DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEX TRAFFICKING AND INTERGENERATIONAL PROSTITUTION

INDEPENDENTLENS
PBS.ORG/INDEPENDENTLENS/HALF-THE-SKY
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Community Cinema is a rare public forum: a space for people to gather who are connected by a love of stories, and a belief in their power to change the world. This discussion guide is designed as a tool to facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. It is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the show— but to step up and take action.

This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive primer on a given topic. Rather, it provides important context, and raises thought provoking questions to encourage viewers to think more deeply. We provide suggestions for areas to explore in panel discussions, in the classroom, in communities, and online. We also provide valuable resources, and connections to organizations on the ground that are fighting to make a difference.

For information about the program, visit [www.communitycinema.org](http://www.communitycinema.org)
Working in documentary film has always been an adventure, a pleasure, and a roller coaster ride—but rarely does a project come along that changes one’s entire worldview.

Making *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* has truly been a life-changing endeavor and an honor. The concept for the transmedia project was originally brought to me by my fellow executive producers: Jamie Gordon and Mikaela Beardsley. Mikaela had recently produced the film *Reporter* about the intrepid *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof. She was very excited when, in conversations in the field, he talked about his upcoming book to be co-written with his wife Sheryl WuDunn addressing the struggles and triumphs of women and girls in the developing world that they had personally encountered over years of reporting.

That book turned out to be the groundbreaking work, also titled *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, which became an international bestseller. The game-changing element of the book is the focus on personal stories that allow readers to deeply connect with individual, true stories of women and girls facing horrendous difficulty and inequity. It tackles head on issues such as maternal mortality, sex trafficking, gender-based violence, and forced prostitution—and illustrates the hope offered by the life-changing opportunities of education and financial empowerment. The storytelling nature of the subject-driven narrative leant itself beautifully to documentary film.

As a New Yorker, I knew of Nick’s work as a journalist for *The New York Times*, and of the highly regarded Pulitzer Prize-winning articles that Nick and Sheryl had written together during their tumultuous years as reporters based in China, but I had never met either of them. Nick and Sheryl believe in the power of social media and the potential of this subject matter to reach new and diverse audiences through multi-platform content. This is where the larger concept of the transmedia project inspired by their book came from.

Now, the project is launching on multiple platforms, with a four-hour television series for PBS and international distribution through Fremantle Media; a one hour film for Community Cinema; free curricula developed for Community Classroom, over 20 short films and educational modules made in partnership with some of the project’s more than 54 NGO partners worldwide; mobile games for India and Africa (executive produced with Games for Change with the support of USAID); a social-action Facebook game; and two websites—one housed on PBS.org and another advocacy-based site at halftheskymovement.org.

“We wanted to create a unique experience that goes beyond “issue” filmmaking to simply tell incredible stories.”

From the Filmmaker

Maro Chermayeff
As a filmmaker, the centerpiece of the project for me was the documentary series. Filmed in ten countries, the series is inspired by Nick and Sheryl’s work—but also goes beyond the page to film new and immediate stories that lend themselves to the drama that television demands. Our approach was to orchestrate 2-week trips to six different countries, following Nick as he reported on an agent of change working to better her own life or the lives of women in her community. Joining Nick on each leg of the journey was a different actress who had experience advocating for social issues, but who was not an expert in the specific issue we were following in that location. Rather, she was there to act as the eyes and ears of the audience, allowing an intimate and honest way into some of these tough and demanding stories. We had the good fortune to be joined by Eva Mendes in Sierra Leone, Meg Ryan in Cambodia, Gabrielle Union in Vietnam, Diane Lane in Somaliland, America Ferrera in India, and Olivia Wilde in Kenya.

The experience of the shooting was some of the most difficult I have ever experienced in over twenty years of producing and directing large and complicated series. Having directed a ten-hour series aboard the USS Nimitz on a six-month deployment to Iraq (PBS, Carrier), run away with a traveling circus (PBS, Circus), and made a film about toxic waste being dumped on a Native American community (HBO, Mann v. Ford), I was prepared for and yet still stunned by the conditions in which most people in the world live. I was especially affected by the experiences of women living under these conditions. From rough terrain to blistering poverty, the situations were incredibly challenging and the issues were often heartbreaking.

For example, children being raped as early as two and three years old in post-conflict Sierra Leone or the staggering reality of trafficking and sexual slavery of young girls in Cambodia. But the women we worked with were some of the most amazing, courageous, and admirable women I have ever known. The tears often flowed. Two of the more emotional experiences occurred while trying to help the fourteen-year-old Fulamatu seek justice against the uncle who raped her and two of her friends, only to watch the case crumble, and during the harrowing brothel raid in Cambodia with the fiery Somaly Mam that freed several under-age girls being held in slave-like conditions where they were forced to work as prostitutes with 10-30 clients per day.

Working with Nick and Sheryl was an invaluable and amazing opportunity as a director. I was so impressed by Nick in the field as he tenaciously sought out the story and by Sheryl’s incredible ability to see the big picture and address the large global issues. I knew I wanted to honor their work. We all felt from the start that it should be an epic production, visually stunning and visceral, showing the amazing places we visited and people we met in all their beauty. We wanted the reality of their world to be accessible and yet, at times, shocking—an edge-of-your-seat adventure with global significance. We wanted to tell true stories, yet also deepen people’s experience and understanding of the issues women and girls face in the developing world. We also believed, and Nick and Sheryl were deeply committed to showing, that the stories could and should be uplifting and empowering. Even in the darkest of circumstances, we found the most startling humanity and confirmation of the human spirit’s resilience. People who engage with all of our content—on the multiple platforms available—will be angry, motivated, inspired, and most important, feel connected to the subjects and themes. We wanted to create a unique experience that goes beyond “issue” filmmaking to simply tell incredible stories about the capacity of human beings to persevere against all odds and the restorative power of opportunity in parts of the world that are not “over-there,” but a small leap from our own backyard.
The Film

In 2009, Pulitzer Prize winning-journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn published a ground-breaking book about the oppression of women and girls worldwide. That book was *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*—an instant bestseller that immediately catalyzed an already burgeoning movement to eradicate gender inequality.

The landmark PBS documentary series *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* aims to amplify the central message of the book—that women are not the problem, but the solution—and to bolster the broad and growing movement for change. Using the story of the book and its impact as a launchpad, the documentary zeroes in on the lives of girls in some of the countries around the world where gender inequality is at its most extreme and explores the very real ways in which their oppression can be turned to opportunity.

 Featuring six celebrated American actresses and the commentary of the world’s leading advocates for gender equality, the film is a passionate call to arms—urging us not only to bear witness to the plight of the world’s women, but also to help to decisively transform their oppression into opportunity.

**Episode One**

*Gender-Based Violence*
Sierra Leone | Eva Mendes

*Sex Trafficking*
Cambodia | Meg Ryan

*Education*
Vietnam | Gabrielle Union

**Episode Two**

*Maternal Mortality*
Somaliland | Diane Lane

*Intergenerational Prostitution*
India | America Ferrera

*Economic Empowerment*
Kenya | Olivia Wilde


*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is a production of Show of Force and Fugitive Films in association with Independent Television Service (ITVS). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by CPB with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is inspired by Nick Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn’s book of the same name.
Episode One

In Episode One we follow Nicholas Kristof and three American actresses to developing countries where gender discrimination is at its most extreme. We explore the shocking extent of gender-based violence in Sierra Leone with Eva Mendes, the global crisis of sex trafficking as experienced by women and girls in Cambodia with Meg Ryan, and the need for and power of educating girls in Vietnam with Gabrielle Union, where she visits an innovative education program that is transforming, not only the lives of the country’s poorest and most vulnerable girls, but also the futures of their families and their communities. Featuring commentary from Sheryl WuDunn and interviews with some of the world’s leading advocates for gender equality—including Hillary Clinton, Michelle Bachelet, and Gloria Steinem—*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression to Opportunity for Women Worldwide* offers a nuanced and moving account of this century’s most pressing problems, and an uplifting, actionable blueprint for change.

**Gender-Based Violence**

Our first stop is Sierra Leone, a country recovering from years of colonial oppression and a terrible civil war and which is still suffering from rampant gender-based violence. Guided by Amie Kandeh, the passionate and dedicated coordinator of the International Rescue Committee’s Women’s Protection and Empowerment Program in Sierra Leone, Kristof and actress Eva Mendes come face-to-face with the enormous challenges women and girls face in a country where rape is practically the norm—challenges embodied by Fulamatu, a buoyant 14-year-old who hopes one day to become a bank manager. When we meet Fulamatu she was raped repeatedly by a local church pastor—a family friend who is close enough to be officially considered her uncle. She had risked the shame of telling her parents and the ridicule of her community to break her silence and press charges against the perpetrator. The outcome is a sobering object lesson in the insidious effects of gender-based violence, and the urgent need to end impunity for the violators.

**Sex Trafficking**

As interviews with WuDunn and some of the world’s leading advocates for gender equality explain, in many parts of the world cultural attitudes and traditions are used to justify the low status of girls, rendering them vulnerable to all manner of exploitation and abuse. This is nowhere more evident than in Cambodia, where the pernicious global problem of sex trafficking is perhaps at its worst. Actress Meg Ryan joins Kristof in Phnom Penh as he catches up with Somaly Mam, one of the women profiled in the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*—a woman who was herself a child sex slave and who now has dedicated her life to rescuing and rehabilitating others. As Mam’s story merges and mingles with those of the girls in her charge, the horrors of sex trafficking are writ large—so too is the awesome resilience of the human spirit and the vast, untapped potential that resides in each and every one of Mam’s girls.

**Education**

That potential, WuDunn and our luminary advocates tell us, is the key to bettering our world: tap into those girls and they will change the future. The clarity of that equation, the elegant cause-and-effect of it, animates Episode One’s final sequence, in Vietnam, where former Microsoft executive John Wood’s organization Room to Read is transforming the lives of the country’s poorest and most vulnerable girls. Hosted by Bich Vu Thi, program officer of Room to Read’s Girl’s Education program, Kristof and actress Gabrielle Union get to know a few of the program’s stars and encounter firsthand the incredible obstacles which stand between these girls and their bright futures. Still, these girls are almost miraculously undaunted—and fiercely determined to change both their circumstances and those of their families. The ripple effect of their education even now is making itself felt—and there is no doubt that with a little bit of help, a little encouragement and support, these girls and the tens of millions of others like them in the developing world will be a powerful army for change.

Combining vivid, visceral on-the-ground stories with the commentary of a vast and impressive roster of experts, advocates, and agents of change, Episode One takes us deep into the lives of girls in the developing world and makes us witness to their seemingly impossible struggles—at once challenging and inspiring us to be a part of the vital, urgent project to empower them once and for all.
Episode Two

Episode Two continues our journey to the hot spots of gender oppression around the world and highlights the courageous work of some of the extraordinary women and men who are taking a stand in the face of incredible odds. This episode focuses our attention on the role of women in their families and their communities—examining the fundamental obstacles that hinder their potential, and charting the ripple effect that results when that potential is harnessed.

Veteran journalist and Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide co-author Nicholas Kristof is once again accompanied by a three celebrated American actresses who offer fresh and personal perspective on the issues in each country. Kristof travels to Somaliland with Diana Lane to examine maternal mortality and female genital mutilation, to India with America Ferrera to explore intergenerational prostitution, and with Olivia Wilde to Kenya, where the transformative power of economic empowerment is changing women’s lives and is laying the groundwork for the next generation. In the process, the film considers the central role of women in the health and stability of their families and communities and establishes their critical role in the global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve peace. Featuring on-camera commentary from Sheryl WuDunn and some of the world’s most respected and outspoken advocates for gender equality—including Melanne Verveer, Zainab Salbi, and Desmond Tutu—Episode Two underscores the fundamental obstacles to women’s progress and prosperity and celebrates women’s boundless capacity to better our world.

Maternal Mortality
The episode begins in Somaliland—an unrecognized country, populated mainly by nomads, where the average woman today has a 1-in-12 chance of dying in childbirth. Joined by actress Diane Lane, Kristof reconnects with Edna Adan, founder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeisa. A spry 70-something woman often and rightly described as a “force of nature,” Adam is almost single-handedly revolutionizing the experience of childbirth in her country—providing medical care to women who would otherwise have none, training midwives, and fighting tirelessly against female genital mutilation—a traditional practice still common in much of Africa (and elsewhere), which severely compromises a woman’s ability to deliver a child. In Somaliland, the challenges women face in the developing world are starkly apparent: Poverty and tradition conspire to undermine a woman’s health, directly threatening her life, and having a lasting impact on her children’s survival and ability to thrive.

Intergenerational Prostitution
As WuDunn and our cast of gender equality advocates argue, tradition is, in many ways, the greater evil. In too many places in the world, tradition still is used to marginalize women, to keep them down and in their place. This vicious cycle repeats itself generation after generation, damaging and ending lives and undermining the ability of thousands of women improve their quality of life and live their full potential. The key—as Kristof and actress America Ferrera discover in India—is intervention by someone from the inside: someone like Urmia Basu. A social worker and an educated, middle-class Bengali, Basu has dedicated her life to stopping the cycle of intergenerational prostitution in India, where 90 percent of girls born to sex workers follow in their mothers’ footsteps. What she is up against is neatly illustrated by one of the young girls in her care, Monisha, who is on the brink of being wrenched out of school and likely sold to a brothel by her own family—a family that belongs to a sub-caste of sex workers. What keeps Basu going is girls like Sushmita—and more to the point, women like Sushmita’s mother, Shoma, who has lived the utter brutality and degradation of prostitution every day of her life and desperately wants a different fate for her daughter. Shoma’s hope for her child is the seed of real and lasting change.

Economic Empowerment
When women have equal control over their finances and the financial decision-making on the personal, community, and national levels, everyone benefits. WuDunn and the many contributors who lent their voices and considerable expertise to Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide all stress that putting money in the hands of a poor woman changes everything. During their visit to Kenya, Kristof and Olivia Wilde witness the impact of the economic empowerment of women firsthand. In this episode’s final segment, they explore the impact and challenges of microfinance and the ways it is transforming the lives of women and those around them. We begin with Jane Ngoi, a former sex worker-turned-dressmaker who is now able to send her four children to school, where they are each at the top of their class, and end with Rebecca Lolosoli, a Samburu woman who built a safe haven for women on the slender thread of a jewelry-making business. Kristof and Wilde see for themselves the dramatic and tangible transformation that can be set in motion by a woman with a little money of her own and a system of support to help her make the best use of her financial and personal resources. Replicate the experiment several million times, and the world will be an entirely different place.

The episode—and the film—ends with an urgent call to action, an invitation to the viewer to take up the central moral challenge of our time, and to join a movement that will tap the immense potential of women to create a more peaceful and more prosperous world for us all.
Background Information

AFESIP Cambodia: Somaly Mam and Sex Trafficking in Cambodia

Somaly Mam was a child sex slave in Cambodia. She was abducted when she was a young girl by a man who claimed to be her grandfather and kept as a domestic slave until being sold to a brothel at the age of 12 or 13. She was abused, raped, tortured, and beaten daily for many years, and after seeing a friend killed in front of her, managed to escape.

Today, Mam is a renowned leader at the forefront of the antitrafficking struggle. Through two nonprofit foundations, AFESIP Cambodia and the Somaly Mam Foundation, she has rescued more than four thousand children who were victims of human trafficking. Most are 12 to 15 years old, but some are as young as 3, and like Mam, they were commodities sold into lives of prostitution.

Sex work depends on a sizable population of males, disposable income, and social factors that actively encourage or fail to deter the buying and selling of sex. Cambodia lacked all three of these factors before the late 1960s and as a result had relatively little sex work compared with its neighbors Vietnam and Thailand.

Following U.S. president Richard Nixon’s extension of the Vietnam War through secret bombings of Cambodia from 1969 to 1973 and a secret invasion mission in 1970, the Khmer Rouge—a militant Communist group—convinced significant portions of the Khmer population (the predominant ethnic group in Cambodia) that the United States was the enemy. By 1973, the secret U.S. bombings forced the Vietnamese out of the country, creating a power vacuum that was soon filled by Pol Pot and his rapidly growing Khmer Rouge movement. In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, overthrew the pro-U.S. regime, and established a new government, Democratic Kampuchea.

As the new ruler of Cambodia, Pol Pot set about transforming the country into his vision of an agrarian utopia. The cities were evacuated, factories and schools were closed, and currency and private property were abolished. Anyone believed to be an intellectual, such as someone who spoke a foreign language, was immediately killed. Skilled workers were also killed, in addition to anyone caught in possession of eyeglasses, a wristwatch, or any other modern technology. Prostitution was completely banned and punishable by death, resulting in its virtual elimination in the highly authoritarian social system. During this period, an estimated 2 million Cambodians were killed, approximately 25 percent of the country’s population.

The Vietnamese army overthrew the Khmer Rouge in 1979, but civil conflict continued in Cambodia for the next two decades. Under the new People’s Republic of Kampuchea (later renamed the State of Cambodia), commercial sex work started to reemerge. After the dismantlement of the State of Cambodia in 1992, about twenty thousand male troops and civilian personnel of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) arrived together with many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and business interests from abroad, creating a new market for sexual services in this very poor country.
After the withdrawal of UNTAC in August 1993, the demand for prostitution was briefly reduced, but by the mid-1990s the sex industry was growing again. The police were harassing sex workers, but also owned many of the brothels, which made regulation of the sex trade even more difficult. Workers between 15 and 18 years old were not uncommon, but some establishments, such as those in Toul Kork and Svay Pak, specialized in providing younger girls. NGOs became alarmed by the growth of child prostitution and the number of women and children abducted and sold for prostitution. By 1995, it appeared that women from surrounding countries were also being trafficked into Cambodia. International concern was raised and some raids were carried out, but these actions only served to displace the brothel owners and workers to other areas in the country.

Today, Cambodia continues to be burdened by its recent history of violence, with women and children often paying the highest price. It is one of the poorest countries in the world and relies heavily on foreign aid. Millions of unexploded land mines and munitions continue to kill and maim civilians, despite an ongoing demining drive, and thousands are infected with HIV/AIDS, making it among the worst-affected countries in Asia. International organizations, foreign donors, and foreign governments have urged the Cambodian government, led by Prime Minister Hun Sen, to clamp down on Cambodia’s pervasive corruption and address the ever-growing sex-trafficking crisis.

In this context, the work of Somaly Mam and her team is critical to the safety and health of thousands of Cambodian women and girls. As many as five hundred girls at a time live in the Foundation’s shelters and clinics in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, where they are given the opportunity to recover from lives of rape, racism, and violence.

Mam is now a universally recognized leader in the movement to abolish sex trafficking. She was honored as one of TIME magazine’s 100 Most Influential People of 2009 and was featured as a CNN Hero. She is also the recipient of the Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation, the World’s Children’s Prize for the Rights of the Child (WCPRC), was a 2006 Glamour magazine Women of the Year honoree, and has won accolades from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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In Kolkata, India (formerly Calcutta), there are over ten thousand women and girls who live and work as prostitutes. Many were trafficked into the country from Nepal and Bangladesh while others were born into the commercial sex trade, being the children of generations of prostitutes. While not all of these women are forced into sex work, the reality is that few other options are available.

Around India, there are castes that traditionally engage in familial, intergenerational prostitution. Starting from around age 13, girls are sold by their parents or married off and subsequently prostituted by their husbands. Earnings are higher for younger girls so there is an urgency to marry or sell them before their value diminishes. For many rural, uneducated parents, it is difficult to imagine how a female child could bring any value to the family beyond prostitution. And for the girl who has been denied education and training, it is equally difficult to imagine a brighter future. In this context, the caste system and cultural traditions provide easy justification for a practice driven by poverty, economics, and gender-based discrimination.

The heartbreaking reality of India’s intergenerational prostitution is especially apparent in Kalighat, one of the oldest red-light districts in Kolkata. Here, narrow alleys lined with small “apartments” form a confusing maze and the buildings lean into the street across crowded roads. Life is a constant struggle in this society where sex workers are regarded as nonhuman, and opportunities for these women are limited after working in the business.

New Light is a nonprofit community development project and charitable trust that was founded in Kalighat by social worker Urmi Basu in 2000. Basu is a well-educated, middle-class woman who was born in Kolkata. She credits her parents with raising her with a great deal of freedom and a strong sense of her own social responsibility. Using her own savings, she founded New Light with the goal of supporting and educating the children of sex workers, particularly the girls, and providing opportunities for them beyond the red-light district.

Since it first began in a small room among the brothels, New Light has provided shelter, educational opportunities, recreational facilities, health care, and legal aid for the children, girls, and women in the Kalighat community. The demographic composition reflects India’s diversity, with Hindi-speaking and non-Indian women from Nepal and Bangladesh representing 30 percent of the community.

New Light also provides microcredit facilities and an income-generation program (Anchal) for mothers in Kalighat, and the organization is active in HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment. There is a crèche as well as a night shelter for the protection and education of victims of trafficking, women in prostitution, and children rescued from red-light areas.

“Your daughter does not have to be bound by fate. She needs to be allowed the power to create her own fate.”

– Urmi Basu, Founder of New Light
Apne Aap: Ruchira Gupta and Prostitution and Sexual Slavery in India

Apne Aap was founded in 2002 by Emmy Award-winning journalist and filmmaker Ruchira Gupta and 22 women from Mumbai’s red-light district with a vision of a world where no woman can be bought or sold.

The women were the subject of Gupta’s documentary *The Selling of Innocents*, which exposed the trafficking of women and girls from Nepal to India. During the production of the film, the women formed a connection with each other and Gupta that broke the isolation in their lives and gave them the strength to resist their situation.

When the filming ended, the group continued to meet informally in parks and on benches. The strength of their collective bargaining inspired them to formally register Apne Aap as an NGO. Through the efforts of a board member, Apne Aap was given a room in the heart of Mumbai’s red-light area. This room was a safe place to meet, chat, sleep, stitch torn clothes, bathe, and receive mail. It was also a place to hold meetings and classes. In the following years Apne Aap’s vision and impact grew. Members reached out to other women trapped in prostitution and organized self-empowerment programs in Bihar, Delhi, and West Bengal. The connected groups of survivors turned their focus to dismantling the system of prostitution by calling for the Indian Parliament to create more severe laws that punish buyers of prostituted sex.

Since helping to found Apne Aap, Gupta has campaigned tirelessly to promote the leadership of survivors in the global fight to end trafficking, including bringing groups of survivors to speak before the United Nations General Assembly in 2008 and 2009.

Gupta has also worked with the United Nations (UN) in various capacities for over 10 years in Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, Kosovo, the United States, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Iran. In some of these countries, she has helped develop the National Action Plans on women’s empowerment and laws against human trafficking. She has designed and created a manual for law enforcement personnel and prosecutors with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), presently being used in India to confront the demand for prostituted sex.

Her most significant contributions to civil society, governments, and multilateral bodies like the UN have been to highlight the link between trafficking and prostitution and to lobby policy makers to shift the blame from the victim to the perpetrator.

Although all of the other 22 founding women have since passed away from hunger, suicide, and AIDS-related complications, Apne Aap’s work continues. Self-empowerment groups across the country meet at Apne Aap community centers – safe spaces where women and girls can gather, access education, improve their livelihood, and receive legal rights training. Today, Apne Aap’s work reaches over ten thousand women and girls and continues toward making the vision of the founding women come true.

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“‘It’s not just saving them from prostitution, it is saving them from a world where these women themselves have never been taught to value their own lives.’

– America Ferrera, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*
Root Causes and Contributing Factors

Sexual exploitation is the most widespread form of human trafficking making up 79% of all recorded human trafficking cases. One in five victims of human trafficking are children and two thirds of victims are women. Gender-based discrimination and the devaluing of women and girls are at the root of this exploitation, which is compounded by religious and cultural traditions and other social and economic inequalities. Sexual exploitation and trafficking exist because it is acceptable for those in the society with more power—often adult men—to purchase and use those with less power—women and children, and among them especially, ethnic minorities, the poor, and the disabled.

Poverty and lack of economic opportunity make women and children especially vulnerable to traffickers. They are lured with false promises of job opportunities in other regions or countries, where they expect to be able to make money to support themselves and help their families. Many of those who accept these offers find themselves in situations where their identification documents are destroyed, they or their families are threatened with harm, or they are bonded by a debt that they have no chance of repaying.

Contemporary Slavery: The Global Slave Trade

There are more people living in slavery today than at any other time in history. According to Anti-Slavery International (ASI), the world’s oldest human-rights organization, there are at least 27 million adults and children, in countries all over the world, who are being forced to live and work as slaves or in slave-like conditions.

The growing crisis of modern-day slavery is relatively unknown, in part, because it does not fit our historic image of slavery. Contemporary human bondage can take many forms including forced labor, child marriage, debt bondage, and commercial sexual slavery. Modern slaves can be sex-workers, domestic help, garment workers, or agricultural workers. They might work in factories, build roads, or harvest crops.

Hundreds of thousands of children, mostly girls but also boys, have been taken from their homes and delivered to brothels where they fuel a sex industry that thrives in great part by servicing men from every part of the world. Some countries in Asia have become centers of sex tourism, like Thailand and India, and the commercial sex trade victimizes girls as young as three years of age. Traffickers threaten to or use force, coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception to bring their victims under their control to exploit their vulnerable social or economic status.

The sexual enslavement of children is part of the general exploitation of children in impoverished parts of the world. They are lured with false promises of decent employment, caught in debt bondage, kidnapped, or simply sold outright by parents, friends, or people they know. Many children who are used by their families to pay off a debt do not know what the original debt amount or interest rate are, and as a result, live without the hope of one day buying back their freedom.

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“Sex trafficking is a business. Traffickers are in it for the money. They are buying the girls at basically zero cost and sell at 100% profit. It is a business.”

– Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide
Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Women and Girls

Slavery was officially abolished worldwide at the 1926 Slavery Convention, yet it continues to thrive thanks to the complicity of some governments and the ignorance of much of the world. Women and children are disproportionately victimized by the commercial sex trade and the global slave trade and constitute the vast majority of the estimated 2 million people sold into sex slavery around the world every year.

**Fast Facts**

- There are approximately 27 million slaves alive today—more than at any point in history—and 56 percent are women.
- The average price of a trafficked human is at a historic low of $90, which means that it is sometimes more “cost-effective” for traffickers to allow their victims to die than to provide them with adequate conditions and health care.
- Slavery is an extremely profitable, international industry. It is estimated that trafficking in the United States yields $9 billion every year, and around the world, trafficking in women for commercial sex purposes nets $6 billion per year.
- Between five hundred thousand and 2 million people—the majority of them women and children—are trafficked annually into situations including prostitution, forced labor, slavery, or servitude. Only 93 countries have some legislative provision prohibiting trafficking in human beings.
- Roughly 14,500 to 17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States each year. California is a major trafficking entry point, with 43 percent of California trafficking incidents occurring in the San Francisco Bay Area alone.
- In the United States 70 percent of all prostitution is handled by pimps, who keep most of the money, and it is estimated that 70 percent of prostitutes experience multiple rapes each year—some as frequently as once a week.
- The typical age of entry into prostitution is 13 to 14 and almost 33 percent of the women got started in prostitution through family members or friends.
- Some estimates claim there are at least 300,000 children in prostitution, while others believe the numbers may be as high as 500,000 to 1.2 million.
- Worldwide, an estimated 51 million girls have been married before the age of consent. In many parts of the world, parents encourage the marriage of their underage daughters in exchange for property and livestock or to benefit their social status.
- The sexual violation and torture of civilian women and girls during periods of armed conflict has been referred to as “one of history’s great silences” and has generally been ignored despite the millions who have been injured and killed by the brutal practice. Trafficking of women and girls was reported in 85 percent of the world’s conflict zones.

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- www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/slaves/etc/stats.html
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“One reason why trafficking has been ignored is that the victims are voiceless.”

— Nicholas Kristof, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide
What is Needed?

Sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls is a worldwide crisis, but there is a global movement to challenge the attitudes and institutions that make this abusive behavior possible. Research indicates that the most effective strategy for addressing sexual exploitation is through coordinated efforts by international and local institutions to raise public awareness, increase political will, establish stronger policies and enforcement, and provide resources to support and rehabilitate survivors.

What’s needed:

• **Prevention.** The prevention of human trafficking requires several types of interventions. Some are of low or moderate cost and can have some immediate impact, such as awareness campaigns that allow high-risk individuals to make informed decisions. Strong laws that are enforced are the most effective deterrent, but require a substantial and sustained financial commitment in the training and monitoring of local and state law enforcement.

• **Protection.** Governments that are determined to crack down on trafficking organizations have to win the confidence of the victims, who are often the best sources of information. Protecting the identity of victims and providing for their safety are crucial for the successful prosecution of traffickers. Laws and procedures that protect victims will encourage them to come forward and testify against traffickers and their organizations.

• **Prosecution.** Human trafficking laws must provide serious penalties against traffickers and also criminalize the patrons of brothels that keep women and children in sexual slavery. Training is also needed to ensure that an insensitive investigation and prosecution process does not further traumatize trafficking victims.

• **Reintegration.** Victims of human trafficking face major problems being reintegrated into their home communities when they are freed, including social stigma and emotional trauma. Government agencies, international donors, and NGOs must work together to establish programs that provide practical assistance and help returning victims reintegrate and become productive members of their communities.

“It is a shame on our civil society. So every person in every corner of this world has to raise a voice and say, ‘This has to stop.’”

– Urmi Basu, Founder of New Light

Sources:

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» [www.create4theun.eu/we-can-end-prostitution-and-trafficking-for-sexual-exploitation-now](http://www.create4theun.eu/we-can-end-prostitution-and-trafficking-for-sexual-exploitation-now)
Thinking More Deeply

1. What insights did *Sex Trafficking in Cambodia* and *Intergenerational Prostitution in India* give you about the sexual exploitation of women and girls around the world? What information surprised you the most?

2. Why is sexual exploitation an important issue to tackle? What are some of the ripple effects of intergenerational prostitution and sex trafficking on families, communities, and societies?

3. How is sexual exploitation connected to the cycle of poverty? What role, if any, could access to education and economic empowerment play in combating this form of gender-based violence?

4. Nicholas Kristof says that one of the "global paradoxes is that countries with the most conservative sexual mores tend to have the most prostitution." Why do you think that is? What value do women have in these societies? Discuss some examples from the film that illustrate this paradox.

5. Somaly Mam says, "The girls and me are the same because we have the same life. I am them. They are me." Is it important that Mam is both a Cambodian and a survivor of sex slavery? Why or why not? How do you think her experience informs her work? Do you think it is possible for individuals from different social or economic circumstances or from international organizations to be effective in the developing world? What are the benefits and challenges?

6. Somana chose her name because it means "forgiveness." She tells the story of returning from the brothel and says, "The moment I became a victim, no one would forgive me. They would say I am a bad girl. If that mentality continues, I couldn’t live with myself. But I am not angry, I’ll stand taller to help other girls." What did you think of her story? What role do you think forgiveness can play in reintegrating survivors into their communities? Would you have taken the same path if you were in her shoes? If you were a survivor, what name do you think you would choose?

7. There is a culture of silence surrounding sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children. Survivors often experience social stigma, fear of retribution, and emotional trauma and are reluctant to share their stories. What are some of the ways that Mam’s programs are breaking that culture? What impact do you think these programs have on the survivors, the girls and women they work with in the brothels, and the men in the community?

8. One of the primary reasons that sex trafficking and sexual slavery continue to flourish is that there are too few penalties for traffickers, brothel owners, and the patrons and sex tourists that keep this economy running. What are some of the barriers that Mam faces when trying to bring perpetrators to justice? What are some of the consequences for survivors who come forward to seek prosecution? How do these challenges compare with the barriers faced by women who seek justice for other forms of gender-based violence? Discuss some of the strategies mentioned in the film that are crucial for ending this practice.

Topics and Issues Relevant to the Film.

A screening of *Sex Trafficking in Cambodia* and *Intergenerational Prostitution in India* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Women’s empowerment
- Sexual exploitation
- Sex trafficking
- Intergenerational prostitution
- Gender-based violence
- Slavery
- Gender issues
- Human rights
- Global poverty
- International development
9. Urmi Basu describes the cycle of intergenerational prostitution: “Women who are in prostitution have very little ability to make their daughters aspire to do something different. It’s not that trans-generational prostitution happens because they want to make it happen. It’s because they have no option, they have no escape.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What “escapes” do Basu and New Light provide? What are some of the barriers that girls like Monisha and Sushmita face when they try to access New Light’s resources?

10. Basu says that the parents “fear that maybe someday when my child is empowered and educated and moves away, he or she is going to abandon me.” What other factors contribute to parents’ reluctance to see their children change their fate? How would you react if someone more privileged than you were to offer to take your children away to a better life?

11. “The distinction between people like us and people living in Kalighat is not that we’re smarter, it’s not that we’re harder working, it’s not that we’re more virtuous, it’s that we’re luckier.” What do you think about Kristof’s statement? Do you agree? What role does luck play in shaping an individual’s opportunities? Discuss how your own life and opportunities are shaped by luck, and what your life may have looked like if you were the child of a sex worker.

12. Ruchira Gupta and Urmi Basu say that the average age of entry into prostitution in India is 9 to 13 years old, but those averages are continuing to come down. Somaly Mam also mentions that brothel owners are seeking younger girls every year. What do you think is driving this trend? What factors do you think are contributing to the desire to exploit younger and younger girls? What does this trend illustrate about the nature of extreme poverty in the 21st century?

13. There is an international debate raging around the subject of prostitution and whether women will be better protected if it is legalized. What do you think? What impact do you think legalizing prostitution would have on the global sex trafficking crisis?

14. Sex trafficking is not just a problem in the developing world—14,500 to 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States each year. What impact, if any, do you think sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are having in your community? What more could or should the United States do to combat sexual exploitation on the national and international levels?
Suggestions for Action

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. **Join the global movement for women’s economic empowerment.** Visit the *Half The Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity For Women Worldwide* movement website (www.halftheskymovement.org) to learn more about the issue and find out how to host a screening with your friends, family, community, or organization and facilitate a discussion of the film and the best-selling book that inspired it.

2. **Stay connected.** The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the United States, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. It is operated by the Polaris Project, an NGO working to combat human trafficking. Callers can report tips and receive information on human trafficking by calling the hotline at 1-888-3737-888. Online tips can be submitted at www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/report-a-tip. More information about the Polaris Project can be found at www.polarisproject.org.

3. **Be cool!** Apne Aap’s “Cool Men Don’t Buy Sex Campaign” highlights the role that men play in fostering the sex industry. Antitrafficking efforts frequently address only the victims of sex trafficking, ignoring the force that fuels the trade — male demand for purchased sex. Visit the website to support the campaign and learn how you can start a “Cool Men” movement and host an event in your community: apneaap.org/cmdbs/cool-men-dont-buy-sex-campaign

4. **Join the international campaign to stop child sex trafficking.** Human trafficking is the third-largest and fastest-growing criminal activity in the world. It is estimated that approximately 1.2 million children are trafficked domestically or across borders each year. In order to end this serious crime and abuse of children and young people, ECPAT International and The Body Shop have formed a partnership to create and implement the global “Stop Sex Trafficking of Children & Young People” campaign. For more information or to join the campaign: ecpat.net/TBS/en/about_campaign.html

5. **Help create a better future.** PROJECT FUTURES global is a project of the Somaly Mam Foundation that empowers volunteers to take action and join the fight against slavery. Through PROJECT FUTURES global, volunteers can use their skills and interests, their communities, and their social networks to speak out and increase awareness. Visit the website to find out how you can participate: projectfutures.somaly.org

6. **Mobilize your community and become part of the “Say NO—UNITE to End Violence against Women” campaign.** This campaign was launched in 2009 by UN Women to engage people from all walks of life online and on the ground to end gender-based violence in all its forms. The “Say NO—UNITE” tool kit has a range of resources, tips, multimedia tools, and step-by-step guides for creating your own campaign, organizing community events, and starting local clubs to galvanize support.

Say NO—UNITE to End Violence against Women: www.saynotoviolence.org

Say NO — UNITE Organizer’s Tool Kit: saynotoviolence.org/about-say-no/organizers-toolkit
Resources

www.haltheskymovement.org – This is the official website for the Half The Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity For Women Worldwide movement, as well as for the book and film of the same name.

www.rescue.org – The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives.

www.careinternational.org – CARE International is an organization that is fighting poverty and injustice in more than 70 countries around the world and helping 65 million people each year find routes out of poverty.

www.afesip.org – AFESIP Cambodia was founded by Somaly Mam to care for those victimized by trafficking and sex slavery. The primary objective of AFESIP’s work is to secure victims’ rights by providing holistic care through a victim-centered approach, with the long-term goals of successful and permanent rehabilitation and reintegration.

www.somaly.org/programs/voices-for-change – Voices for Change is a project of the Somaly Mam Foundation designed to give survivors an opportunity to help themselves by helping others, to have their voices heard in the courts of law and public perception, and to have influence and impact on effectuating change. It is their vision that from those who have struggled through the pain of slavery will arise a new generation of leaders who stand for justice and free will.

www.apneaap.org – Apne Aap Organizes groups of women and girls who are at the risk of or are affected by trafficking into self-empowerment groups and ensures their access to three fundamental rights: education, a sustainable and dignified livelihood, and legal empowerment as per their “3L” model. They also develop and participate in nationwide education and outreach programs to support victims of sexual exploitation and end trafficking.

www.newlightindia.org – New Light provides shelter, educational opportunities, recreational facilities, health care, and legal aid for the children, girls, and women in the Kalighat District of Kolkata, one of the oldest red-light districts of the city.

www.gems-girls.org – Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) is the only organization in New York State specifically designed to serve girls and young women who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking and their work has put them on the forefront of the national movement to end the sexual slavery of women.

www.ecpat.net – ECPAT International is a global network of organizations and individuals working together for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography, and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

endviolence.un.org – UNiTE to End Violence against Women was launched in 2009 by UN Women to engage people from all walks of life to end gender-based violence in all its forms.

www.now.org – The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States and works to bring about equality for all women.

www.amnesty.org – Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights for all.

www.msf.org – Médecins Sans Frontières, also known as Doctors Without Borders, is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organization that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, health care exclusion, and natural or man-made disasters.

www.savethechildren.org – Save the Children is an organization that works to save and improve children’s lives in more than 50 countries worldwide.

www.unfpa.org/public – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man, and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity.

www.worldvision.org – Recognizing women and girls as critical partners in development, the Christian humanitarian organization World Vision works to equip, protect, and advocate for women in nearly one hundred countries.
A Message from New Video

New Video, a Cinedigm company, is a leading entertainment distributor and the largest aggregator of independent digital content worldwide. New Video’s Docurama Films is proud to offer *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* as part of its roster of acclaimed, award-winning documentaries. Here are ways in which grassroots organizers and home video consumers might utilize the DVD to spread the message of the film and benefit their organizations:

**Affiliate Program:** New Video offers a free Affiliate Program that allows organizations or individuals to earn a 10 percent referral fee off every DVD purchased through a unique tracking link on their websites, social media properties, and signatures. (www.newvideo.com/about/affiliates) New Video is very hands-on with enrollees, helping them reach their highest potential within the program: calling out the “donation” from the program, messaging that purchasing directly supports the independent film community, etc.

- **Wholesale Orders:** Bulk orders start at just ten units (non-returnable), with discounts increasing at tiered intervals. Great for fundraising incentives, membership premiums, etc.
- **DVD Giveaways:** New Video can offer a small quantity of DVDs for giveaways in exchange for promotion on social media and web properties.
- **Member Discounts:** New Video can create unique discount codes for organizations to offer its members a discounted rate on the DVD.
- **Social Media Engagement:** New Video can post or retweet organizations that are spreading the word about a release or engaging in a giveaway or screening event.

Please contact Vanessa at vvarous@newvideo.com if you are interested in the above options.
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ITVS
Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy® Award-winning series Independent Lens on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. Women and Girls Lead is a strategic public media initiative to support and sustain a growing international movement to empower women and girls, their communities, and future generations. To learn more, visit itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead

SHOW OF FORCE
Dedicated to creating feature documentaries and television series events of the highest caliber, Show of Force is known for dynamic, character-driven storytelling that consistently engages, entertains, and inspires. Show of Force is a media production company represented by CAA (Creative Artists Agency), with 20 years of combined experience and excellence between partners Maro Chermayeff and Jeff Dupre. They have produced over 20 hours of television and media content per year with a staff of excellent young producers and are the recipients of numerous awards and accolades for their work on both U.S. and international media broadcasts. Show of Force is the production company overseeing the multiple platforms of the Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide movement. To learn more, visit showofforce.com