

For Immediate Release
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Slavery not over for girls in Nepal One scarf, one book, one girl – the power of one

Kelowna, BC – “Climbing Everest is not the biggest challenge in Nepal” according to Linda Edgecombe, author and international speaker. As you read this, according to Unicef, UNESCO and IWEN, there are over 20,000 girls between the ages of seven and sixteen who are in bonded servitude (paid for slavery) in Nepal. Daily survival is a challenge as just under half of the population is fueled by poverty. “It’s shocking as a Canadian, appalling as a woman and there is something we all can do to change this tragedy.”

Fact: The Nepalese Government states that they abolished these practices years ago, but their culture still supports it. At the same time, there are over 1.5 million “Dalit”* girls not allowed to attend school in Nepal because of the cast society they find themselves in. These girls are referred to as “untouchables”. At this moment, there are thousands of women and children that are victims, living in horrific conditions due to the fact that in Nepal, when a woman is without a man to head her household, she is considered worthless. With the average household income below \$250 a year in Nepal, poverty is their biggest hurdle. Thus, changing the practice of bonded servitude becomes more difficult to break. *Dalit refers to a Nepalese slang meaning *comes from the swamp* and refers to those in the lowest Cast and considered *untouchable*.

Fact: In exchange for her bondage, a Nepalese family will receive a mere equivalent of \$25-\$50 Canadian for the services of each of their daughters per year with contracts negotiated on an annual basis - assuming that the girls make it home each January.

Fact: In the past three years, a small registered charity in Canada, IWEN, has been raising funds, working to buy these girls out of their contracts and diligently trains teachers to educate the women and girls in the “Dalit” areas of Nepal that there is hope and a way out of their slavery.

Fact: A mere donation of \$195 (Can) will buy a girl out of her bondage contract, afford her an opportunity for school and a uniform, purchase her books and buy her family the livestock necessary to produce a small, sustainable income with options other than selling their daughters.

Edgecombe urges Canadians with “more than they need” this Christmas season to consider helping those without hope. “You can change the lives of these girls and women with less than the cost of the ‘it’ toy this holiday season”. According to a recent Ipsos Reid poll, 77% of North Americans state that they don’t need anything this year for Christmas and a whopping 85% said they’d prefer to receive gifts that help others.

This Christmas, IWEN and Linda Edgecombe are launching the *One Scarf, One Book, One Girl* campaign. For \$195, donors will receive a Nepalese scarf, the inspirational new book, *Shift...26 Simple Truths about Getting a Life*, by author and award winning speaker, Linda Edgecombe, and a charitable tax receipt for \$165. Participants will know that when they wear the scarf, a young girl is learning that she has a chance at freedom and to make her world, and ours, a better place.

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