

True Grit: Women Taking on the World, for God's Sake by Deborah Meroff, (Bucks, UK: Authentic, Paternoster Publishing (a division of OM) 2004. (50 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

2004 Statistics About Women and Children

Child Labor:

1. "At least 250 million of the world's children –one out of six– work for a living. Nearly half of them put in the same hours as adults. Two thirds endure hazardous conditions." (page 27)
2. "Forty-eight million children work in sub-Saharan Africa. In all of Africa, about two out of five children earn some kind of income." (page 27)
3. In India: "Reliable agencies estimate between 75 and 115 million children under the age of fourteen are working. And although all bonded labor and servitude was officially abolished in 1975, at least 15 million children today are 'bonded' to pay back family loans. These are the ones most exploited and abused. Many are made ill by harmful conditions or exposure to chemicals. Poor pay and inflated interest rates make it almost impossible for loans to be repaid." (page 29)
4. "About 7% of the world's child workers between the ages of five and fourteen live in Latin America. One in six children there are wage earners. More than 2 million are being sexually exploited, with a growing number of sex tourists going to Central America." (page 30)
5. "Eight out of ten children start working before the age of fourteen. About 3.5 million between the ages of six and eighteen work regularly." (page 30)
6. "UNICEF reports that at least 100,000 children are believed to be involved in commercial sexual exploitation." (page 30)

Domestic Violence:

7. "Courts in many countries are reluctant to rule on domestic violence, considering it a family matter. A judge in Chile found that violence within the home was not a crime and did not fall within the court's jurisdiction.

In Mexico, only eleven out of thirty-two states have changed their seventeenth-century civil and penal codes to make domestic violence a

crime. In the remaining states, beating wives or children is not considered an offence.

The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare has estimated that 95% of abuse cases in the country are not reported.” (page 51)

8. “In India a kidnapping or abduction happens every 4 minutes, a dowry death every 10 minutes, a rape every 54 minutes, an act of cruelty every 33 minutes and a criminal offence against women every 7 minutes.” (page 52)
9. “A 2003 Human Rights Watch report, ‘Just Die Quietly: Domestic Violence and Women’s Vulnerability to HIV in Uganda’ documents widespread rape and brutal attacks on women by their husbands in Uganda, where a specific domestic violence law has not been enacted and where spousal rape is not criminalized.” (page 52)

Education:

10. “Two-thirds of the world’s 880 million illiterates are women. Of the 300 million children without access to education, 200 million are girls. The number of illiterates is not expected to decrease significantly in the next 20 years.” (page 55)
11. “Studies show that one of the main factors influencing mortality rates of children under the age of five is the mother’s education level. A 10% increase in female literacy reduced child mortality by 10% in 13 African countries between 1975 and 1985.” (page 57)

Girl Soldiers:

12. “Tens of thousands of girls are among the 300,000 children fighting in today’s armed conflicts at any one time. Some of them carry a fully-automatic assault weapon by the age of seven or eight.” (page 86)
13. “One fourteen-year-old girl abducted to serve a rebel group in Sierra Leone said, ‘I’ve seen people get their hands cut off, a ten-year-old girl raped and then die, and so many men and women burned alive...So many times I just cried inside my heart because I didn’t dare cry out loud.’” (page 86)

Health-Life expectancy:

14. “Around 1.3 billion people have no access to clean water. Every eight

seconds a child dies from a water-related disease. Dirty water kills 3 to 4 million men, women and children annually.” (page 90)

15. “Vitamin D deficiency affects the growth of 30% of children in China, South Asia and Africa, also reducing their resistance to disease.” (page 90)
16. “Tuberculosis is the single biggest killer of young women worldwide. Over 900 million females, most between the ages of fifteen and forty-four are infected; 2 million will die and 2.5 million more will get sick this year. In some parts of the world, the stigma attached to TB leads to isolation, abandonment and divorce.” (page 90)
17. “In many Indian homes, women are the last members of the family to eat. Often they survive on leftovers. According to UNICEF 47% of children under three are malnourished, and 50% of women are anemic.” (page 91)
18. “Malaria takes the lives of almost 3000 African children each day. A very-low-income African family might spend \$19 a year for malaria treatment out of a yearly income of \$68. Malarial anemia is estimated to cause as many as 10,000 maternal deaths each year.” (page 92)
19. “Diarrhea has killed more children in the past ten years than all the people killed by armed conflicts since WWII. Nearly 7000 children die each day due to dehydration caused by diarrhea.” (page 92)
20. “In Zambia, one in five children die before their fifth birthday.” (page 91)

Health-AIDS:

21. “Many men in Africa and Asia believe that sexual relations with a virgin can cure the virus that causes AIDS. This has led to a tragic increase of infection among young girls. For every HIV-positive male there are six infected females.” (page 93)
22. “More than 16.4 million women today have contracted HIV or AIDS. Last year 1.3 million women died from AIDS-related illnesses.” (page 93)

Female Infanticide:

23. “Two million babies are aborted in India every year, the vast majority of them female” (page 73)

Marriage-Brides at Risk:

24. “Every year up to 25,000 brides are deliberately set on fire in India and Bangladesh. In the capital city of Delhi alone, a woman is burned to death every twelve hours. Most of their murders go unpunished.” (page 132)
25. “Ironically, death rates have increased as India becomes more prosperous. Officially recorded fatalities shot up from 1912 in 1987 to 4006 in 1989 and 6222 in 2000. Most of the victims were burned to death. Members of the husband’s family pour kerosene oil over the bride and set her afire with the kitchen stove. Other women have been burned with acid. But the statistics cited are only the official figures. Thousands of deaths go unrecorded, and only about 3% of perpetrators receive justice.” (page 132-133)

On the Streets:

26. “There are probably over 100 million children working on the streets. Approximately 1 million more are forced into the sex trade worldwide every year. The average age keeps decreasing and even very small girls and babies are involved.” (page 137)
27. “At least a million children are being exploited for sex in Asia. The greatest numbers are in India (500,000), Thailand (60,000-200,000), Taiwan (40,000-60,000) and the Philippines (60,000).” (page 138)
28. “It is estimated that there are at least 40 million street children in Latin America. Many are victims of abuse, sometimes murder, by police and other authorities and individuals who are supposed to protect them.” (page 139)
29. In Brazil “There are approximately 100,000 street kids between the ages of seven and eighteen.” (page 139)
30. In Mexico “About 5000 girls are currently being used for sex tourism, prostitution and pornography.” (page 139)
31. “The Philippines is one of the favored destinations of pedophile sex tourists from Europe and the United States. An estimated 1.5 million street children work as pickpockets, beggars, drug traffickers and prostitutes.” (page 139)

Poverty:

32. “Over 1.3 billion people worldwide live in absolute poverty, living on less than \$1 a day. Of this number 70% are women.” (page 152)
33. “Half the world-over 3 billion people-live on less than \$2 a day.” (page 152)
34. “Twenty-four thousand people die daily from hunger. Children below five make up three-fourths of this number.” (page 152)
35. “Around 800 million people are chronically undernourished; 3 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation and 2 billion have no access to electricity.” (page 152)
36. “Women in Africa and Asia walk an average of 6km to obtain water. One flush of a toilet uses as much water as the average person in the developing world uses for a whole day’s washing, cleaning, cooking and drinking.” (page 152)
37. “Latin America has the highest gap in the world between the rich and the poor.” (page 152)
38. “It would take 13 billion dollars a year to end hunger for the earth’s poorest citizens. Compare this with the 18 billion dollars that is spent on pet food every year in the United States and Europe.” (page 153)
39. “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy...” Psalm 82:3-4 (page 153)

Refugees:

40. “There are many millions of refugees and asylum seekers in the world. Twenty-eight million people are displaced inside their own country.” (page 154)
41. “80% of the world’s refugees are women and children. A large number are widows.” (page 154)
42. “Women and children are also victims of 80% of wartime deaths by small weapons, far outnumbering military casualties.” (page 154)

43. “Lord, you know the hopes of humble people. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort their hearts by helping them. You will be with the orphans and all who are oppressed, so that mere earthly man will terrify them no longer.” (Psalm 10:17-18, TLB) (page 155)

Religious Slaves:

44. “Parents in southern India and Nepal continue to ‘marry’ their five to seven-year-old daughters to a Hindu god or temple. They hope this will appease the deity or bring favor. In the past these girls, sometimes called Devadasis, served as sacred temple slaves or dancers. Once they reached puberty they provided sexual services to any male who was her social superior. Missionary Amy Carmichael dedicated her life to the rescue and care of hundreds of these children.

Today’s temple slaves are used until the priests tire of them, and then sold to the highest bidder as child concubines. Eventually the girls (and any children they conceive) are turned out on the streets to survive any way they can. Still ‘married to the gods’, they may never marry anyone else. Most are forced into brothels, their distinctive bangles and pendants declaring their original status as temple prostitutes.

Although the practice was outlawed in Britain over 150 years ago, there are today an estimated 30,000 Devadasis in the State of Andhra Pradesh alone. The idea of marrying daughters to the gods is reviving. However, women’s groups are campaigning against it and some Christian organizations are offering alternative lifestyles to girls who have been freed.” (page 171)

Trafficking:

45. “Illegal trade in human beings is one of today’s fastest growing and lucrative businesses and the top human rights issue of the twenty-first century. Victims number from 700,000 to 4 million annually. Police statistics indicate that less than .5% of these are male. Most females are imported and exported for forced labor or sexual exploitation; many are sold by destitute parents. Others are lured to another country by false promises of legitimate work. Their passports are then confiscated and they become virtual slaves. *Every nation in the world is involved.*” (page 174)

46. In Brazil “The majority of Brazilian women and girls are exported for the purpose of sexual exploitation to Europe, Japan, Israel and United States.” (page 177)

47. In Colombia “Interpol estimates 35,000 women are trafficked out of Colombia every year, with estimated profits of 500 million dollars.” (page 177)

Widows:

48. “In Zambia as in most other places, widows suffer discrimination and injustice and are often deprived of inheritance. Required acts of mourning may include being:

- *Forced to crawl around the funeral house or grave of their deceased husbands

- *Slapped and starved

- *Prevented from bathing or changing their clothing for days, weeks or a month

- *Kept under a blanket until the burial

- *Insulted and shouted at with obscenities

- *Accused of having killed their husband, and submitted to trial by order

- *Stripped half-naked

- *Deprived of some or all of their property

- *Sexually ‘cleansed’; for example, by insisting they have sex with their father-in-law

- *Denied custody of their children, even small babies

- *Forced to live with in-laws

- *Denied freedom of movement for months or even years, a virtual house arrest” (1 page 80-181)

49. In Nepal “The most severe form of widow abuse is labeling her a bokshi or witch, and holding her responsible for the death of her husband. Such women may be stoned or beaten to death. Other widows-especially in non-urban parts of Nepal-are generally treated as outcasts, and physically abused by the authorities in their communities. In some areas widows are forced to shave their heads and wear white clothes. In most parts, they are restricted to eating vegetarian food with limits on spices, etc. Widows have to cook for themselves and cannot eat food touched by others.” (page 181-182)

50. In India: Widow Burning

The Hindu tradition of sati or suttee-widows throwing themselves or being pushed onto the funeral pyres of their husbands-was outlawed in 1829 after

the cruel deaths of thousands of women. However, the practice continued for many years afterward and still does occur very occasionally. In August 2002 a crowd of 5000 gathered to watch the burning to death of a widow in the state of Madhya Pradesh. When police got to the scene they tried to pull her off the fire, but villagers pelted them with rocks so they were forced to retreat. Her fellow-villagers proclaimed themselves to be proud of the event, and believed the sacrifice would help to end a long drought.

After the legal ban on suttee, widows in many places were subjected to a ceremony that formally degraded them. Their heads were shaved and they were forbidden the use of personal ornaments. Even today, India's estimated 40 million widows-both Hindu and Muslim-are commonly blamed, shamed and robbed of property rights. Many flee their homes to escape abusive in-laws. In tribal communities, widows may be accused of being a witch and killed. Hindu widows who remarry are frowned upon; the higher the caste or social position, the more restrictions. In some castes leviratic marriage is practiced and the widow is taken by a brother. The daughters of the widows probably face an even bleaker future. With no one to provide a dowry they are married off to almost anyone who will take them, usually older men.

In 2001, after the huge Hindu Kumbh Mela festival that drew millions of worshippers from all over India, families left behind 10,000 elderly widowed mothers and other unwanted relatives. These poor and infirm women survived as best they could from one day to the next, hoping someone would return for them." (page 182-183)