

CASE STUDIES & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Kwesi

When Kwesi was 8 years old, his world was turned upside down. His father died, and his mother, Yaba, did not even have enough money for a funeral. Desperate and grieving, Yaba accepted the aid of a neighbor for pay for the funeral. Once the funeral was over, the neighbor demanded payment for his aid. Yaba could barely afford to feed her eight children, let alone pay off this “debt.” Enraged, the neighbor threatened to call the police and have the terrified mother jailed.

Kwesi, who overheard the confrontation and was scared of losing his mother immediately after his father, offered to work off his mother’s debt. “Three years,” the man told him. “You will have to work for three years.”

Kwesi went to the fishing community of Yeti, where he began work at eleven o’clock at night. He was forced to cast nets until the early hours of the morning, when

he would gather the nets in, only to work on gutting fish through the day. The 8-year-old worked with little food and water, and was frequently beaten by the trafficker with heavy boat paddles. On one terrifying day, Kwesi almost drowned after getting his foot caught in one of the nets. When he came up coughing water, the trafficker beat him with the paddle for his slow work. Kwesi bears a scar on his lip this day.

After being enslaved for just over a year and a half, Kwesi was approached by two representatives from FTS’ partner organization, Challenging Heights. After asking Kwesi a number of questions, they went to question the trafficker. They quickly returned to Kwesi to tell him that he is now free. After confirming that they met with his mother, Kwesi joins the several other children that Challenging Heights liberated and returns to his home village. At home with his mother and siblings, Kwesi now studies hard at math and dreams of being a bank manager.

1. How/Why did Kwesi become a slave? Was he forced or did he volunteer? What are some of the underlying causes/reasons that led to Kwesi becoming a slave?
2. What may have happened if Kwesi did not offer to pay off his mother’s debt? Would Kwesi and his family have been better off?
3. Was forcing Kwesi to work for three years against the law or is that acceptable in other countries?
4. In what ways was Kwesi taken advantage of? What rights were he and his family denied?

Trafficking in Nepal: Sapana



The Kantipur Daily reported the abduction and detention of Sapana, a 14-year-old girl who narrowly avoided being sold into slavery in India. Sapana was abducted from her village in Nepal while she was in the jungle, cutting grass. She was kept in a closed room in the forest and repeatedly beaten. Her ear started to bleed. She was kept drugged and semi-conscious.

She explained: “I was given food once a day. A kind of medicine was mixed in rice.” The same person who abducted Sapana put two yellow drops into her food. She begged her not to put the drops into her food. When the drug slowly stopped working, she could feel people moving around her. She said, “One day some person came to the room and exchanged foreign currency. They were communicating in Hindi, so I did not understand.”

She knew from the conversation that soon she and the other girls would be taken away or “trafficked” but she didn’t know where or why. There was no possibility to escape from that place. There seemed to be 4 or 5 other small huts from where she could hear the voices of girls. Days passed by. There were no drugs in the food given to her, so she was conscious. There was a plan to transport girls to another place. She looked everywhere in her room and found a small hole in the door. There was also a small bag hanging on the wall, containing a hammer, needle and some sharp objects. There was blood on the objects. She was frightened. The door was made up of plywood and when she hit the door with a hammer, the hole got bigger. She was afraid that someone might hear it.

She made a hole big enough for her to get through and she decided to run away. It was quiet and dark outside. For a

moment, she thought of opening up the other rooms, but thought the abductors might know about it. She started running without looking back. She said, “I don’t remember how long I walked. After a while, I found a road. I met an old woman. When I told her my story, she offered for me to stay at her place. The next day, I continued the journey. I arrived at Anamnagar in the evening. I had been to Kathmandu sometimes before so I remembered the name of some places. When I was about to get on the bus, someone pulled me from behind. I did not recognize that person but when he said my father’s name, I was confident.”

Then she managed to get back to her family. She went to stay at Chautara Rehabilitation Center at Lamosanghu with the help of Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar (GMSP). Sapana does not know the name of the place where the abductors took her. She only remembers she was taken to the North from Gongabu.

After Sapana fled, the abductors came to Sapana’s village. The trafficker was arrested in Pangretaar. The police launched an investigation on him. According to the District Superintendent of Police, he is only one member of the trafficking gang.

The parents went to FTS’ frontline partner, GMSP, to get help when the girl returned home, and they pushed the police to start searching for the traffickers. When the trafficker came to the village, the villagers arrested Anuja and handed her over to the police. Sapana also received on-going legal support from GMSP.

1. Why do you think the traffickers targeted Sapana as someone they could abduct?
2. Name some of the factors that made it possible for Sapana to escape.
3. Why do you think Sapana and the nine other girls were abducted?
4. Why is this story about slavery very different from other stories that involve debt bondage slavery?
5. Do you think that if Sapana would have agreed to go with the traffickers, she would have been working a good job in the city like they had promised her?

Bonded Labor in India: Guddi



Guddi married into a family in bonded labor in Gulrahai. In her village, she was the only woman with an intermediate education. She was warmly received into her new family, but like them, she was forced to break stones for the quarry contractor. In spite of her education and her dream of studying more, she had to break the stones to repay the illegal debt of her family. She was not allowed to go anywhere else for work or further studies. Another big challenge for her was the purdah system, in which she was forbidden to speak in front of other community members so she could neither mobilize nor educate them.

When other freed slaves of nearby villages saw that people in Gulrahai were in slavery, they told FTS' frontline partner, PGS, which decided to intervene in the village. When PGS fieldworkers introduced themselves and talked about bonded labor, Guddi came forward, despite the traditional requirement not to speak. She said, "The biggest reason behind the bondedness and poverty is illiteracy." She agreed

to volunteer with PGS and set up a Village Education Center. PGS has helped her get some basic training in teaching methods from a specialist non-formal education organization.

Today, 25 students are getting education from her. The students (who had not been attending the main village school) are showing good progress even after the first few months. Guddi also feels supported by the community members in her role of educating their children. Because of this, there is a radical change in the mindset of the community; now they are not so strict in following the purdah system. Guddi is encouraged to conduct meetings and discuss protecting children with their parents. Guddi hopes the situation will continue to improve in future with support of PGS.

1. Discuss the purdah system, and why you think Guddi was forbidden to speak in front of other community members?
2. Describe what bonded labor is and how it is linked to slavery.
3. Do you agree with Guddi when she states, "the biggest reason behind bondedness and poverty is illiteracy"? If not, then what do you think is the biggest reason behind debt slavery and poverty?
4. How might education help the future generation of children who are born into bondedness?

Restavek Slavery in Haiti



“My name is Carina Louis. I am eleven years old. I live in Carrefour-Sainte, a small town of Mont Ramier. My mom has a serious psychological problem. Often she loses touch with us, her children, and the community. Sometimes she has a disoriented sense of her surroundings, and an inability to control her actions. You could say she has a mental disorder.

I am the third in a family of five children. Magalie is a friend of my family and she knows the economic and social reality of my family. Because she knows everything about me, she decided to ask my family to let me go with her to Port au Prince to help me. However, despite the fact that I was just a little girl that did not stop her from making me responsible for doing difficult work at home such as cleaning the dishes, fetching water, and throwing away rubbish. I slept on the floor on a scrap of cloth. I was given things to eat, but I was malnourished because I was not eating well, and it was the only way for me to survive. I was far away from my family and when I did not want to do something, they threatened they would send me back to my mother. When they threatened this, I had a really bad feeling, because I also knew that there were still problems with my mother. Even though I was the one to fetch water to the house,

I did not even have access to this water to take my own bath. Going to school was only a dream, because I had no access to school like all the other children of the house. The lady and her children would hit me whenever they wanted. They often told me I was the daughter of a crazy woman and that hurt me.

One day my grandmother came to retrieve me. That day, I was so happy, I even cried with joy. It was like rain during the dry season for me. When I asked my grandmother why she came for me, she replied that she received training on children's rights through [the child rights module] introduced by FTS frontline partner, Limye Lavi.

I thank the people who took the initiative to set up this training on children's rights to make our parents know and respect our rights. Thank you for the light you have brought into the community. When I'm a big girl I'd love to be a nurse to help bring my health care skills to the community and help my family to live better.”

1. Do you think Magalie actually helped Carina? If not, how would you explain the way Magalie treated Carina?
2. List some basic necessities that all people need to survive that Carina was deprived of while working for Magalie.
3. Why was it so important for Carina's grandmother to receive training on children's rights? Do you think training more people around the world about children's rights would be helpful?
4. How does education play a major factor in leading to Carina's freedom?

Brazil: An Incredible Rescue



It happened in the middle of the night, two men slipping away quietly from a ranch. They walked 14 miles through forests and fields to escape. A younger slavery survivor had risked his life to help an elderly stranger who could never have walked free on his own. When they arrived at the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), a frontline partner of Free the Slaves, the two men were exhausted. Ronival, 69, had a broken shoulder and was blind in one eye. He had lost 55 pounds during 10 years of slavery. He wept while describing his living conditions.

For six years he slept outside the rancher's house. He eventually moved to a wood hut, but there was no electricity, drinking water or sanitation. He bathed in a polluted stream that was also used by cattle. The elderly man had been rescued by Joel, 30, who was already free. CPT was helping him file legal claims against different slaveholders. Joel had been tricked several times by farmers who promised good jobs but never delivered.

"This is not human job, this is slave job," Joel recalls saying to himself. "But I always attempted once more. Who knows: this time, it might be better?" Joel's mother told him about Ronival's situation, so he decided to act. He thought of calling authorities, but feared it would be too dangerous. "I didn't want to expose myself; somebody might identify me, it might be dangerous for my life," Joel said. "So I opted to do the rescue immediately on my own."

Now free, Ronival's vision is recovering thanks to cataract surgery. CPT helped him win compensation from the slaveholder in court. CPT helped Joel restart his life free from threats from the men who had enslaved him.

1. Describe some of the living conditions that the two survivors had to endure during their time as slaves.
2. Why do you think Joel was enslaved multiple times? List several factors.
3. Is deceiving people into entering slavery through promising jobs illegal in Brazil? If so, then how do so many people get away with it?
4. What makes a person vulnerable enough to be coerced into slavery? How can the government help prevent this type of slavery from continuing?

Forced Marriage in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Cécile, age 15, tells the story of returning home from school one day to find a much older man discussing financial matters with her father. Later that day, Cécile's father asked her to go see the man at his home to pick up something the man owed to her father. When she arrived, the man shut the door behind her and informed her that she was now his wife, because her father had exchanged her for that debt.

Cécile ran away the next day, but her father told her she must go back to her new husband. She went instead to her maternal uncles, who were furious with the father and tried to persuade him not to send

Cécile back. But the father was insistent. He attacked and injured one of the uncles, and they backed down. Cécile's mother tried to speak with her father, but her father beat Cécile's mother, too. The father brought Cécile back to her new husband's home. She ran away again. But this time, she met a woman who agreed to help Cécile hide.

While under this woman's protection, Cécile met a staff person from a Congolese agency. With their support, Cécile was able to earn some income, meet other girls in difficult circumstances, and feel less alone.

1. Why did Cecile's father make her marry someone when she was only 15? Is it legal for parents to force their children to marry someone at 15, and to someone they do not want?
2. What are some of Cecile's rights that are being taken away?
3. How common do you think forced marriage is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?
4. Do you think Cecile should have the right to choose who she wants to marry and when?
5. Name some of the underlying reasons why you think forced marriage is practiced, and discuss ways you think the government can help protect children's rights.