

## CHAPTER I

## Understanding Slavery Today

---

For Meera the revolution began with a single rupee. When a worker from the Sankalp organization found Meera's unmapped village in the hills of Uttar Pradesh, India, he found the entire population was enslaved through debt bondage to work in stone quarries. The men and women hammered and pried rocks from the earth; the children hauled the rocks in baskets. Children as young as five worked in the pits making sand by smashing stones with a hammer. The dust, flying rock chips, and heavy loads meant that many villagers suffered from silicosis and damaged eyes or backs. These villagers were enslaved in order to make a substance so common, and that costs so little, that only by using slaves could *hand-made* sand be profitable.

Calling together a few of the women, the Sankalp worker proposed a radical step. If ten women would agree to set aside a single rupee a week to form a credit union, he would help them put their savings in the local bank and arrange a loan of seed money.<sup>1</sup> In India, small-scale credit unions such as these are known as "self-help groups." In time, the first group was formed and the rupees slowly mounted up. After three months, enough money had been saved that the group decided to pay off the loan that held one woman — Meera — in bondage. The landlord and moneylenders were surprised that she had been able to pay off her debt, but they were not worried. Sometimes it happened that a relative from outside the village might send a gift, or an inheritance might provide enough to pay off a debt bond. Since the original debt holding a family might have been contracted two or three generations before, such repayments are seen as a windfall by the landlords. With the local economy

completely under their control, the landlords and moneylenders know they only have to wait for a crisis — a serious illness or the need to pay for a funeral — to drive a family back to them for another loan.

Once a family has taken a loan, they are trapped. Make no mistake, these loans are not like the mortgages we have on our homes or the payments we make on our cars. Under the most common system of bondage in South Asia, work does not repay the debt. When a person borrows from a landlord, that person, his or her family, and all the work that all of them are capable of is simply *collateral* against the loan. Until the debt is repaid, the moneylender owns the family and everything they grow or produce. If the landlord owns all their productive output, is it possible to repay the debt? In a word, no. And so the debt is passed on from husband to wife, father to son, through the generations. The control of the landlord is total, and if he is unsatisfied with his returns, a child can be taken from the family and sold. In Meera's case, with the whole village under their thumbs, the landlords and moneylenders were unconcerned that she had paid her debt; she would be theirs again soon enough.

Freed from her enslavement, Meera shifted to piecework, selling loads of sand directly to the wholesaler, and she began paying larger amounts into the credit union. In another two months, enough money had been saved to free another woman, and she also began to deposit larger sums from her increased income. The following month a third woman bought herself out of bondage.

At that point, a dramatic change came over the self-help group. After a lifetime of slavery, the other members, seeing that freedom was possible, declared themselves free and renounced their debts. Once they saw that Meera and the other women could live in freedom, could work and provide for their families, bondage lost both its threat and its security for them. It was a profound realization and a revolutionary step. The landlords, who had been happy to have the cash that paid off the debts of two or three slaves, now faced revolt. For the landlords and moneylenders, the threat was immense: if the system of collateral debt bondage was dismantled, their power and profits would evaporate. The landlords moved quickly against the women. A gang of thugs was sent to rough them up and drive them from the quarries. Several women were injured, but they stood firm. With backing from the Sankalp worker, they fought to defend their new freedom.

At one point the main landlord came to the village to threaten the women and force them back to work for him. "He told me, 'Even if you die, I will drag your body out of the ground and make you work,'" one

of the women said. For this landlord such a revolt was inconceivable — was he not of the upper caste? Hadn't his family controlled these villages for generations? Weren't these people Kols, a tribal group below even the lowest castes? For perhaps the first time in his life, the landlord found that his assumed superiority counted for nothing. The landlords tried to cut the women off from the wholesalers and from the quarries where they worked, but the women made their own deals with the wholesalers and found new areas to quarry. Working together, the women came through. Soon they began to help women in other villages start credit unions. In less than a year, the whole village was freed, and the funds building up in the credit unions were used to equip a simple open-air school for the children who had been freed from the quarries.

Less than fifty miles from the quarries, the land turns flat and fertile. Here, without the help of microcredit, freedom can be difficult for an ex-slave. When I first met Baldev in 1997, he was plowing. His master called him "my plowman." Baldev's father and grandfather had also been bonded to his master's family, held against a debt passed down through the generations. Two years later I met Baldev again and was surprised to learn that he had freed himself from debt. But he had not freed himself from bondage. He told me:

After my wife received this money [from a relative], we paid off our debt and were free to do whatever we wanted. But I was worried all the time — what if one of the children got sick? What if our crop failed? What if the government wanted some money? Since we no longer belonged to the landlord, we didn't get food every day as before. Finally, I went to the landlord and asked him to take me back. I didn't have to borrow any money, but he agreed to let me be his *balvaba* [bonded plowman] again. Now I don't worry so much; I know what to do.

Lacking any preparation for freedom, Baldev reenrolled in slavery. Without external support, his emancipation didn't last.

## Understanding Slavery, Understanding Freedom

To many people, it comes as a surprise that hereditary debt bondage and other forms of slavery persist into the twenty-first century. Every country, after all, has made it illegal to own another human being and exercise total

control over that person. And yet there are many people like Baldev — by my estimate, around 27 million people in slavery today. (Please see chapter 5 for an explanation of how this estimate was made.) If slaveholders no longer own slaves, how can they exercise so much control that, sometimes, freed slaves deliver themselves back into bondage? This is just one of the puzzles of modern slavery.

It is important to explain that collateral debt bondage — the complete control of any person because of a debt — is specifically outlawed in India. Meera and the women of her village had no legal obligation to pay back the sums they “owed” to the moneylenders and landlords. In fact, they were breaking the letter of the law when they did repay their “debt.” But in the countryside, among the illiterate and systematically oppressed, this law is unknown. The world’s great web of television, radio, and the Internet has yet to reach these villages. Their reality is bondage; no other way of thinking is permitted. Clearly, the landlords have no interest in allowing their bonded workers to know their rights. When the workers have been bonded for generations, when they know no other reality but slavery, when their masters constantly reinforce their inferiority and the preordained nature of their bondage, it can be frightening to contemplate “disobedience.” The bonded worker is more likely to see resisting the landlord as an act that will threaten the livelihood of his or her family than as an act of liberation. Freedom, being unknown, is hard to imagine. The choices available in freedom are completely alien to these bonded workers. To help these families to freedom means opening their eyes to the reality of their bondage and the possibility of freedom.

For some slaves, the first step out of bondage is to learn to see their lives with new eyes. Their reality is a social world where they have their place and some assurance of a subsistence diet. Born into slavery, they cannot easily redefine their lives outside the frame of enslavement. For other slaves — those who have been enslaved after living in freedom — it is not usually necessary to think their way to freedom. Their challenge is to overcome the crushing violence, the stunned shock, of the total control over their lives.

Rethinking slavery does not happen just with individuals; it also occurs within populations. The way slavery came to be seen as a violation of human rights is based on this rethinking — in the public mind, within religions, and in law. How the understanding of slavery was transformed in the public mind over a period of centuries is the subject of chapter 2. A larger question is how to bring about such a transformation today, when the problem is not apathy or indifference to the continued presence of slavery, but ignorance of it.

The waning years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first have seen an explosion of interest in and work on modern slavery, yet this work has just scratched the surface. In the early 1990s, when I began to search for funding to carry out research on slavery, foundations that I thought might support my work could not imagine the need for it, since “slavery ended long ago.” Fortunately, between the emergence of a generation of young activist-scholars and the pressure that outrage over international human trafficking has brought to bear on governments, public awareness and support for research and antislavery work has mushroomed. Yet while we come to understand that slavery is all around us, even in America and Europe, we are in the dark when it comes to the most basic questions of who, how, how many, and where. These questions are crucial not just for the slaves but for all of us. For if the path to freedom is not as smooth as we can make it, if it leads only to lives of continued exploitation, then the problem is not solved; it is merely postponed.

To see how freedom can be a hollow victory, look at the United States. While Americans can be justly proud of Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, it simply did not go far enough. Remember that, at first, the proclamation applied only to those slaves *behind enemy lines*, where the power of the document could not reach. With the end of the American Civil War, freedom came to all slaves, but *only* freedom, and that was a great wrong. Slavery is theft — theft of a life, theft of work, theft of any property or produce, theft even of the children a slave might have borne. In America, for generations, the lives and sweat of men, women, and children had been stolen. The debt owed to ex-slaves was tremendous. Their productive labor had built a whole society — it had raised great plantations out of the wilderness — and had created beauty, sustenance, shelter, apparel, and wealth. In return, slaves endured abuse, sexual assault, violence, and the selling away of their children or spouses or parents and were given just enough food to keep them working. Here was a debt that could not be repaid to the millions who had died in slavery, and it was a debt to the living that was denied or ignored.

### No Freedom without Forgiveness?

After the Civil War, there were calls from ex-slaveholders for compensation for the billions of dollars’ worth of slave “property” they had lost when slavery ended. Given the enormous cost in lives and property the war had already exacted, these calls were ignored. Meanwhile, nearly 4

million ex-slaves also waited, if not for restitution or compensation, then at least for the tools to rebuild their lives. The federal government's Freedmen's Bureau, with its successful education programs, and the potential formula of "forty acres and a mule," could have transformed millions of destitute ex-slaves into economically autonomous families.<sup>2</sup> But the bureau was quickly shut down, and the mule and the forty acres never materialized. Today, we have learned that exactly such a mixture of education and a livelihood can bring stable freedom and citizenship to ex-slaves. Yet after the death of Lincoln, as the Southern elites reasserted their influence, and as many Northern politicians redirected their energies to other issues, no such support came for the freed slaves. The result of this neglect has reverberated into our own lives.

Perhaps no other country in the world so dramatically demonstrates the consequences of a botched emancipation. America has suffered, and continues to suffer, from the injustice perpetrated on ex-slaves. Generations of African Americans were sentenced to second-class status, exploited, denied, and abused. Without education and basic resources, it has been difficult for African American families to build the economic foundation needed for full participation and well-being in American society. Today there are laws that call on criminals to make restitution for what they have stolen, for the damage they have inflicted. No such restitution came for the stolen lives of millions of slaves.

At the end of the American Civil War, nearly 4 million ex-slaves were dumped with little preparation into the society and economy of the United States. Today some 27 million slaves exist in the world. If we can end slavery in this generation — which is a real possibility — do we really want the next four, five, or twenty generations to face the problems of emancipation gone wrong? Our aim in ending slavery cannot be the creation of a population whose suffering and anger spills out over the decades. Helping freed slaves achieve full lives is one of the best investments a government or society can make. We know the alternative: that way lies Jim Crow and a horrible waste of human potential. It also gives birth to anger, retribution, vengeance, hatred, and violence. In fact, one of the most profound, and unanswered, questions about slavery and freedom is this: even if there is restitution, how can there be forgiveness?

Those who have suffered enslavement may say that this is a crime beyond forgiveness. It is no momentary act of violence, no crime of passion, but a systematic brutalization and exploitation that can stretch out over generations. And it incorporates the most horrible crimes known — torture, rape, kidnap, murder, and the willful destruction of the human

mind and spirit. It is exploitation, injustice, and violence in their most potent forms all rolled together. The damage slavery does and has done is inestimable, and that includes the damage done to minds deeply injured by enslavement.

The minds injured by slavery include those of the slaveholders. By dehumanizing others in order to enslave them, slaveholders dehumanize themselves. Those of us with little direct experience of slavery find it hard to feel any concern for the slaveholder, but many of those who have lived in slavery recognize the damage slavery does to the master as well. A community that allows slavery in its midst is sick to its core. For the ex-slave to grow as a citizen, that sickness must be treated, especially because many freed slaves continue to live in the same area where they were enslaved. Ex-slaves and their former slaveholders may see each other regularly. If injustices are allowed to fester, it will be impossible for either to move on. In America, the ugly sickness of slavery reemerged in segregation, discrimination, and lynch laws. In part, this was because most Americans sought to ignore the legacy of slavery. The immediate needs of freed slaves were not met in the years following 1865, and Americans since then have attempted to draw the curtain over the past, to let bygones be bygones.

We can see a parallel in postapartheid South Africa. Faced with the large-scale, horrific murders and torture of the past, many people in that country argued that collective amnesia would best serve the reconstruction of a truly democratic state. But Desmond Tutu explained, “Our common experience in fact is the opposite — that the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, is embarrassingly persistent, and will return and haunt us unless it has been dealt with adequately. Unless we look the beast in the eye we will find that it returns to hold us hostage.”<sup>3</sup> In America that beast has been on the prowl for more than a hundred years and has evolved into new forms of discrimination, recrimination, and injustice. Putting down that beast is one of America’s greatest challenges. Ensuring that that same sort of beast never grows up when slaves are freed today is a challenge for the whole world.

To help governments enforce their own antislavery laws, to find the best ways to liberate slaves, and to ensure that freed slaves build new lives and that communities overcome the sickness of slavery, means building a sound understanding of what slavery is today and where it is going tomorrow. We cannot solve a problem we do not understand. The aim of this book is to explore some of the fundamental and underlying ideas about slavery in order to help that understanding grow.

## Same Slavery, Different Packages

With only a handful of people around the world working to gain an understanding of slavery, the picture is sketchy. What's more, every time someone fills in a few more strokes, the picture gets a little clearer but also a little more complicated. We tend to see slavery in simplistic terms, but it is as complex as any human relationship can be, especially one shaped in different countries by culture, religion, and social change. At the moment, we really are like the blind men with the elephant, each describing just one part of the beast, with only the slightest idea of the actual shape of the whole animal. This book is about bringing together a set of ideas that explore slavery today, and what we can learn from past instances of slavery. Virtually every person wants to live in a world without slavery, but in our fight against slavery our tools are few, our resources scarce, and our knowledge piecemeal. The chapters of this book aim to fill in some of the holes and to save us from reinventing wheels that were assembled in the antislavery campaigns of the past. But it is important, before taking up those ideas, to review the work of investigators who are shining light into the dark corners of contemporary slavery.

One thing researchers do know is that slavery is evolving and seems to be increasing in raw numbers. The past few years have seen the discovery of new forms of slavery. Researchers, journalists, and activists around the world have documented human trafficking in eastern Europe, debt bondage in South Asia, and short-term "contract" slavery in Brazil, as well as "classical" slavery in North Africa put to new uses. Organizations as diverse as the American Central Intelligence Agency, the Vatican, the United Nations, and Amnesty International have turned their attention to slavery.

Slavery is not always easy to recognize, sometimes because the outer "shell" of slavery hides its inner reality. But what is the basic reality of slavery? It is a simple yet potent truth that slavery is a relationship between (at least) two people. Like the other common and patterned relationships that humans have, slavery takes various forms and achieves certain outcomes. The outcomes of slavery tend to be similar across time and cultures, the forms less so. The outcomes of slavery are exploitative: theft of labor resulting in economic gain for the slaveholder, use of the enslaved person as an item of conspicuous consumption, and the possible sexual use of an enslaved person. Any particular slave may fulfill one, some, or all of these outcomes for the slaveholder.

While the outcomes of slavery tend to be similar, the forms of en-

slavement are more varied. There are core attributes that define slavery, but these attributes are embedded in a wide variety of forms reflecting cultural, religious, social, political, ethnic, commercial, and psychological contexts. The mix of influences for any particular slave and slaveholder may be unique, but they follow general patterns reflecting the community in which the slavery occurs. Part of the challenge of understanding slavery both historically and today is to find the underlying attributes shared by all forms of slavery and to analyze and understand the various forms slavery can take in any particular case. Across time and across different countries, the extreme differences in the forms of slavery mean that the underlying nature of the slavery relationship—the attributes that mark it as slavery—can be obscured. Religious justifications, “willing” participation, token payments, the apparent signing of a contract, and any number of other layers of meaning, rationalization, or explanation can be used as part of the way a community explains and rationalizes slavery in its midst.

Today, the core attributes of slavery remain the same as they have always been. They are the same attributes that described a slave in the past: the state of control exercised over the slave based on violence or its threat, a lack of any payment beyond subsistence, and the theft of the labor or other qualities of the slave for economic gain. All slavery shares these attributes, though there can be occasional exceptions, such as gifts or remuneration beyond subsistence. The key and central attribute, the core, of slavery, however, is the violent control of one person by another.

Slavery has always been about violent control, but modern slavery differs in three important ways. First, slaves today are cheaper than they have ever been. The cost of slaves has fallen to a historical low, and they can be acquired in some parts of the world for as little as ten dollars.<sup>4</sup> This means that they are no longer a big capital purchase, like livestock or equipment. Slaves today are more likely to be seen as disposable—something you use and then throw away when it is no longer useful. Second, slaves are now held for a shorter length of time. In the past, slavery was usually a lifelong condition; today it may last just a few years or even months. Third, today slavery is globalized. This means that the forms of slavery in different parts of the world are becoming more alike. The way slaves are used, and the part they play in the world economy, is increasingly similar wherever they are located. These changes have come about very quickly, occurring, for the most part, in the past fifty years. This new “outer shell” of slavery has grown so quickly that we have trouble seeing the big picture of modern slavery. To see better, we need the help of researchers studying today’s slavery where it lives.

## Sketching the Big Picture

We can start with looking at what researchers are finding out about slavery at the individual level. Around the world people are looking closely at the lives of slaves and helping them to achieve their freedom. What have they learned that can help us? One of the first things they recognize is the role that poverty and vulnerability play in driving people to slavery. While slavery may be linked to religion in one country, to caste or “race” in a second country, and to gender in yet another country, it always reflects differences in economic and social power. Slavery is no longer based on broad categories of “race.” Slavery is fundamentally a question of power and specifically the power to use violence. It is no revelation that some people use power to immorally or illegally enrich themselves. A pertinent question for us to ask is why some people are so vulnerable to this abuse of power that they can be enslaved.

Vulnerability is key to slavery, but not all the vulnerable become slaves. That fact alone generates an important question: Why are some vulnerable people enslaved and others are not? If we can answer that question, perhaps we can learn how to best protect people from enslavement. Of course, with respect to some of the poor the answer is clear — they are not worth enslaving. There are millions of vulnerable people who are, from the perspective of the slaveholder, not fit to be slaves. The elderly, the infirm, and the very young are almost never enslaved. Those in the market for slaves seek health, strength, and youth. But, of the young, healthy, and strong, why are some enslaved and not others? At the broadest level, we can say that those enslaved lack both the personal and financial resources and the social and governmental protections to prevent their enslavement. At the local level, however, the answer quickly gets complicated, and many of the answers are both partial and tantalizing. A quick look at the trafficking and enslavement of children in West African demonstrates this.

### THEIR BODIES WASH UP ON SHORE IN THE MORNING . . .

In 2001, Monika Parikh, a researcher for Free the Slaves, traveled to Lake Volta in Ghana. Her aim was to explore rumors of children being enslaved in the fishing villages there. Lake Volta is one of the world’s largest lakes and, in the past, has been a source for fish for both the national and export markets. In recent years overfishing has meant a drop

in fish stocks. The resulting economic pressure has pushed some fishermen to use children as workers rather than pay adult wages. These children, some as young as three, work long hours mending, setting, and pulling nets; cleaning and smoking fish; and rowing the fishing boats. The greatest danger comes when they must dive deeply into the lake to retrieve snagged nets. The fishermen tie weights to the children to help them descend more quickly. Much of the work goes on during the night, and in the dark depths the children get tangled and trapped and then drown. A local official stated, "The bodies of children wash up on the shores of our village, but the police typically attribute the deaths to drowning, a natural cause." If not drowned outright, the children suffer from shock when forced down into water that is too cold for diving.

When Parikh was able to speak with some of the enslaved children, she found them hollow eyed, gaunt, and grim. They reported that they were fed fermented corn and cassava flour, but only sparingly. Two little boys reported eating some of the little fish they had netted, but for this their master had beaten them with a cane. If sick or injured, the children receive no care or treatment. Exhausted and staggering from lack of sleep, they often hurt themselves in their work. While most of the enslaved children are boys, some girls are used as well for domestic work and to sell the fish in the market. Like other trafficked girls in Ghana, they are likely to be sexually abused as well.

The children come to this enslavement with the cooperation of their parents. Fishermen visit villages in the surrounding countryside in order to recruit children. With schooling hard to obtain and family incomes around the starvation level, parents sometimes agree to let their children go in order to gain the two hundred thousand cedi (about twenty-eight dollars) offered as an "advance" on their child's labor. Normally, the fisherman promises that another four hundred thousand cedi will be paid to the parents over the next year. Once the children have been taken away from their home villages, the reality of slavery descends. Fishermen, when asked, state that they have "bought" the children, and once they reach Lake Volta, their treatment of them makes this assertion clear.

For all the horror these children suffered, a happy ending to this story is unfolding. After Parikh completed her research, she circulated it to a number of local and international agencies. A local relief organization began to work directly with the children; meanwhile, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a branch of the United Nations, began to bring their resources and expertise to bear. With a large grant from the U.S. government, the IOM set many of the children free and

reunited them with their families. To prevent recurrences, the IOM helped the fishermen move into other types of work if they promised to stop enslaving children. Once the children had been returned home, their families were also helped to find ways to increase their incomes, thus relieving some of the pressure that drove them to “sell” their children in the first place. To date, more than a thousand children have been freed, and the nature of the fishing industry on Lake Volta has been transformed.

The rescue of the fishing children shows that real progress can be made when economic alternatives are developed for both those who would enslave and those who are vulnerable to enslavement. Removing the pressures that tempt some people to exploit workers is important. More important is aiding the families that are vulnerable: helping them get the education, income, and skills that protect them from slavery. The lesson of Lake Volta is also important because it shows that the enslavement of children in West Africa can be stopped—a crucial point because the enslavement of children is widespread and deep-rooted in the region. It is a practice that Anne Kielland understands better than most.

#### THE SLAVEHOLDER’S APPRENTICE

If we are the blind men examining the elephant, Anne Kielland is an expert on the toes. A Norwegian who speaks flawless French and English, she has spent long periods in the villages of West Africa coming to grips with why and how the children of that region are trafficked into slavery. In 2000, together with Roger Ouensavi, Kielland interviewed more than forty-seven hundred households, representing over 11,500 children, in the country of Benin. Kielland’s study is the largest, most complete study of child trafficking and child labor migration ever done.<sup>5</sup> Like most good research, the results immediately brought basic assumptions into question.

It was assumed that trickery and false promises were being used to get parents to allow their children to go to the cities where they could be enslaved. There was a common belief that three factors were driving that traffic: poverty, boredom, and ignorance. It was assumed that the poorest, most destitute families would be the most vulnerable, simply because they were the most likely to take the chance that a child might actually get work abroad and send money home. It was also assumed that in the smallest rural villages, where there was little to do, children and teenagers would be the most willing to take a chance on working abroad if it meant getting to the bright lights of a city. Finally, it was assumed that parents

and children would not take recruiters' bait if they knew how likely it was that the experience would end badly. All of these assumptions, which may be true elsewhere, were only partially true in Benin.

A crucial point is that trafficked children are just one thread in a more complex story of children moving around their own country and migrating between countries in order to find work. According to the research, not all children who left home were enslaved: some got jobs, made money, and came home in triumph. Their success, however, helped set the scene for the exploitation of other children. Kielland and Ibrahim Sanogo explain:

The children in most of the cases agree to go. They have seen children who have returned to the villages having been paid in kind, in form of a radio or a bicycle. They are impressed by such wealth, and when the intermediaries [recruiters] return, new recruits will be eager to travel in order to get the same things. In a few cases children do well and come home to the village with modern commodities, and in even fewer cases they can afford to build a nice house for the parents, showing the entire village how well they have done. Unfortunately, the children normally come back as poor as they left or they don't come back at all. Girls who have been in domestic service often return pregnant. . . . It resembles a lottery. The grand prize is tempting, and the winner gets a lot of attention. Unfortunately in the case of child labor migration, the price of the ticket is human, fragile, and extremely vulnerable.<sup>6</sup>

Within the African context, where children are expected to make a significant contribution to the family economy from an early age, and the transition from childhood to adulthood is not a clearly defined event, it is not unusual or remarkable that children are made to work. Added to that is the custom of "placing" children with relatives who might provide a better life for them, often in what might be thought of as an apprenticeship. This may seem alien, even cruel, to Americans and Europeans, but it is important to remember that, in the early nineteenth century, this was absolutely normal and common in both Europe and the United States before the institution of mandatory and universal primary education. The end of such "placements" in Europe and North America came just over one hundred years ago. In Africa today, many villages have little or no schooling available, and the alternative of sending a child to the city to learn a skill and earn much-needed money can be appealing. The tragedy comes when human traffickers, concealing their aim of enslavement, take advantage of this system and convince parents and children that a golden future awaits.

Poverty, boredom, and ignorance were found to have an effect on this process, but in unexpected ways. The better-off families of the poorest villages were the ones most likely to send their children away to work, confounding the idea that this placement was some sort of last resort when a family faced destitution. In Benin, better-off families actually used their resources and connections to get their children out of the poorest villages, hoping for a chance of a better life.

#### HOW YOU GONNA KEEP THEM DOWN ON THE FARM, AFTER THEY'VE SEEN TV?

Assumptions about boredom driving children into risky work turned out to be backward. While villages with daily markets were found to have fewer children leaving, those with their own soccer teams and televisions saw *more* children go. Playing on soccer teams seems to cause young people to identify with the big teams in the cities, and it holds up the possibility of enjoying, or even participating in, big-time sports. In a curiously contradictory effect, soccer, the very activity that most holds the attention of rural children, also helps them to see and yearn for life outside the village. Television has much the same effect. As a window through which children see the world — the cities, the wealth, luxury, excitement, and glamour outside the village — television helps prepare children and parents for the blandishments of recruiters and traffickers.

Finally, it was assumed that if parents really understood the risk their children were facing when they left home, they would not let them go. If a village had a place where information about trafficking and migration was handed out, if there were groups that met regularly where such topics could be discussed, then surely parents would learn and children wouldn't be put at risk. Once again, the results were mixed. It turned out that exactly the places and groups that could warn about the risks of trafficking could also spread the word about "successful" children; they may have even served as recruitment grounds. When the international movement of children was decreased through public education, then the within-country placement of children into jobs increased. Having organized women's groups in a village decreased the amount of in-country movement of girls, but this increased the amount of international traffic, the very type that is most dangerous. Only public education through press and radio uniformly slowed the outflow of children.

If we are trying to keep vulnerable people out of slavery, what can we learn from Anne Kielland's studies? First and foremost is that we have to

look for answers appropriate to the people at risk. From the outside we might view the traffic in children in West Africa simplistically: it is wrong; it must be stopped. Up close we see it is the criminal exploitation of a much larger, culturally accepted use of child labor to support families. Sometimes getting people out of slavery is about kicking in doors and helping them to freedom. But in this case the solution is most likely to be a matter of making sure families don't need to send their children off to work, and establishing universal and mandatory education — the fundamental basis for economic growth and social development.

### Why Aren't Governments Doing More?

To establish universal and mandatory education, not just on the law books, but also in reality, takes government will and resources. Many governments in the developing world lack both, and sadly the rich and powerful governments are partially to blame. The investments our governments make in the Southern Hemisphere are too often focused on developing those countries as trading partners and selling them weapons. Weapons are the last thing these countries need, but as the guns flow south, the money gushes north. Every year, the countries of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America spend about \$22 billion in the international arms market.<sup>7</sup> The estimated cost of providing primary education to every child on the planet who currently lacks it is less than half that amount. The powerful countries are getting richer on this trade; the United States, Russia, France, Britain, and China together sell almost 90 percent of the weapons delivered to poor countries. The volume of this production is almost beyond comprehension. For example, every year about three pieces of ammunition, bullets, bombs, mortar shells, and so forth are produced for every man, woman, and child on earth. They are added to an existing stockpile that could kill every human being many times over. There are a lot of inhuman and vicious examples of bad government and business policy. But when we know that basic education keeps children out of slavery, and when we know that just half the money the developing world spends on weapons in one year would provide that basic education to every child, how can there be a choice?

However, the solution requires more than education alone. Ignorance supports slavery, but there is another pillar helping to prop up bondage. Around the world, slavery grows where corruption disrupts the rule of law and makes the vulnerable open to violent control. Not surprisingly,