bush slashed funds because some of the funds were used for abortions in China. The action eliminated the staff of specialists that Rose needed. According to Kristof and WuDunn, the pressure to end the funding originated from Christian and right-wing organizations.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Republican presidents have vowed to end medical funding to women’s clinics in foreign nations if abortions were included as one of their services. What resulted were more unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and the death of girls and women. Although UNFPA did not provide an abortion service because they held discussions with China on population control, conservative activists assumed that such discussion was a smokescreen for abortions. President Reagan reduced funding and President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush both ultimately ended funding all together. Kristof and WuDunn report that UNFPA has done important work for women’s health including the widespread use of safe IUDs which prevented unwanted pregnancies and, therefore, abortions. Right-wing conservatives often ruin good-health programs in their goal to eradicate abortion.

Kristof and WuDunn believe that it is scandalous that 122 million modern-day women seek contraception choices but have no access to it. However, contraception programs that have existed are not always successful but many have modest success in reducing population growth. Kristof and WuDunn write that the solution to population growth is a combination of the availability of contraceptives, education on family planning and focus on good child health care. Differences between men and women also impact population growth. Some men, the authors write, want to plant their seed to pass on their genes often without little thought about caring for the children.

Kristof and WuDunn state that family planning is crucial for the fight against AIDS. It was criminal that AIDS was allowed to rise to epidemic portions because of indifference to the disease that was initially centered in the male homosexual community. Kristof and WuDunn cite what they consider sanctimonious opinion makers like Patrick Buchanan who in 1983 basically said that homosexual men were getting what they deserved. Also, the authors explain, right-wing conservatives are against educating youngster on condom use because they feel it might encourage sex.



Kristof and WuDunn point out that condoms have helped prevent the spread of AIDS and other STDs and are cost effective. Surprisingly, it was a Republican president, George W. Bush, who supported abstinence but also backed a condom distribution program and is credited with helping to reduce the spread of AIDS. Kristof and WuDunn relate accounts of other legislators who have backed key legislation in support of women's health. AIDS is transmitted at a higher rate in Africa than in America partly because the health care in the U.S. is so much better than in Africa.

Catholic Relief Services fights poverty on a worldwide basis. A quarter of all AIDS care workers is sponsored by churches. For the sake of the ill and suffering, the beliefs of a faith-based organization that provides help should not be a barrier to those who disagree with their religion. Kristof and WuDunn report that there is a Pentecostal boom in Africa with good and questionable effects. Pentecostals believe that everyone such speak up and preach including women. They discourage drinking and adultery. However, the authors point out, they sometimes offer congregants the false hope that God will keep them safe from AIDS.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn point out the impact that faith and religion has on helping the suffering women of the third world by citing how Republican presidents, under pressure from their evangelical constituents, have cut funding of certain foreign aid if it is even suspected that some of it would finance abortions. The frustration of making progress and then to be thwarted by the only hope the suffering women of developing nations had comes through the pages from the authors.

One of these agencies merely discussed family planning with officials of overpopulated China but it was enough for calls from the religious right to demand that the funding be ended. The authors point out the irony that one of the slashed programs ended the distribution of IUDs which led to more pregnancies and then to more abortions – the very procedures the religious right wants to eradicate.

The authors provide other examples of narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy from the West which throw up more barriers to relief and solutions. Kristof and WuDunn write about another right-wing mindset that they believe allowed the spread of AIDS – many conservatives believed that AIDS was a God-sent punishment for homosexual men who were “getting what they deserved.” The authors use this example in hopes of convincing those who can help to not allow biases and prejudices to get in the way of helping those who suffer needlessly. The authors balance the harm done by some of faith with the help that others provide.

Catholic Relief Services fights poverty and debilitating diseases like AIDS on a global basis. The authors caution that all religious help is not positive, however. The authors provide the example of Pentecostal missionaries who bring much needed help to the suffering women but they mislead them that God will keep them safe from AIDS. By describing the help and harm that the West can bring to these suffering regions, the



authors are underscoring that helping them is complicated and that they are dealing with a people that is fragile and hopeless.

Vocabulary

consortium, profound, zealotry, discordant, inherent



Chapter 9: Is Islam Misogynistic?

Summary

It is against the Islam religion for a woman to be examined by a male doctor. Kristof and WuDunn write that the majority of the countries with practices like honor killings and genital cutting are Muslim. Hinduism subscribes to the practice of burning brides who are exposed to have lost their virginity before marriage. The authors report that women in predominately Muslim countries are the least educated in the world. The authors also point out that Mexico and Latin America, often thought to be impoverished and socially backward, provide good education for girls and have established maternity hospitals in poor neighborhoods.

According to Kristof and WuDunn, in many Muslim countries, women are not considered to be equals of men. One sheikh declared that it was evil for women to “mix with men.” Kristof and WuDunn have concluded that these conditions are not the result of Islamic beliefs but, rather, societal mores developed independent of the Koran. Kristof and WuDunn write that the Koran does declare that a woman’s testimony is only half as important as a man’s. When outdated statements arise in the Bible, the authors writer, Christians and Jews ignore them, while the Muslims are inclined to take them at word value. However, modern Muslims are pushing for gender equality.

Kristof and WuDunn write that many Muslims have denounced slavery even though it is mentioned in the Koran indicating they could allow change in other areas. Kristof and WuDunn believe that prominent Muslim women like Queen Rania of Jordan and Sheikha Mozah, the first lady of Qatar, are exhibiting leadership in women’s causes. Soraya Salti is a Jordanian woman who is teaching boys and girls how to develop business plans. However, even some leading women in the Muslim world believe that young girls should be prosecuted and jailed if after inspection it is confirmed that they do not have hymens. One girl was jailed to protect her from her family who planned to kill her because she refused to marry her cousin.

It is the opinion of Kristof and WuDunn that the rise of terrorism can, in part, be blamed on the over-population of young men. Societies that have more men than women are more likely to become violent and crime-ridden. Kristof and WuDunn believe that since women don’t have a voice in Muslim countries, the power of men is even more enhanced. There are more young adult men than young adult women in many Muslim countries because boys and men receive better health care. Kristof and WuDunn write that countries that repress women are usually economically challenged because they don’t exploit the talents of close to half of their populations. The authoritarian and patriarchal strongman governments in Muslim countries are mirrored in the individual homes of its citizens.

The most progress in women’s rights has been made in Afghanistan after the U.S. defeated the Taliban in 2001. According to Kristof and WuDunn, a flood of aid programs



poured into the country once the Taliban scattered. The authors learned that the Afghans were a little apprehensive about the Westerners who suddenly appeared in their country. Giving out soap to the women shocked the people because washing with soap was an after-sex practice. It is the opinion of Kristof and WuDunn that Westerners can help people in isolated societies like Afghanistan by writing checks. Local Afghan Muslims like Sakena Yacoobi who established clinics around the country are more trusted by the people. Kristof and WuDunn write that Sakeena believes that a healthy lifestyle and a good education go hand-in-hand because it's impossible to learn with an empty stomach. Even though she is an Afghan, Yacoob has bodyguards and gets death threats every day chiefly because of her focus on the education of women.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn focus on the debilitating impact that religion within third world nations have on women. It isn't lost on the reader by this time that it is women who suffer the most from religious beliefs, economic issues, the lack of education and adequate healthcare. It is also not lost on the reader that it is men who are in charge of the nations and villages in which women suffer and are most at risk.

While most of the focus prior to this point has been about the lack of women's rights in Africa and Asia, the authors focus on the impact of religions like Islam and Hindu that are behind some of the suffering of women. The authors are careful not to deride these religions and their rituals but point them out and the resultant suffering they cause. Hinduism believes that brides who had lost their virginity before marriage should be, or can be, burned. The authors recognize the chilling impact that such beliefs have upon those outside that religion, particularly in the West where they hope to recruit the most help from.

The authors provide examples and anecdotal evidence but allow the readers to draw their own conclusions. Not many people in the developed world could have any understanding for such barbarous acts as the burning of young women. Kristof and WuDunn hope to convince more allies of the peril that the mistreatment of women causes on a larger, even global basis. Boys and men receive better medical care than women do in Muslim countries. Therefore, there are more men who make it to adulthood, an adulthood with a scarcity of women.

Vocabulary

idyllic, chafed, burka, infidels, magisterial, modernity, insurgent, archipelago



Chapter 10: Investing in Education

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that when they were first married they met a young girl, Dai Manju, in the Dabie Mountains of central China. The family had no electricity, running water or any form of transportation. Kristof and WuDunn learned that Dai's parents were illiterate and that they saw no reason for a girl to be educated so she was forced to drop out of school after fifth grade. Although she had no pencils or papers, she had been the star pupil in her class.

Kristof wrote an article in the New York Times about Dai. A generous reader was inspired and wired \$10,000 to pay for her tuition. Kristof and WuDunn report that Dai graduated from elementary school, high school and accounting school. She obtained a good-paying job and helped her parents build a large new house. The money covered the education of several other girls in the village. Dai's is an example of the positive effect a girl's education can have on her family and community. However, according to Kristof and WuDunn, studies indicate that in general educated girls are from richer families.

Political and societal upheaval as found in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia are barriers to the education of girls. Kristof and WuDunn cite a report on the education of girls in Indonesia which found that educating girls keeps them from marrying young and they ultimately have fewer children.

Kristof and WuDunn report that the deworming of children in these impoverished regions benefit both the physical and intellectual growth of children. They also point out that educating and help young girls in the management of menstruation enhances their chances for a good education. Kristof and WuDunn point out that the iodizing of salt is important since iodine deficiency can reduce a child's IQ by up to 15 points. Paying poor families to keep their children in school is another way to further a child's education. Kristof and WuDunn report that this concept was transitioned into a formal anti-poverty program in Mexico called Oportunidades. The World Food Programme and UNICEF distribute food to rural schools so that students receive free lunches. The cost of such programs, according to Kristof and WuDunn, is about ten cents per meal.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Angeline Mugwendere did everything she could to stay in school. Her impoverished parents couldn't afford to send her to school but she'd cadge supplies and offer to do chores for her teachers – anything so she didn't have to quit school. Kristof and WuDunn learned that she scored number one in the nationwide six-grade graduation exams. She wanted to go on to high school but there was no way. However, Ann Cotton, a Welsh woman who was helping girls in Zimbabwe became interested in Angeline. Kristof and WuDunn write that Cotton had lost a child who was born with birth defects and did not live. She had other children but had vowed to honor the little daughter who lived only a few days. Kristof and WuDunn write that Cotton



began a master's program in human rights and education. As part of her program, she spent three weeks in Zimbabwe to study the low attendance rate of local girls. Kristof and WuDunn report that Cotton learned that the main reason was economics. She was stunned by the level of poverty that existed in the country.

Kristof and WuDunn write that upon her return to London, Cotton began raising money to send girls in Zimbabwe to school. Eventually, she formed the Campaign for Female Education or Camfed. One of the first girls Cotton sponsored was Angeline. Kristof and WuDunn write that Camfed eventually expanded into Zambia, Tanzania and Ghana and helps more than 400,000 children to attend school each year. Kristof and WuDunn believe that local customized programs like Camfed are more successful than large, unfocused programs from the UN or the like.

Analysis

The authors demonstrate that the women of third world nations can succeed and that there is hope. They provide a success story that they have first-hand knowledge of. To further their appeal for help for the suffering women of the third world, Kristof and WuDunn tell the story of their personal relationship with a young girl they met years before in China. In the darkness of the pain and misery that the book is largely focused upon, the story of Dai Manju is a shining example of what can result when a girl is given financial help and moral support.

The authors include Dai's story to demonstrate how the women of developing nations can rise above and become success stories with the help of others who care. Kristof tells how the power of the press and the spreading of the word about the suffering women can have positive and long-lasting impact. His article appearing in the widely-read New York Times led to a charitable donation that allowed Dai to have a good education that ultimately led to a well-paying job. The authors are telling their readers that their help is not only needed, but it will actually lead to good things.

Kristof and WuDunn stress the importance of the safety networks of education and access to good health care that will keep the women from remaining in the abyss. While the authors stress the need for donations from the West, they assert their belief that money rather than volunteerism is the most helpful. Since the people who are part of the culture understand it better than any outsider ever could, they recognized that leadership must come from within but donations from the West are crucial in supporting those who rise to leadership roles in these different cultures.

Vocabulary

exultant, vortex, indefatigably, philanthropic, cadged



Chapter 11: The Financial Revolution

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that Saima Muhammad of Lahore, Pakistan, was beaten by her husband every evening. The family was so poor that Muhammad had to send her daughter to live with relatives because they didn't have enough food. Kristof and WuDunn write that when Muhammad had a second daughter and a relative advised Muhammad's husband to marry another woman so he could have a boy, Muhammad was naturally upset prompting her to join a solidarity group organized by the Kashf Foundation.

Muhammad was given a small loan and she started a successful embroidery business. She was able to pay off the family debt, bring her daughter back home and renovate the house. They were the only family in the community to have a TV. Her husband was content to loaf around the house and even happily accepted a third daughter. Kristof and WuDunn report that Muhammad intends to send all three of her daughters to school.

Kristof and WuDunn explain that Muhammad is a benefactor of the microcredit revolution taking place in the developing world. The authors add that microfinance is raising the status of women and protecting them from abuse, as most microfinance loans are made to women. Social issues like family planning and education are discussed at the meetings. Men allow their wives to leave their homes alone because they bring home money.

Roshaneh Zafar is the Pakistani woman who founded Kashf. She had a position at the World Bank but decided she could do more important work by establishing her own foundation. Kristof and WuDunn write that Zafar faced many obstacles – religious, societal and economic – but devised a financial system for impoverished women in third world countries. Kristof and WuDunn add that Kashf became a huge success by 2009 when Zafar employed 1,000 employees and had 300,000 clients.

Kristof and WuDunn report that microfinance has not been as successful in Africa as in Asia due in part to the general poorer health in Africa from AIDS, malaria and complications from childbirth. According to Zafar, microfinance is not the only answer to a better life – good health and education are also crucial. The authors write that most microfinancial loans are made to women because they are deemed more reliable in paying back the loans. Men tend to waste money on tobacco, alcohol and prostitutes. The authors add that women are also the focus of most anti-poverty programs because they generally suffer more than men. Putting money in the hands of women, the authors state, assures that it will be spent more wisely.

Kristof and WuDunn write that families are generally healthier in developing nations when women are in charge of the finance. A U.S. foreign aid program called Millennium



Challenge has encouraged recipients to revise legal codes for the protection of women. Kristof and WuDunn write that some activists push for women in impoverished areas to enter politics and run for government positions. Women are seen as more empathetic than men and more capable of making compromises, the authors write. Women who assume leadership roles in small communities are generally more effective in having positive impacts on women's issues than those who run a state or nation. Kristof and WuDunn point out that after women got the vote in the U.S., more attention was paid to health, education and domestic and societal issues.

Kristof and WuDunn describe Goretti Nyabenda as a prisoner in her own hut in Burundi. She could only leave when her husband gave her permission. The authors add that she had no education and could not have or spend money. Nyabenda joined a new CARE association in her village and ultimately was elected its president. The women in the group pool their money for loans which they make interest on. Nyabenda's husband had more respect for her after she defied him and improved her lot in life. Kristof and WuDunn write that the group expanded their focus to education, health care and other women's issues.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn provide an example of a woman who puts her anger and frustration to good use. When Saima Muhammad's mother-in-law told Muhammad's husband – right in front of Muhammad – that he should get another wife because Muhammad had delivered him two daughters and no sons, Muhammad was devastated. But she soon turned her sadness into action by deciding to take her life into her own hands. Through an aid organization, she was able to get a loan and grow a successful business.

The authors included Muhammad's story because it is an example that the suffering women of developing nations can strike out and better their lives. There is the caveat that depending on the culture and circumstances could be fatal. But the authors include this story because it shows that helping women in these dire circumstances can have positive results.

To demonstrate that there is economic help that is coming within, the authors provide the readers with information about microfinancing that is having a huge impact on the economies of third world nations and even on the economies of remote villages. By focusing on this innovative economic system, the authors are telling prospective donors that many of these people are trying to help themselves. Combining an effective economic system within these nations with donations from the West and foreign aid, the potential for change is made stronger.

Based on empirical as well as statistical studies, ironically it is the beleaguered woman in developing nations who is the beacon of hope. Kristof and WuDunn report that families and communities are generally healthier when women are in charge of the finances.

Vocabulary

exacerbated, solidarity, emancipated, pragmatic, cadre, panacea, profligate, apartheid, conciliatory, venerable

Chapter 12: The Axis of Equality

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that Zhang Yin, a Chinese woman, began her career making \$6 a month taking care of her siblings became a tycoon in the paper business, founding her own company in Hong Kong. She and her husband focused on the purchase of American scrap paper which was valuable in China. Kristof and WuDunn report that Yin and her husband moved to Los Angeles so they could ship paper back to China cheaply in empty container ships. They then opened a paper manufacturing company, Nine Dragons Paper, back in China. Their American recycling business was called America Chung Nam and became the biggest American exporter to China in volume. By 2006, Yin was worth \$4.6 billion.

Kristof and WuDunn report that Chinese women are on the top of many wealthiest people lists. China has allowed an even playing field for women. China overcame many sexist traditions that were in effect as recently as 100 years ago. Kristof and WuDunn write that at the time, women were required to bind their feet so they stayed small, young girls were forced into marriages, were sold, not allowed to have educations and female infanticide was common. In rural areas, daughters didn't even have names – they were “No. 1” and “No. 2,” etc.

Kristof and WuDunn report that although Communism caused death and despair there was one bright spot – Mao Tse-Tung did abolish child marriage, prostitution and concubinage. The authors point out that China still faces challenges in gender equality but all in all has made phenomenal advancements from where they started in a relatively short period of time. Chinese women are excelling in math and science and in champion chess. Kristof and WuDunn explain that China is an important model because of its advancements in women's rights preceded significant economic growth. This is also true in other countries that have allowed women an even playing field.

Kristof and WuDunn describe a relationship between a woman in Brooklyn and a woman in Rwanda that began on the Internet. Murvelene wanted to make regular donations to a charity and found an organization called Women for Women International. Kristof and WuDunn write that Murvelene opted to donate \$27 a month to a Rwandan woman named Claudine who was the only survivor of her family in the genocide. She was raped at 13 and became pregnant. Claudine was alone and had her baby by herself. She went through several rough years but things turned around for her when she began receiving the money from Murvelene. Kristof and WuDunn write that she had enough money to care for her kids, accumulate savings and enroll in training classes.

Kristof and WuDunn write that Zainab Salbi grew up in Iraq during the Iran/Iraq war. Her father was Saddam Hussein's pilot; her mother was a biologist. Salbi called Saddam “uncle.” Kristof and WuDunn pointed out that she and her family lived a privileged life



but the specter of doom was ever present. There were rumors of Saddam and his sons raping and abusing women. Kristof and WuDunn note that it was after Salbi's marriage some years later that she felt compelled to help women after reading about Serbian soldiers gang-raping women in rape camps as a military strategy to spread terror. She and her husband established Women for Women in Bosnia in their basement. Kristof and WuDunn report that they raised funds and traveled to the Balkans to meet the abused women. Eventually they moved their successful operations to other war-torn countries and became a \$20 million organization. Kristof and WuDunn point out that she never mentioned her early relationship with Saddam. However, inspired by the brave women she dealt with, she eventually told the world about her connection with him.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn focus on China and the relatively quick rise of Chinese women into positions of authority and on the positive impact they had on the Chinese economy. The authors focus on the rapid evolution of Chinese women to emphasize the positive impact that equal rights and opportunities for women can have. While the authors emphasize that change is usually accomplished at a snail's pace, the transition that took place for women in China was relatively rapid.

It was just 100 years ago that Chinese women had to tape their feet to keep them from growing so that they looked like children's feet. Kristof and WuDunn contrast the plight of African and Asian women with Chinese women who just a relatively short time ago were sold and not allowed to have an education during a time when female infanticide was common. The authors convey the hope for those suffering today that perhaps the transition might be faster than anyone imagined. But the underlying message is that in order to effect change, the West must help them.

The authors focus on an internal aid organization that grew out of a war-torn country suggesting another way to funnel assistance to the suffering. One of the founders of Women for Women was so inspired by the bravery of the women they rescued that she was compelled to divulge information about herself that she had been reluctant to share. Kristof and WuDunn point this out to demonstrate that both those who give and those who receive can benefit from helping women at risk.

Vocabulary

arbitrage, recalibration, autonomy, chauvinistic, proximity



Chapter 13: Grassroots vs. Treetops

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn write that the genital cutting of young girls has been an on-going tradition in third world nations for centuries. There is a new movement led by an American woman who lived in Senegal for many years. Kristof and WuDunn note that this practice may soon be eradicated in West Africa. The majority of genital cutting is practiced in Africa by Muslims although some Christian families in Africa also follow the tradition that goes back centuries. Kristof and WuDunn write that the UN estimates some 3 million girls are cut each year in Africa alone. These cuttings also take place to a lesser degree in parts of the Middle East and Asia. Kristof and WuDunn explain that the reasoning behind the practice is the belief that by reducing the sexual pleasure of a girl she is less likely to be promiscuous. Kristof and WuDunn describe a video of an eight-year-old being subjected to the practice stating it was excruciating to watch. Some girls die in the process.

Kristof and WuDunn write that the UN took up the cause, using the term “female genital mutilation” or FGM. Laws were passed against the practice in 15 African countries and a media campaign spread the word about the horrific practice. But Kristof and WuDunn point out these laws are generally not enforced. More than 90% of Sudanese girls are still cut. Kristof and WuDunn describe how the locals claim the practice as part of their culture and that it is not America’s concern.

Kristof and WuDunn write that the most successful campaign waged against FGM was that by Tostan, a West African group founded by Molly Melching from Danville, Illinois, which didn’t lecture women about the practice but encouraged them to talk about their experience and express their feelings about it. Melching saw the need to educate the women and teach them to read and write. Kristof and WuDunn point out that Melching learned how the women felt and why mothers agree to have their daughters cut.

Melching was married to a Senegalese man and had a daughter who told her mother she wanted to be cut because all her friends were being cut. Kristof and WuDunn note that the girl changed her mind when Melching explained in detail what the cutting involved. Melching has made detailed information about cutting as part of the overall educational program she developed. After being educated about the practice, more and more women announced that they would stop having their daughters cut; however, these women were initially ostracized and threatened by other villagers. Kristof and WuDunn note that Melching believes the only change that will be long-lasting is one that occurs slowly and that comes from the people. Tostan is rated as having the most success in the eradication of the process. The authors note that other charitable groups are also beginning to have success.

Kristof and WuDunn conclude that the most successful projects to improve the life of women in developing nations have started at the grassroots level. The local people take



ownership of the process with a goal for success. Kristof and WuDunn write that high school student Jordana Confino of New Jersey found a way to participate in a grassroots movement to help women. She represents the emergence of the part-time aid worker. Kristof and WuDunn write that Confino's mother kept her informed of world events, especially those focused on women's causes, from the time she was very young. In the eighth grade, Confino and another friend started a club to focus on women's issues called Girls Learn International. Confino and her friend raised money and visited other schools to recruit volunteers. Eventually there were chapters of the club around the country. Kristof and WuDunn note that the organization focused on the importance of educating illiterate women to increase their knowledge and strengthen their resolve.

Analysis

Kristof and WuDunn focus on female genital mutilation that takes place in mainly Muslim communities. The practice is egregious but Kristof and WuDunn issue a word of caution that rituals like this one are faith-based and tied to centuries of tradition, so lectures from the West will not simply eradicate it. Support is needed from the West but change for this and other practices that the West doesn't understand will take a soft and prolonged approach.

The authors cite that some success has been achieved in the eradication of FGM by a group that encourages women to discuss their issues and experiences. The group, Tostan, doesn't lecture the women or the community, they are allowing the change to come from within which the authors underscore is the only way that something as entrenched in the cultures as genital cutting can begin to lose its grip. To illustrate just how much cutting is part of these cultures, the authors point out that women schedule their daughters for cutting and some daughters asked to be cut because their friends are. The authors cite these cases to illustrate just how much this abhorrent ritual is part of the culture.

To appeal to students, Kristof and WuDunn write about the help that Girls Learning International has provided to third world women. The organization was founded by a student who raised money, spread the word to other schools and recruited volunteers. Kristof and WuDunn hope to plant a seed in the minds of other youngsters who could be inspired to emulate that success.

Vocabulary

anesthetic, infibulations, euphemistic, expatriate, grassroots

Chapter 14: What You Can Do

Summary

Kristof and WuDunn refer to America's struggle with equal rights for African-Americans. With the emergence of important high-profile figures like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and books like John Griffin's *Black Like Me*, the injustice that had been ignored was in everyone's face. Kristof and WuDunn point out that the pollution of air, land and sea seemed to be inevitable with the advancement of man. However, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* changed all that. The book led to the banning of DDT and other harmful pesticides and herbicides and to the eventual establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency. The authors parallel these societal shifts to the need for the world to face the horrors that women face especially in developing nations. They believe that a far-reaching movement for women's equality must be launched for the education, safety and health of girls around the globe.

Kristof and WuDunn caution that it is wrong-headed to think of sex-trafficking and mass rape as women's problems. They are everyone's problem and impact everyone's life and every nation's economy. Kristof and WuDunn point out that the British effort to end slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can stand as a model for such a movement. The authors write that slavery had been an accepted evil for all time. The ancient Greek and Roman philosophers had great empathy for everyone and everything except their slaves. There are references throughout the Bible to slaves. In the 1800s, slavery was an accepted and important part of the global economy. Kristof and WuDunn write that Britain turned the tide by banning slave trade in 1807 and in 1833 emancipated its slaves. For their efforts, Great Britain paid the price in damage to its economy and its geopolitical relationships and in the conflicts that arose over their monumental action.

Kristof and WuDunn write that leadership to make significant, sustained change must come from the grassroots of the developing world. The authors state that that kind of leadership and change is beginning to happen in India, Africa and the Middle East. However, local leaders need the support of the West in the huge challenges they face. Kristof and WuDunn point out those seemingly unrelated geopolitical challenges like terrorism can be better addressed with the liberation of women. Instead of throwing billions to fight terrorism after 9/11, the money could have been spent to expand successes such as educational and microfinancial programs which would have won the hearts of women instead of creating new terrorists and stirring more hatred.

The authors write that women are often more trainable than men and eager to better themselves. Kristof and WuDunn underscore the inanity of a nation that allows half its workforce to go untapped. Women's health and nourishment is also important in a nation's economy.



Kristof and WuDunn write that since the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam war movements, there has been an appreciable increase in women leaders for change in the U.S. Women have led in causes like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the many feminist movements. They add that women have assumed leadership roles in the academic world and in the management of charitable foundations. Wealthy American women who once were no-shows in the causes for women's rights are beginning to have direct participation.

Kristof and WuDunn believe that a new women's rights movement should focus on building coalitions across geopolitical lines; resist the temptation to overstate possible results; bring men into the fold; and, embrace change for all facets of women's suffering. They add that any successful movement must be ready to change and alter its course. Kristof and WuDunn write about the importance of introducing new ideas into isolated communities. Even TV shows that are focused on entertainment are educational for women who had never imagined how women in first world countries live.

Kristof and WuDunn believe that a new movement should focus on: maternal mortality, human trafficking, sexual violence and discrimination. The pathway toward solutions begins with education, micro-finance, family planning and women's empowerment. The UN has been diligent in issuing proclamations to help suffering women. But Kristof and WuDunn believe that local leadership and grassroots efforts are more likely to effect change.

Analysis

To bring possible donors and aid workers closer to the egregious problems facing women in developing nations, Kristof and WuDunn use examples that are more familiar to Americans. They draw comparisons to the fight for equal rights for African-Americans and focus on leaders that emerged in that cause like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. The authors stress the importance of leaders emerging at a grassroots level for real change to be effected. The authors caution, however, that these leaders need to be supported by the West, because local leaders understand how to make a difference but that difference is always costly and leaders rely on outside help to achieve change.

The authors point to the bravery of a nation as an example of how a people can provide inspiration that can lead to change. Kristof and WuDunn cite the example of Great Britain which, in the nineteenth century, was the first nation to denounce slavery and emancipate all slaves in the British Empire. It was risky – their economy and reputation both took on serious damage. But they did the right thing. Kristof and WuDunn use this example to inspire individuals and nations to do the right thing now.

Kristof and WuDunn cite successes that women have achieved in leading causes like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and feminist movements that have made real improvements and advancements in the lives and careers of women in the West. By making this comparison, the authors are attempting to parallel the successes that readers are acquainted with to the possibilities that await the leadership of women in



developing nations. The authors are signaling that there are women in those nations who will emerge and make a difference with the support of the West.

Vocabulary

abolition, dysfunctional, pragmatic, prodigy, suffrage, empirical



Important People

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn are the first married couple to win a Pulitzer Prize. WuDunn is the first Asian-American to win a Pulitzer. They are both high-profile foreign correspondents and editors for the New York Times. Kristof won a second Pulitzer for his reporting on the Darfur genocide. Kristof is a geopolitical opinion maker who appears on cable news programs and WuDunn is a former newscaster and business executive. The focus of their work has been largely upon the suffering of people in developing nations and shining light on issues that the West can help find solutions for.

Kristof and WuDunn recognize that they would not have come to the same opinions they did about the suffering of women in developing nations had they not personally visited them. When a young woman was dying from an infection from fistulae that developed from lack of health care facilities, Kristof and his videographer both donated blood for the surgery she needed. Kristof and WuDunn were also known to pay for the tuition of school girls who could not afford to pay for school themselves. Kristof and WuDunn knew how vital it was for young girls to get an education because it would better their individual lives and that of their family and village.

Kristof and WuDunn are modern-day crusaders for the equality of women around the world. Without trying to push Western ideas on cultures that have remained locked in their traditions for centuries, they try through education and gentle guidance to reach through those barriers and to guide suffering women into the twenty-first century. They recognize that they face a challenge of monumental proportions and that there is no silver bullet solution and that the transition will not be easy or quick.

Meena Hasina

Meena Hasina had been sold into the sex trafficking industry by her impoverished family. She was forced into prostitution at the age of twelve. She had a rebellious streak but it was beaten out of her. The prostitutes were not allowed to use condoms so it was not unusual for them to have children. Meena gave birth to two children both of whom were taken from her although they remained a part of the brothel. She sought help from local police but was only mocked and scolded by them before being returned to the brothel for another beating. Meena learned of plans to murder her because of her rebellious nature. She abandoned her children and ran away to Forbesgunge where she prostituted herself to support herself. A pharmacist became her protector and eventually they married and had two daughters. She returned to the brothel in an attempt to get her first two children back. She wanted to save her eldest daughter, Naina, who was approaching the age when she would be prostituted.



Meena's two children, Naina and Vivek, were terribly mistreated in the brothel and confused about their parentage and lied to about who their mother was. They were told at different times that a woman named Pinky was their mother or that their mother, Meena, was dead. These children never saw a doctor or spent one day at school. Vivek pleaded for his sister's freedom when she was being forced into prostitution. They heard Meena calling to them at various times.

Naina gave some tip money to Vivek in hopes that he could get someone to contact the woman who was calling to them. He eventually fled to Forbesgunge to try to find the woman. When he arrived in the village, he started calling her name. Meena heard the boy calling her name. They were both stunned when they faced each other. The reunion was joyful for both.

Meena was determined to rescue Naina. She begged Ruchira Gupta, head of Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an organization that fights sex slavery, to help her. The police had never raided any brothel in the Bihar State, but after hearing Meena's story, Ruchira decided that there was always a first time. The police raided the brothel and rescued Naina who was drugged and initially denied that Meena was her mother. Even though Meena and her children had been victims, they were stigmatized by the other villagers in Forbesgunge.

Edna Adan

Kristof and WuDunn write that Edna Adan always marched to a different drum in her village in the Horn of Africa. At a very young age she scandalized her village by learning to read at a time when girls were not educated nor allowed to read. The authors write that Adan went on to accomplish much more.

Against all odds she established the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Somaliland. After observing the great many deaths of women during childbirth she decided to take action. Kristof and WuDunn write that the hospital has 60 beds and a large staff. Edna's hospital has saved the lives of countless mothers and babies during its existence.

Mukhtar Mai

Kristof and DuWunn make the point that locals are often best suited to effect change in remote, isolated villages whose people do not trust outsiders like Westerners. One example of local leadership is the work done by Mukhtar Mai in her small village in southern Punjab. She never attended school because there were no schools for her to attend. Mukhtar was gang-raped as punishment for a perceived crime committed by her brother. While the logic is lost on Westerners, it was Mukhtar's reality. She was awarded a small compensation for the outrage and decided to use it to build a school for her village rather than use it on herself. Mukhtar writes that she understood the value of education and wanted the young girls of her village to have a better opportunity in life than she had. The new Mukhtar Mail School for Girls was built near her home in the village.



Ainul Bibi

Ainul Bibi was the “madam” at the brothel where Meena Hasina had been forced into prostitution as a young girl. Bibi groomed her own daughters for prostitution and ran the brothel with an iron will. To keep them in line, she routinely beat the prostitutes herself or would have family members beat them.

Ruchira Gupta

Ruchira Gupta founded the Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an organization that fights sex slavery and trafficking in Indian. Apne Aap is headquartered in Kolkata which was formerly named Calcutta. Gupta was a journalist grew up in the small village of Forbesgunge which gave her insight in the people and cultures of the people in small, isolated locations.

Kristof and WuDunn write that many charity workers were reluctant to work in villages like Forbesgunge because of the rampant crime that existed in the area. The authors describe Gupta as a fearless person who believed that her strong connections with national police would help make changes in the region. Her organization was successful in raiding brothels and rescuing young girls who’d been kidnapped and forced into prostitution.

Frank Grijalva

Frank Grijalva was the principal of Overlake School in Redmond, Washington, a private school for grades five through twelve. He sought a way to teach his upper middle class students about how some kids their ages lived across the globe from them. Kristof and WuDunn write that Grijalva was inspired by articles he read about the struggles of kids in Cambodia and decided to have his kids sponsor the building of a school in Cambodia. The authors write that with the permission of their parents, the kids went all out to raise money with activities like bake sales, car washes and talent shows. Along the way, the kids were educated about Cambodian history and its current challenges.

Natalie Hammerquist

Natalie Hammerquist was a 17-year-old student who traveled to Cambodia to learn firsthand the strife that young people in that nation were suffering under. Hammerquist was inspired by her trip and decided to take foreign languages in her last year in high school and more in college.

Hammerquist plans to pursue a career focusing on the empowerment of youth around the world. Kristof and WuDunn write that seeing Cambodia and meeting some of the young people there were pivotal in the direction Hammerquist life would be taking.



Harper McConnell

Harper McConnell was a student at the University of Minnesota when she took advantage of an opportunity that arose through her church to visit the Congo. She stayed in Goma with the British couple who founded the HEAL Africa hospital.

McConnell started a school for children awaiting medical treatment and a skills-training program for women admitted for surgery. Both programs were greeted with great enthusiasm. McConnell described the sacrifices she had to make in her transition from life in the U.S. to life in the Congo, but she told the authors that it was all worth it.

Mahdere Paulos

Mahdere Paulos is one of the women in developing nations that have emerged as a leader. She is the head of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association which files suits and lobbies to change laws. Since she was born and raised in the region, Paulos has an intimate understanding that change must first occur in the culture itself before the legal codes can really be effective. In addition to her legal work, Paulos is an activist for equality and education for women.



Objects/Places

The Sonagachi Project

Kristof and DuWunn Sonagachi, India, is a red-light district in Kolkata. It had been the locale for concubines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In current times there are hundreds of brothels in the region that contain more than 6,000 prostitutes.

Due to great concern that it would be a hotbed of the AIDS virus in the 90s, the Sonagachi Project was launched with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO). The project called for unionization of sex workers to encourage safe practices including condom use to reduce the spread of the HIV virus.

The Netherlands and Sweden

Kristof and WuDunn point out that The Netherlands and Sweden represent the contract between the criminalizing and legalizing prostitution. In 2000, the Netherlands legalized prostitution believing that the women would have better health care and that it would be easier to keep children from forced prostitution. In 1999, Sweden criminalized the procurement of sexual services. The prostitutes would not be prosecuted but the men who hired their services would face criminal charges.

After ten years, Kristof and WuDunn write, Sweden's approach has achieved more success in reducing trafficking and in reducing the overall number of prostitutes. The Netherlands plan has provided improved health care for prostitutes but there are no statistics to indicate that the incidence of AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases have decreased.

Ashoka

Ashoka is an organization that supports and trains social entrepreneurs around the world. Kristof and WuDunn write that these individuals are referred to as Ashoka Fellows and their numbers have grown to more than 2,000 worldwide. One of the main focuses on Ashoka Fellows is the fight for women's rights. Ashoka was founded by Bill Drayton a former management consultant and government official who developed the concept of "social entrepreneurship."

Prajwala

Sunitha Krishnan is an Ashoka Fellow from India who gained fame for her fight against sex trafficking. Together with Catholic missionary, Brother Joe Vetticatil, Krishnan organized a school in a former brothel for children of prostitutes. From there, Krishnan



established shelters for girls who were rescued from brothels and forced prostitution. She called her organization Prajwala which means eternal flame.

Rapex

Sonette Ehlers was a medical technician in South Africa who developed a product that she called Rapex. The device resembles a tube with barbs inside. The device is inserted like a tampon and when a man tries to rape a woman wearing one of these devices, he is immediately and painfully impaled with the scores of barbs that line the Rapex. Ehlers felt compelled to create the device because of the millions of rapes that occur each year in Africa.

Equality Now

Equality Now is an advocacy group out of New York that focuses its efforts on the suffering of women around the globe. The organization was founded by Jessica Neuwirth who had worked with Amnesty International. Her experience taught her the importance of letter-writing campaigns and the lasting impact that they can have. The group suffered from lack of funding but recent funding from such high-profile celebrities like Gloria Steinem and Meryl Streep has kept it afloat. Equality Now's letter-writing campaign successfully shined the light on the suffering of women in Ethiopia.

The Edna Adan Maternity Hospital

Edna Adan was determined to help the thousands of young women in South Africa who suffered in childbirth; many of them died. She gathered as many funds as she could and attained rights to a tract of land in the town of Hargeisa. The building was almost finished when she ran out of money. The building was lacking a roof. An article in the New York Times about Edna and her hospital written by Ian Fisher sparked interest in Edna's plight resulting in the establishment of an organized fundraiser and soon donations were pouring in.

Kristof and WuDunn write that the three-story hospital with the name, "Edna Adan Maternity Hospital," was finally completed. Edna takes no salary and lives in an apartment in the hospital so she can always be on call. Kristof and WuDunn report that the hospital depends on monetary gifts for training and the donation of medications and other resources.

HEAL

HEAL Africa is a major 150-bed hospital located in Goma, the largest city in eastern Congo. Despite its generous size there are usually another 100 patients waiting for a room. The staff, which is largely Congolese, consists of 210 medical professionals, 14 of whom are physicians. Unfortunately, more resources are needed for the hospital. There



are only two gynecologists on staff in an area that is populated with some five million people. Since birth control is not widely practiced, the area is in dire need of more gynecologists.

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

Kristof and WuDunn write that a condition known as fistula that develops in childbirth has become an increasing problem that has reached emergency status in many areas of Africa. Fistulae develop in women who have had little or no prenatal care and often no assistance during labor or birthing their child. It causes horrific damage to the rectum and bladder and causes the constant leaking of urine and feces. The condition is only healed through a surgical procedure. The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital was founded in Ethiopia to treat the thousands of African women who suffer from this condition.

34 Million Friends of UNFPA

Kristof and WuDunn write that after President George W. Bush cut \$34 million from the United Nations Population Fund or UNFPA, retired French teacher Jane Roberts of Redlands, California, was inspired instead of angry. According to Kristof and WuDunn, also inspired was Lois Abraham a grandmother in New Mexico. Independent of each other, the two women began fundraising in an attempt to replace funds cut to the UNFPA. The UN informed them of each other and they joined forces as 34 Million Friends of UNFPA. Word spread through word-of-mouth and by articles in the media. When President Obama restored funding of UNFPA the organization had raised \$4 million and decided to keep fundraising.

Themes

Slavery

Kristof and WuDunn point out that most people in first world countries believe that slavery was abolished more than a century ago and that it doesn't exist anywhere in the world. However, that perception is not accurate. The authors write that there are different forms of modern-day slavery which include the sub-categories of sex trafficking and kidnapping that renders young girls powerless with nothing to look forward to other than a bleak and terrifying existence that is merely for the pleasure and profit of others. Young men are also kidnapped and trafficked and turned into slaves but their numbers pale in comparison to the girls who are abused in this manner.

Kristof and WuDunn write that slavery has existed since the beginning of time. There are mentions of slaves in the Bible and by philosophers who were empathetic to everything and everyone except their slaves. Great Britain did not allow slavery but had colonies that included slaves as an integral part of their economies. Great Britain banned the slave trade in 1807 and in 1833 emancipated slaves who lived within their kingdom. Great Britain faced losses in their economy and conflicts with other nations because of taking what at the time was considered to be a brazen and unreasonable stance.

Women in third world nations who are sold by impoverished families, trafficked and forced into prostitution are today's modern-day slaves, the authors write. They are brothel slaves who are often so young when they are first indoctrinated into prostitution they come to accept it as their fate. They know nothing else. Forced prostitution, sex trafficking and kidnapping are all related crimes that destroy the lives of young women in isolated brothels in Africa, China, India and elsewhere. Kristof and WuDunn have shed the light on this atrocity in hopes of reducing the misery and someday eradicating it.

The Fight against AIDS

Kristof and WuDunn believe that it was scandalous and tragic that AIDS was largely ignored when it first began to emerge. The U.S. turned its head; President Reagan's press secretary when questioned about the administration's plans for AIDS, asked what it was. The delay in dealing with the impending crisis is one of the reasons that it was able to embed itself into so many cultures.

Kristof and WuDunn learned that the transmission of AIDS to the majority of African women is through their husbands. AIDS is often categorized as a disease of gender inequality. Nick visited an AIDS-ravaged family in South Africa. The husband infected his wife with HIV before he died of AIDS. The wife was dying of AIDS as was her young son who contracted the disease when she gave birth to him. A teenage daughter was the



only one in the family who had not contracted the HIV virus but the mother feared that the girl would become promiscuous like the other girls in the village and wind up with the disease anyway.

Kristof and WuDunn write that conservatives in general are beginning to bring more focus on poverty, sex trafficking and AIDS than they have in the past. Pastor Rick Warren didn't understand what the big deal about AIDS was until he visited South Africa and saw the horror of the disease first hand. His Saddleback Church out of Southern California now has some 7,500 members who volunteer in poor countries in the fight against AIDS. The donation of time and resources are both crucial in the fight against AIDS.

Kristof and WuDunn have concluded that education is needed to inform people of lifestyles that can save their lives. The authors report four strategies to fight the spread of AIDS: the training of elementary teachers in AIDS education; warning young girls of the perils of sugar daddies; encouraging debates on condom use; and, providing students with free uniforms to keep them in school longer. Doctors Without Borders have successfully set up operations in remote areas of Africa to fight the disease as have missionary doctors and faith-based aid workers.

Foreign Aid & Charitable Organizations

Kristof and WuDunn report that there is an ongoing debate about the amount and nature of foreign aid. They have concluded that, surprisingly, foreign aid is misdirected and can cause harm to relations between those who have the resources to give and those who are need of help. Some economists like William Easterly of New York University believe that foreign aid is often wasted and misused. While economist Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University advocates foreign aid that fights malaria and AIDS as a way to wipe out poverty.

Kristof and WuDunn report that other economists have found no correlation between foreign aid and economic growth. Kristof and WuDunn point out that foreign aid has to be properly targeted and the culture of those it is intended to help must be taken into consideration. When Westerners come into a remote village, they are automatically viewed with suspicion. Assuming that a large number of volunteers are Caucasian, some of the villagers may have seen few if any white people in their lives and an even lesser number of Western white men and women. Kristof and WuDunn write that the last thing these people who are already annoyed by the presence of strangers need is to be lectured about practices – like genital cutting – that has been part of their culture for centuries.

Kristof and WuDunn conclude that foreign aid is sometimes squandered and difficult to get just right. The most important and successful uses of foreign aid have been in health and education. Kristof and WuDunn report the successful campaigns for vaccination, sanitation and oral rehydration. Since the eradication of smallpox some 45 million lives have been saved. They stress that progress can only be made if a slow, gentle



approach is taken with the people that need help and that expectations for progress are not unrealistic.

Religion's Role/Influence in Aiding Women

Kristof and WuDunn write that religion has played an important role in campaigns to help women who suffer from abuse and mistreatment in third world nations. While there are good intentions the inclusion of religion has sometimes caused conflicts and widened the gap between first and third world countries. Abortion is a divisive topic in American politics. The funding of some important programs that help the suffering of women in impoverished and remote villages in Africa and Asia has been cut by Republicans who fear that abortions are funded by American aid. Funding was cut by President Reagan to an important arm of the UN, the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) even though it did not fund abortions but did hold discussions with Chinese officials about population control.

Ultimately, President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush cut funding altogether. These cuts were based on the moral majority, Christian evangelicals, who pressure Republican politicians to cut funding to any organization that they suspect supports abortion. Ironically, the cutting of these funds resulted in the reduced use of IUD which led to more pregnancies and an increased number of abortions. Kristof and WuDunn refer to this as the "God Gulf" in American foreign aid because of religious considerations.

Pentecostal missionaries have had good and dubious impact in their attempts to help the struggling women in developing nations. The authors explain that the Pentecostal religion supports open discussion by all congregants. They encourage lay people to deliver sermons. These missionaries have helped to develop open communication in some regions and villages which allows women to speak out about the abuse and mistreatment they suffer. However, the authors also point out, they have misled congregants as well by assuring them that as long as they believe in God and pray for his help, they will not contract AIDS.

Kristof and WuDunn point out that female genital mutilation is often a practice that is based on tradition and even faith. Honor killings are religion-based in that certain sects worship the hymen and a girl who has what is perceived as illicit sex has violated God. Some interpretations of the Koran claim that beautiful virgins who never defecate, urinate or menstruate await Muslim men in heaven. Such beliefs are called "houris" and are used to persuade young Muslim men to become suicide bombers.

Change

Authors Kristof and WuDunn have focused much time and attention to the plight of third world women. They discuss all the problems they face that people in the West can barely imagine much less endure. With their vast experience, the authors have come to know many of the people and attain a level of understanding about their culture. Kristof



and WuDunn are dedicated to the cause of these women and, seeing the women firsthand and observing the misery that leave them no option for change, the authors have arrived at very specific ways in which people in the West can really help them.

The authors caution that one way not to attempt to effect change in the remote and isolated villages of Asia, India and Africa is to begin an outreach with lectures that they need to change their ways. Many of the customs that the West views as abhorrent have been part of these cultures for centuries. One prime example is the practice of female genital circumcision which, according to the authors, is more accurately known as female genital mutilation. Mothers will schedule their daughters for this mutilation because it is tradition. Kristof and WuDunn also advise any would-be volunteers to not expect change in a hurry. Changing laws do nothing until the underlying culture undergoes change – and that kind of transition is a prolonged one.

Kristof and WuDunn believe that there are key elements that will ultimately bring about change. They include the education of girls; improved health care available to everyone; targeted foreign aid that will help women make changes; and, the encouragement of leaders within the community who will make changes at the grassroots level.



Styles

Structure

Half the Sky by Kristof and WuDunn is organized into categories of abuse, inequality and mistreatment that women in developing nations currently suffer from. The first topic covered is described by the author as modern-day slavery. There is focus on the kidnapping and sex trafficking of women and children in parts of Africa and Asia. The authors draw attention to the rampant prostitution in these areas, particularly forced prostitution and the inherent health risks that exist in this environment.

The authors write about the “new abolitionists,” comparing the current day slaves with slaves of the past. Kristof and WuDunn describe how rape and other abuses are crimes used to intimidate women into remaining silent and repressed. Honor killings and bride burnings are covered as punishment usually for what is perceived as sexual misbehavior. The authors write about the mounting problem of maternal morality. The death rate of women giving birth has been rising because of the lack of medical facilities and staff.

Another major topic covered are the benefit of micro-financing and small loans which has helped women in third world nations to have hope for a better life. The centuries-old practice of female genital mutilation is discussed at length. There is discussion about foreign aid and how lecturing people on their culture is not successful. The authors point out that changing a culture is a lengthy process and that no change can be achieved without education and good health care.

In each chapter the authors provide the names of charitable organizations that are helping the women win their struggles. Contact information is often provided for these organizations with the hope that their book will recruit more volunteers and donations for the causes that they are dedicated to exposing and supporting.

Perspective

Half the Sky by Kristof and DuWunn is written in the first person by the authors who not only wrote the book but “lived” much of it too. There would be no other individuals more qualified than Kristof and DuWunn to relate their experiences and express the feelings and opinions that result from their journeys. The authors rely on statistics that they quote and provide resources for as well as empirical evidence that they have amassed themselves.

Kristof and DuWunn ruled out no nation or location on the globe for their study. They journeyed to remote villages in Africa and isolated peoples that resided outside the edge of civilization. It is obvious from the descriptions of their experiences and the women and men they met that their focus was not to lecture on adapting improved lifestyles but



to listen to these people to gain a greater understanding of their unique existences and the societal and cultural mores that dictated their lives.

Kristof and DuWunn write about how they have followed certain young women and others they have met through the years. They enjoy seeing the progress that these people that they have come to love have made with just a little bit of attention and the resources they need to be educated, learn to live healthy and strive for a better life. The sincerity and genuineness of Kristof and DuWunn radiates off the pages.

Tone

Kristof and DuWunn are two award-winning journalists who have dedicated many years to learn first-hand about the pain and misery that the majority of women in some developing nations must endure. They have made numerous trips to the regions of the world where women, in many cases, are treated no better than animals. The journalists have tried in gentle, non-confrontational ways to inform these women that there are other ways to live.

The journalists show great respect for these women and for the cultures they are part of. In their writing the authors portray the understanding that they gained from their travels. And while they want nothing more than to eradicate the suffering that women in these regions are made to endure, they understand that the process of transition will take education, the availability of health centers and, most of all, time. Much of the pain and anguish that these women suffer are tangled in the mores of the villages and in the very fabric of tradition.

Kristof and DuWunn do their part by helping women they meet in small personal ways like donating blood and helping pay for tuition or hospital stays of destitute women. Kristof and DuWunn also have helped by spreading the word through their books and featured articles in the New York Times and other high profile venues. Through their experiences Kristof and DuWunn have been able to determine the resources and kind of aid that will be most beneficial to these women. They share this information with the reader in hopes of recruiting more help.



Quotes

I wasn't even allowed to cry.... If even one tear fell, they would beat me. I used to think that it was better to die than to live like this. Once I jumped from the balcony, but nothing happened. I didn't even break a leg."

-- Meena Hasina (chapter 1 paragraph 9)

Importance: Meena Hasina was eight years old when she was kidnapped and trafficked in the sex industry. Her statement captures the horror of a child thrown into forced prostitution. Suicide is the only way out for most of these children.

Prostitution is inevitable. There has always been prostitution in every country. And what's a young man going to do from the time when he turns eighteen until when he gets married at thirty."

-- Border Guard (chapter 2 paragraph 8)

Importance: The border officer laughed when Nick Kristof suggested that sex traffickers could be arrested when trying to cross the border from Nepal to India. He defends the need for prostitution which is the mindset that creates barriers against ending it.

Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or to teach how to fish... they will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry."

-- Bill Drayton (chapter 3 paragraph 33)

Importance: Bill Drayton, a former management consultant describes the zealous spirit of social entrepreneurs like Zach Hunter who as a teenager founded Loose Change to Loosen Chains, a charity that fought against modern slavery.

There's more prostitution now than when we started.... I'd say we failed. We rescue ten people and twenty come into the brothels."

-- Sunitha Krishnan (chapter 3 paragraph 47)

Importance: Sunitha Krishnan the founder of Prajwala that worked at closing brothels downs describes the frustration and near hopelessness of her work.

When I treat rape victims, I tell the girls not to go to the police because if a girl goes to the police, the police will rape her."

-- Dr. Shershah Syed (chapter 5 paragraph 13)

Importance: Dr. Shershah Syed, a gynecologist in Karchi often treats young girls from the slums who were the victims of rapes. He has learned not to suggest that they report the crime to the police.

The fistula patient is the modern-day leper.... She's helpless, she's voiceless.... The reason these women are pariahs is because they are women. If this happened to men, we would have foundations and supplies coming in from all over the world."



-- Ruth Kennedy (chapter 6 paragraph 20)

Importance: Ruth Kennedy was a nurse-midwife who worked at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia. She explains the trauma and uncertain future that young rape victims face after brutal rapes due to fistulas – some which cannot be repaired.

Looking at maternal mortality is a great way to look at a health system as a whole, because it requires you to do a great many things. You need family planning, you need a district hospital for C-sections, and so on.”

-- Dr. Paul Farmer (chapter 7 paragraph 49)

Importance: Dr. Paul Farmer, a Harvard public health specialist, captures the importance of improving mortality rates because of the overall impact it has in a nation's health care in general.

Education is the key issue for overcoming poverty, for overcoming war. If people are educated, then women will not be abused or tortured. They will also stand up and say, 'My child should not be married so young.'”

-- Sakena Yacoobi (chapter 9 paragraph 64)

Importance: Sakena Yacoobi, is an Afghani physician and educator. Her statement underscores the importance of education. The Middle East is notorious for terrorism and mistreatment of women. The education of women and men will serve to reduce or eliminate all forms of violence.

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.”

-- Derek Bok (chapter 10 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote underscores the need for education in third world countries in which girls and women are egregiously mistreated. A benefit of an educated populace is the resultant decrease in violence and crime.

She's not going to have a son... so you should marry again. Take a second wife.”

-- Sharifa Bibi (chapter 11 paragraph 4)

Importance: Saima Muhammad's mother-in-law Sharifa had this advice for her son when Saima delivered her second daughter. The statement was made in front of Saima who at first was devastated. She later used her anger, however, to reach out and find a better life for herself and her children.

Incredibly, it looks as if they will make female genital cutting in West Africa go the way of foot-binding in China. That makes the campaign against genital cutting a model for a larger global movement for women in the development world.”

-- Kristof and WuDunn (chapter 13 paragraph 2)

Importance: The authors cite the old tradition of foot-binding in China that was done to keep women's feet child size with the current tradition of female genital mutilation that

takes place in Africa. They express the hope that ending the mutilation will lead the way for more change.

Encouraging more women into the labor force has been the single biggest driver of Euro-zone's labor market success, much more so than 'conventional' labor market reforms."

-- Goldman Sachs (chapter 14 paragraph 21)

Importance: This statement was included in a 2007 Goldman Sachs's research report. This statement underscores that a financial institute like Goldman Sachs that is focused on the bottom-line can ill afford to harbor any sexist attitudes in the conduct of its business because profits are its business.



Topics for Discussion

1

Why is AIDS often referred to as a disease of gender inequality particularly in third world nations? How do most African women contract AIDS?

2

What are the four anti-AIDS strategies tested in Africa that have been examined by MIT's Technology's Poverty Action Lab?

3

What are the four most important issues that a new women's movement should focus on? What are the changes that can bring more internal focus on them?

4

What are the four quick steps that anyone, including students, can take to help the causes of women around the world?

5

Why is the process of iodizing salt in remote areas of third world nations necessary? Why is it important and what impact does it have on children?

6

Why is FMG or female genital mutilation allowed to be practiced in some countries? What are the reasons for what to the West is a cruel and unnecessary practice?

7

What role do some women play in the abuse of other women in third world nations? What was the specific strategy for female soldiers in the Sierra Leone civil war? What are the reasons behind female infanticide that prevails in some developing countries?



8

What defense is presented by those who advocate and perpetrate honor killing? What is “bride burning?”

9

Contrast the approaches that Sweden and the Netherlands took to combat sex trafficking and reduce prostitution. What were the results of each strategy?

10

What is micro-financing? How has this financial model been successful in some third world nations? Why are women viewed to be important in a fledgling economy?