

ISSUE FACT SHEET: KAMLARI

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How would you define slavery? What is bonded labor? Is bonded labor the same as slavery?
2. What responsibility does a government have to enforce its own country's laws?
3. How will keeping girls in school help to solve the problems of poverty and kamlari?

DEFINITION

Kamlari is a form of indentured servitude. In certain regions, it is not uncommon for poor families to sell their children into a life of labor as kamlari, simply because they cannot afford to care for them or, in some cases, it is the only way to pay off a loan.

OVERVIEW

Kamlari was an acceptable practice in parts of Nepal for generations – simply considered part of life for children growing up in poverty. Children as young as age 6 or 7 may be sold as a kamlari. Parents who are extremely poor often see no alternative, because selling their children as servants to people outside of the family helps to ensure that they are fed, and may provide the family with food and money. (In most cases, daughters are sold as kamlari, not sons.)

RELATED IMPACTS: POVERTY AND EDUCATION

In some cases a girl's family will sell her to provide immediate financial benefits to the rest of the family. Kamlari themselves are hardly ever allowed to go to school. But when girls go to school, everything changes – not only for the girls themselves, but also for their families and communities. Girls with an education earn more money, have an increased status in their community, and are healthier.

WHAT'S WORKING

So what can be done? How can we make sure girls are valued, safe, and in school? Here are some initiatives that are working:

- In Nepal, the practice of kamlari has been illegal since 2002, but the laws have not been vigorously enforced. With the work of advocates such as the social worker and the teacher in Suma's story, and girls like Suma herself, the practice of kamlari is finally coming to an end.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Room to Read and CARE are providing safe places for girls to attend school, helping them gain an education and create a secure future.

RESOURCES

- CARE at www.care.org
- Room to Read at www.roomtoread.org
- Meet the Writer from Nepal: Manjushree Thapa: www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgAtkaFJgQM
- Kamlari video: vimeo.com/38260225 (Note: This video is for mature audiences. Teachers are highly encouraged to view the video in advance.)
- Suma, *Where Are They Now* Video: <https://www.adrive.com/public/Z9VC5s/Nepal%20-%20Suma>