



World Kids

Fun for Kids!



True stories!



PAL Project

Number 28 - September 2010

Last month we learned about how many young girls around the world have a particularly hard life and often have no rights or opportunities to choose how to live their life. This month we want to look at the situation for many BOYS around the world. It is reported that there are about 300 MILLION homeless or orphaned children in the world, and 100 MILLION of these live on the streets of the world's megacities (each of which has more than 10 million inhabitants) - such as Shanghai in **China**, Mumbai in **India**, Sao Paulo in **Brazil** and Lagos, **Nigeria**. Experts say that the overwhelming number of street children is boys who are often forced to beg or peddle drugs. In most societies there is a lot less sympathy for boys, who are expected to be "macho" and take care of themselves and show no emotion if they are abused. Many resort to stealing or joining gangs and they are more likely to face harsher abuse by police officers who would arrest and put them in prison for crimes - instead of seeing them as victims and sending them into rehabilitation programs like the girls.



Although all over the world children are found begging in the streets, their number is reported to have increased greatly throughout the Mekong region, which includes **Cambodia**, **Laos**, **Myanmar**, **Thailand** and **Vietnam**. Children - mostly from Cambodia - are even smuggled to Thailand to be exploited for street begging and many are injured on purpose (such as blinded or severely scarred) in order to arouse pity and earn more money. When there are so many people begging on the streets, often some come up with very different tricks or ways to attract attention to get money! Some years ago when we lived in **Mexico** and had to pass through the crowded towns bordering the United States, we would often stop at a red light in the street and immediately a young boy would run up to the car to wash the windshield (often with muddy water!) or "entertain" us by taking a mouthful of gasoline and blowing it out as he set fire to it!! Of course this is very dangerous and can cause serious injury, but the children often only think that it is neat trick that earns them money!

Taking young boys into other countries to make them beg or work to earn money for their "employers" is sadly very common around the world. Sometimes parents hand their children over, believing promises that the employer will send back the money earned to help the family - which rarely happens. In small villages where no work is available and the family goes hungry, parents are quick to believe people who come with big promises to "help" by putting their sons to work elsewhere. Some young boys, especially from **Bangladesh**, **India** and **Pakistan** are taken in this way to the **United Arab Emirates** to act as camel jockeys for camel races, which may be very dangerous and children can be injured or even die falling from camels! In West Africa child trafficking is widespread; according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 200,000 West and Central African minors are trafficked each year both inside countries and across international borders. Boys follow a well-known trafficking route from **Benin** to **Gabon** to work on agricultural plantations. The group Save the Children reports that in **China** many boys under seven years old are trafficked for adoption - because of the desire for sons and the government limit of only one child per family.



Can you think of a young boy in the Bible who was sold by his family to people who took him away to work in another country?

Often young boys are preferred for certain types of work since they are small and agile (and of course can be paid much less - even nothing, apart from being given food and a place to sleep!). Listen to what an 8-year-old boy named Daiku says from **India**. He is one of 800 children who mine copper and cobalt that go into household electronics and batteries for mobile phones. Daiku and his brothers work from morning until night and are typically paid less than a dollar a day. At times they are paid only with a small lunch. "We get very, very tired in the mines. We spend all day there. It's horrible work. Now we are just going to drink some water and fall asleep." You can read 12 year old Aly Diabate's story on <http://www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/val.cfm> where he tells how small boys are used to climb tall cocoa trees in **Ivory Coast**, West Africa, to harvest the seeds needed to make the chocolate that is so desired in Western countries. Other young boys are used to break up stones in quarries, and make bricks in **Pakistan**. In **Malawi**, the amount of nicotine absorbed by child laborers working on a tobacco farm is equal to that found in 50 cigarettes!



The statistics for child labor are frightening - it is reported that there are 218 MILLION child laborers, 126 million do EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS work, and 73 million are LESS THAN 10 years old!! Every year, 22,000 children die in work-related accidents. But here is a true testimony of one young boy who was able to draw attention to the problem and really make a difference. His name was Iqbal Masih from **Pakistan**, and even at just 10 years old he fought against these forms of child labor. At the age of FOUR, his parents sold him to a carpet factory for the equivalent of \$12 U.S.! At the carpet factory, he was forced into bonded labor. He managed to escape and start a crusade against child labor with the help of a human rights organization, and he became an



international symbol and spokesman against the practice of child bondage by various trades and countries around the world. Iqbal helped over 3,000 Pakistani children escape to freedom from bonded labour and he was a hero to many more, but he was shot in the back and killed at the age of 12 when he returned to Pakistan after speaking abroad! But Iqbal's story inspired another 12 year old boy, Craig Kielburger in **Canada**, to start an organization in 1995 to carry on Iqbal's work (see photo), which continues to help many children around the world. You can learn more and get involved by visiting his site www.freethechildren.com

Child soldiers (mostly boys) are being used at present in about 17 countries around the world including **Uganda, Liberia, Sudan** in Africa, and also in parts of **Middle East, Asia** and **South America**. Apart from helping in general at the camps, they are particularly used in combat, scouting and spying, acting as couriers and guards, and laying mines and explosives. It has been estimated that over 2 million children have been killed in armed conflicts; another 6 million have been permanently disabled; and more than 250,000 children continue to be taken advantage of as child soldiers. During the **Iran / Iraq** War boys, dressed in white robes, were sent out in front of the troops to explode land mines. The children knew they were going to their deaths and were told that they would go straight to Paradise. Even today some Muslim children are persuaded by terrorists to put on vests with explosives and enter buildings to blow them up! It is hard for us to understand how they can do such a thing, but radical Muslims believe that if they die this way, they can be assured of going to Paradise (or Heaven).



The Bible tells us there is only ONE way we can be sure of going to Heaven - can you rearrange the words in this puzzle to find the correct scripture that tells us how?

MOUTH RAISED WITH DEAD YOUR HEART IF FROM GOD WILL LORD THAT
BELIEVE YOU HIM THAT JESUS AND YOU CONFESS IS IN THE SAVED BE YOUR

Let's tell others about the hard lives of some boys and girls around the world, and do our best to help them know about Jesus too. If you would like to write to a boy or girl in Africa or India, let me know!

'Til next time, your friend, Shirley

Facts from sites inc: <http://www.ipsnews.net/alert/yok2012f.html> <http://www.enut.ee/> http://www.actnow.com.au/Issues/Child_soldiers.aspx

Answers to puzzles: Owl: Joseph in Genesis 37; Scripture: Romans 10:9

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