



# HOPE

Rescuing Captives  
of the Sex Trade

by Beth Grant



*Daughters of women in prostitution at a Home of Hope, Kolkata, India.  
Photo by Rebecca Grant.*

“Auntie, I have found my Scripture! Isaiah 54:4 says, ‘Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth.’”

*(The words of a young girl, the daughter of a woman in prostitution, to a Project Rescue staff member. She has found Jesus in a Home of Hope in Kolkata, India.)*

The phone rang in the middle of the night. Our colleague, K.K. Devaraj, director of Bombay Teen Challenge (BTC) was in tears. He and his outreach team had gone into the Kamatapura red-light district in Bombay for the first time and discovered a world that few knew existed: over 100,000 women and girls living in block after block of multi-storied brothels, most sold into sexual slavery, many by their own families.

As Devaraj and his team shared the story of Jesus, more than 100 women in the brothels communicated that they wanted to follow Jesus. Tragically, they were not free to leave because they were literally slaves. But they asked Devaraj if he would take their daughters before they, too, were forced into prostitution. So his question to my husband was, “Can we take 37 little girls?”

David’s immediate response was yes! And that was the beginning of the journey.



The first Project Rescue Home of Hope began in 1997 with those 37 little girls, ages 3 to 12, in the city of Bombay (now Mumbai), India. It provided a safe home where their physical, medical, social, educational and spiritual needs were met. Soon after, the Teen Challenge outreach grew into a church in the red-light district to which hundreds of women in prostitution have come and found new life in Jesus. In time, as women observed how their daughters were thriving, they began to trust Devaraj and the BTC staff. Many began to take their own spiritual journey to faith and found the courage to escape the horror of sexual exploitation.

Today, Project Rescue ministers to victims of forced prostitution in eight locations in India and Nepal. It includes nine Homes of Hope for aftercare, a red-light-district church, a Sunday School for the children of women in prostitution, vocational training centers, night-care centers for children during their mothers’ peak working hours, an HIV/AIDS clinic, and a ministry on the North Indian–Nepali border where trafficking regularly occurs. Prevention efforts also have been conducted in poverty-stricken villages of Western Nepal where procurers trick families into selling their young daughters.



Plans are underway to begin Project Rescue ministries in Moldova, Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union and Central Eurasia where human trafficking is rapidly increasing.

In God's providence, he allowed our team to launch this ministry. But we quickly realized the need to define Project Rescue as it related to our theology and missiology. Working with young children and women who are brutalized daily in sexual slavery—possibly the darkest evil in the twenty-first century—was the most emotionally charged and challenging ministry any of us had undertaken. It was critical to evaluate what we were trying to do, how we would do it and that our mission and strategy were consistent with the Great Commission.

Several key truths have become foundational to our compassion ministry approach:

1. **No true “rescue” can take place without the love and transformational power of Jesus Christ.** Many good social, legal and political organizations are engaged in physically rescuing victims from sex slavery. But only Jesus can free a woman or child emotionally, mentally and spiritually from the bondage of exploitation. A supernatural work of healing through Christ Jesus is the only hope for transforming a young girl exploited for years in prostitution into a courageous woman of God. Without this, rescued survivors find themselves back in slavery within months, if not weeks.



*Young women rescued from prostitution enjoy a meal together at a Home of Hope. Photo by Rebecca Grant.*

2. **For compassion ministry to be life changing, word and deed must go hand in hand.** Giving food, water, education or aftercare for the sexually exploited is interpreted differently around the world depending on the recipient's world view, religious tradition and political ideology. For example, for the Muslim tsunami victim in Indonesia, relief supplies given were frequently viewed as politically motivated to convert them to Western culture or religion or to win political favor. Compassion ministries are not a substitute for proclamation. Both are integral to biblical mission as taught and modeled by Jesus. Together, they are a powerful living statement of the life-changing Word!

We determined that Jesus Christ would be openly at the heart of everything we do. If we take the message and person of Jesus away, lives may be touched momentarily, but they will not be transformed.

The most powerful workers today in the ministry to women survivors of sex slavery are former madams who came to Christ out of the brothels four and five years ago. They had been leaders with natural leadership skills, fearless and full of demonic power.

Today they are strong leaders in the Homes of Hope. They go courageously back into the red-light district, encouraging women to leave, and praying powerful prayers of deliverance.



*Home for children with HIV/AIDS who are daughters of women in prostitution, Mumbai, India. Photo by Wayde Goodall.*

Eighty percent of the women and children now being rescued out of the brothels in Mumbai, India, are HIV positive.

The problem of human trafficking is not just a Third-World issue. The U.S. State Department estimates 18,000–20,000 women and children are being trafficked annually into the United States for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

**3. No social action is value free.** Christian ministries should not be apologetic or defensive because our social action is shaped by our Christian values and faith. All social action is shaped by the political, social and religious ideologies of the individuals or organizations behind it. Whether Christian, Hindu, Muslim, atheist, liberal or feminist, none are value free! Our compassion grows out of our relationship with Jesus Christ, and acts of compassion are a natural extension of his work in our lives.

The church has a great opportunity today to connect our faith in practical ways with the world's most gripping social needs. In the case of human trafficking and HIV/AIDS, government leaders, criminal justice agencies and social services are looking for answers. In the area of aftercare for survivors of sex trafficking, few programs offer qualified care, and

among those that exist, non-faith-based programs have a poor success rate. What an opportunity for the church to bring new life, healing and hope where little or none exists!

Little did we know when our Project Rescue team began this journey in 1997 that God would use us to take the love and light of Jesus Christ to the world's darkest places. But how fitting! It is in the face of hell that the message of the love, grace and power of Jesus Christ shines most brightly.



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*Project Rescue has led a coalition of faith-based groups to produce a new curriculum—“Hands that Heal: An International Curriculum to Train Caregivers of Survivors of Sex Trafficking.” It will be available in October 2007.*