



# Nepal

Lesson 3

Families in Nepal

## Lesson Story:

If you had been born in Nepal, you would probably be the child of a farmer. (80% of people in Nepal are farmers) From the time you were very young, you would learn how to work in your father's fields, helping your family to grow food and then harvest it. Since the Hindus believe that children are a blessing from the goddesses, you would probably have lots of brothers and sisters, and together you would all work to grow enough rice and vegetables to feed your family.

If you could, you might also grow some sugarcane or corn or wheat to sell for money. When the crops don't need attention, your father might try to find some work to earn some money so that you and your siblings could have shoes and warm clothes. He might be able to go to a nearby village and work at building or transporting goods or working for tourists. If he has to travel far to find work, he might be gone for weeks or months at a time.

Your family might also keep a few goats or sheep for milk, but you might only eat meat a few times a year during special festivals. One of your jobs might be to milk or care for the animals, or find grass for them to eat. You might also cut grass to dry in the sun for the animals to eat during the winter. You might need to help your mother by carrying water, cleaning the house, caring for your younger siblings or washing the clothing.

Many of the people in Nepal have never gone to school (about 57% illiteracy rate), so your parents probably wouldn't know how to read or write. If your family could make enough money for school uniforms and supplies, one or two children in your family could go to school for that year. If there wasn't as much money the next year, there would be no school.

***The following website has a story about a little girl named Meena. It is a well-written and true-to-life story about family life in Nepal. However, it is copyrighted and does contain religious aspects. Please be sure to read through on your own prior to using in your classroom. <http://www.wholesomewords.org/children/meena.html>***

## **“No More School” Activity**

Read through the entire activity and decide how it will work with the number and ages and maturity of the children in your group. This is a very difficult lesson, but sheltering American children from the realities of poverty allows them to take for granted the abundance they have. Treat this activity sensitively, but don't overlook the urgency of educating our children about what life is like for many, many children their age. Take your children through it slowly, helping them to feel the impact of what you are saying. It will be hard for them to identify with these ideas, so take the time to discuss and explain what children in Nepal (and many areas of the world) can expect out of life.

**\*\*Begin by telling your students that you have great news. Ask for one or two volunteers (about one for every 10 kids). Have the volunteer(s) stand against the wall apart from the group for the rest of the activity. Now tell the group that the volunteer(s) are the only ones who have to go to school any more. All the rest are free. Have the kids stand up in a circle and clap to celebrate.**

**\*\*Now have the children count off in fives. Tell every number 2 and 3 to sit down. Explain that two out of every five children in the world dies before the age of five. In some places, children aren't even named until they have reached their fifth birthday.**

**\*\*Select about one third of the remaining group of children. Tell them that they feel very fortunate today. A man visiting their village will take them to the city where he has great jobs for them. He pays your parents money in advance to let you go along and promises that you will be able to send money to them. Since your parents have other children to feed at home, they believe the man and take the money to let you go. When you get to the city, you find out that your job is to work all day long in a sweatshop or a factory or a farm. You can't send any money back to your parents until you have worked off the money the man already gave your parents. Since you are making only a tiny bit of money each day, it will be a very long time before you actually earn anything for yourself or your parents. Tell this group to sit down. *(You don't have to explain the sex slavery that many of these children are forced into, but help them to understand that this “buying” of children in poverty is indeed slavery, and would be a horrible existence. Most of these children die at a very young age and never see their families again. This slave trading is rampant in the poor villages of Asia and there are now 27 million people enslaved worldwide, more than double the number of Africans forced into slavery during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Research this subject and educate yourself.)***

**\*\*Select half of the group still standing** (making sure you leave at least one girl and one boy standing). **Tell this half that they get to start their own business to help out their families. Since they have very little schooling, and very few skills, they will have three choices: 1) to pick through the garbage around their village every day to find things to eat or sell, 2) to travel alone to the largest city in their country to beg for money in the streets, or 3) become a thief and steal things from others to help their family to live. Tell them to sit down.**

**\*\*Tell all of the girls left standing that they have been selected to get married!** (In Nepal and many other countries, girls as young as 6 are given in marriage to much older men in exchange for the “bride price”, which might be two goats or a cow, that would help the remaining family members to stay alive. The girls are expected to work for their husband as slaves until they are old enough to bear children for him.) **Have the girls sit down.**

**\*\*The boys who remain standing will get to travel and see the world! They get to join their country”” military, even though they are young and not well equipped to fight against grown men. Have them sit down.**

**\*\*Now everyone is sitting, except the original volunteer(s) who will go to school until they have finished the highest grade offered and then get a good job that requires an education and will pay enough to support their family. Ask how many of those seated would rather go to school than accept the situation they have been given. Help them to see how few children their age get to go to a school. (It costs money to buy a uniform and the necessary supplies and many parents cannot make enough money to feed and clothe their children, let alone send them to school or pay for medical attention.) Help them to see why learning as much as they can in school can enable these privileged children to break the chains of poverty in their families and in their village.**