

WHY HAS
ROSI BEEN
NOMINATED?

Rosi Gollmann

Rosi Gollmann has been nominated for the World's Children's Prize for her over 50-year fight for the poorest and most vulnerable children in India and Bangladesh.

Rosi grew up in Nazi Germany during the Second World War, and experienced the terror, discrimination and suspension of democracy that war brings. As an 18-year-old she decided to dedicate her life to help the poor and oppressed to help themselves. Rosi founded the organisation Andheri-Hilfe, which in the 50 years since it was established has carried out over 3,000 projects with local partners, and in doing so has helped ten million people gain a better future. With Rosi's help, 50,000 child labourers have been set free and been able to go to school. Tens of thousands of children with disabilities have also received support and training. Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe support families living with HIV/AIDS, and fight against the old tradition where girls are forced to be sex slaves in some temples. In Bangladesh, over one million people have regained their sight thanks to Rosi and the committed local staff. Through a campaign called 'No girl is unwanted', 12,000 Indian girls who would have been killed at birth have been saved. At the same time, girls' rights have been strengthened and child marriage has been stopped.



It is evening when Rosi, 17, arrives at the hospital to visit her father, who suffers from pneumonia. Many of the other patients have severe burns. The war has been going on for four years, and now the bombs fall almost every night.

Hasna (left) and Saluddin can see again, after being blind for many years. They are two of the one million people who have got operations and regained their eyesight, thanks to Rosi's long fight for the blind in Bangladesh.

Suddenly the sirens sound, and Rosi hears the rumble of bombers overhead. A terrible explosion shakes the building, and all the windows shatter. Nurses come running to help the screaming patients out of bed and down into the basement. Rosi and her father are the only ones left. As she shouts for help there is a deafening bang, as the ceiling cracks and caves in. Rosi manages to lift her father out of bed and drag him down the stairs. Through the window, she can see the bombs raining down from the sky. All the fires and explosions are lighting up the sky like daylight.

Everyone takes shelter in the basement, but soon the hospital catches fire, so they flee out into the garden. Once outside, all those who can stand up build a human chain to try to put the fire out. For hours, Rosi runs back and forth with buckets of water, and by morning the fire is out. She and her father have survived, but much of the hospital has been destroyed. Later, as Rosi walks through the city towards the small health centre where she works, fires still burn in the streets. Smoke rises from ruined houses, and the streets are littered with burnt bodies that nobody has had a chance to attend to yet.

Rosi escapes

Shortly after this, Rosi's workplace is also destroyed by a bomb. She and her father decide to flee the city along with thousands of others. It's a dangerous journey, as the bombers attack train tracks and roads too. One night, Rosi's father can no longer walk. So Rosi steals a wheelbarrow to carry her father and their bags. They manage to get to the next train station, 20 km away, and finally reach Rosi's mother, who has already fled the city to the safety of the countryside.

Just a few weeks later, in May 1945, the war comes to an end. Rosi is glad that Hitler and the Nazis are



Rosi and her two brothers grew up in Germany during World War II (1939–1945). Both had to become soldiers and the eldest was killed at the age of 21. Between 42 and 60 million people died. More civilians – ordinary people – than soldiers died.

TEXT: CARMILLA FLOYD PHOTOS: ANDHERI-HILFE

gone, but she grieves for the many millions of innocent people who have died.

Democracy abolished

Rosi was only six years old when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party came to power in Germany in 1933. They abolished all democratic rights and persecuted, imprisoned and killed everyone who didn't 'fit in' to their dream society. The Nazis believed that they belonged to a particular type of people, an 'Aryan race', which was superior to all other races. Some groups were seen as a threat that should be eliminated. For example, six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of Roma died in the Nazi attempt to 'exterminate' whole ethnic groups. But Nazi Germany was dangerous for anyone who didn't agree with or do exactly what the Nazis said. Rosi's parents believed that Hitler's racist

ideas went against everything in their Christian beliefs of humanity and dignity. They listened in secret to radio broadcasts from other countries, to find out the truth about what was going on. But their neighbours, who were Christians too, were committed Nazis. One of their boys used to play with Rosi's brother.

"Be careful what you say when he's here," said Rosi's parents. If the boy told his parents that Rosi's family didn't like Hitler, they could all end up in a prison camp. The Nazis banned all political parties and burned books that they didn't like. They banned all youth organisations and instead started Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth). When Rosi and her friends broke the rules and met at their local church, some boys from the Hitler Youth gathered outside, shouting slogans and attacked Rosi and

her friends when they came out. Rosi was angry and wanted to speak out against the Nazis, but a young priest talked her out of it. It was too dangerous.

A tough choice

When the war ended in 1945, Rosi and her parents returned to Bonn, where 90 percent of the buildings had been dam-

aged or destroyed. Rosi's home was still there, but three homeless families had moved into their old apartment and now they all had to share the space.

Rosi studied to become a teacher. In her spare time she worked in a slum in Bonn helping poor children, young people, and the elderly. Everything was scarce – shel-



© Bettmann/CORBIS

The Second World War was a difficult time for children. Here are some school children hiding under their desks after hearing an air raid siren.

© Bettmann/CORBIS



ter, food, clean water, clothes and school supplies. But with hard work, life slowly returned to normal. One day Rosi told her parents that she had made a tough decision.

“I’m never going to get married.”

Back then, over 70 years ago, it was almost unthinkable for a woman to have both a job and a family. Married women were expected to spend all their time taking care of their homes and families. Rosi wanted to be free to help others in need.

India calling

After a few years as a teacher, Rosi had a happy and fulfilling life where she was helping many people. Still, she sometimes wondered if this was to be her life’s work. The answer came from an unexpected source. One morning, a student showed her a newspaper article about an orphanage in Andheri in India.

“The children get less than a handful of rice to eat every day. We have to do some-

thing,” said the girl. Rosi thought that India seemed very far away, but she finally wrote to the orphanage and asked what they needed. Then her students donated 400 parcels containing basic essentials – one for every child at the orphanage. After they had been sent, other people started to donate, and soon Rosi’s small bedroom in her parent’s apartment was crammed from floor to ceiling with gifts: potties, 65 metres of fabric, a refrigerator, medicine and clothes. Rosi decided to go to India herself to hand over the donations – a journey that was to change her life.

A different kind of poverty

The poverty in India felt familiar to Rosi. During the war she had seen many people living on the streets, starving and dying. But there was a big difference. In Germany, the suffering during the war was temporary. But here, the poverty was seen as completely normal, while many other

Indians lived in luxury. Hardly anyone talked about the injustice of it.

At the orphanage, Rosi was welcomed with open arms. The children hung so many flower garlands around her neck she could hardly breathe! Now, Rosi got to know children that she had previously only seen in pictures. Sweetie, who was four, had been found on the street with her eyes burnt out. Two girls had been kidnapped from their village and sold to a brothel. Other girls had been sexually abused and become pregnant, and been thrown out of their families as a result. The nuns who ran the orphanage explained that most of the children were not really orphans, but that their families were too poor to take care of them.

Rosi couldn’t sleep at night. She often cried tears of sorrow and rage, because it was so unfair that parents had to give up their children because of poverty. “Children need love more than anything

else,” she thought to herself. “Are we doing the right thing? If children are hungry, we give them food. If children are sick, we give them medicine. But shouldn’t we be tackling the roots of these problems?”

When Rosi returned home, she promised to come back soon. Now she knew that her life’s work, the reason why she had given up the thought of having children of her own, was in India.

Women change the world

The children’s shelter in Andheri wanted to start a small farm to provide food, milk and an income for the children. Rosi raised funds to get it going, and soon there was a vegetable patch and the first few hens and goats. Rosi started her own organisation and called it Andheri-Hilfe (Help for Andheri).

She travelled many times to India, meeting and encouraging people in villages and slums to develop ideas and programmes. Local leaders

Tharani, 11, was born with HIV, but thanks to support from Rosi, Andheri-Hilfe och their Indian partners she is in good health. Every year, hundreds of poor families living with HIV and AIDS receive support to stay well and to fight for their rights.



formed their own organizations and together they started to tackle the roots of poverty, for example by offering job training to women. Once mothers had an income they could bring their children home. After some years, 40,000 children had been reunited with their families instead of growing up in orphanages.

“This is the proof that women can change the world,” says Rosi. “I learned that charity was not the answer. A human being cannot be ‘developed’ – one can only develop oneself,” says Rosi. “

Rosi soon had to give up teaching to work full time for Andheri-Hilfe. She refused to accept any salary, content to live on her small teacher’s pension. Today, Andheri-Hilfe has grown into a renowned organisation, supporting about 150 development projects by joining hands with partner organisations in India and Bangladesh.

Eradicating poverty

Rosi has never regretted the fact that she didn’t get married. Andheri-Hilfe and the people are her family. She even has an adopted daughter, Maryann, who came to Germany from the children’s home in Andheri as a helping hand. She still lives and works with Rosi.

“We will never stop fighting for the rights of people living in poverty,” Rosi says. “One tenth of the world’s population owns about 85% of the world’s resources. Half of the global population owns less than one percent. We cannot accept injustice on this scale.”

Rosi will soon be 90 years old, but says she will never stop working.

“I have had the privilege of walking alongside so many people on their way to a happier and more dignified life. No wonder I am happy too!” 🌐

How Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe work

Rosi and her organisation Andheri-Hilfe have around 150 projects ongoing, working with local organisations in India and Bangladesh. They reach over 700,000 people a year in India alone. Every year they support people including:

- Children in 20,000 villages are supported with education, for survival and to start children’s parliaments.
- 140,000 children and adults from particularly poor and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities and indigenous people groups.
- Girls at risk of being killed at birth.
- Child labourers and child slaves who are set free and given the opportunity to go to school.
- Tens of thousands of blind people in Bangladesh. More than one million eye operations have given people back their eyesight and preventative work stops more children from going blind.

The girls who disap

As the time approaches for Kodiammal to give birth, she becomes increasingly anxious. She has followed the traditional practice of offering money and food to the gods so that her second child will be a son.

Kodiammal was 16 when she got married and had her first child, a daughter. This was a disappointment, but according to village tradition, the firstborn girl is allowed to live. However, the second daughter must die, because it is believed that then the next child will automatically be a boy.

“Bringing up a daughter is like watering your neighbour’s garden,” say the old people in the village. When a village girl gets married, she moves in with her husband and his family. Her parents must pay for the wedding, and give the husband’s family gifts like money, gold, livestock, household items and fine clothing. This is called a dowry and although it is illegal, it is still a common practice. Therefore, many daughters are seen as a curse, while sons bring in money to the family.

One evening, Kodiammal finally gives birth at home, on the floor of their small house made of mud and straw. Older women from the village are there to help, but Kodiammal does not get to see her baby. Someone says: ‘It’s a girl’ and disappears out into the night with the child. The older women know it’s important that the mother doesn’t get a chance to hold her baby, not even for a few minutes, because then she might refuse to let go.

Killing a baby

Kodiammal’s daughter is buried in the yard, right beside the house. Her husband plants a jasmine bush there. Nobody asks what happened. Most of the people in the village and the neighbouring villages know that there are 14 ways to kill a baby. Like not giving her anything to eat or drink, or leaving her out at night in the cold. One of the most common methods is to squeeze a few drops of a milky liquid

out of the stalk of a particular poisonous plant. This causes the baby to die within half an hour. Every time Kodiammal walks past the jasmine bush she feels a pain in her chest and has to hold back the tears. She hates the poverty that forced her to give up her child. As a woman, she has no power and cannot protest. But this is normal in the village, she tells herself, and she can’t complain. Many women are filled with sorrow, because almost every family here has buried at least one baby girl under their floor or in their garden.

Unwanted girls

After a few months, Kodiammal is expecting another baby. This one should be a son, because the family sacrificed their second daughter. But she knows lots of women who have given up their daughters and then given birth to another girl nonetheless.

One morning, a neighbouring woman comes to visit. She is a member of the new women’s group in the village, IKKAM, which means unity.

“Not long to go now?” she says,



peared



Annandhi was allowed to live. Her name means joy.

Kodiammal went to the village temple with offerings to the gods so that she would have a son.

Infanticide through the ages

Throughout history, in nearly all countries and cultures, unwanted children have been killed at birth or been left to die, because of poverty and tradition. For example, well into the 20th century in Europe, many unwanted babies were left in children's homes run by what people called "angel-makers" because so many babies died in their care. Some were killed outright, others perished through neglect.

nodding towards Kodiammal's belly. "Do you remember what we agreed?"

Since the women's group found out that Kodiammal was pregnant again, they have visited her every week. They visit all families who already have a daughter and are expecting children, because of the high risk that their next girl will lose her life.

"We'll help you if you have another daughter," the woman reminds Kodiammal. "We'll give you two goats, and trees to plant. You and your husband

will get help with training and jobs as long as you let the baby live, even if it's a girl."

Kodiammal would love to believe IKKAM's promises. She has joined the women's group, and begun to learn about her rights. But her husband is unsure. His mother nags him every day, telling him that the family can't afford another girl. Even Kodiammal's own mother agrees.

"Just do what we've always done," they both say.

Joy is born

When the time finally comes for Kodiammal to give birth, the women from IKKAM stay with her and keep watch. They don't let the father or any of the older women in the village come anywhere near. This is just as well, because it is a tiny, wailing, baby girl who is finally laid in Kodiammal's arms.

The baby girl is named Annandhi, which means joy. 🌍



Annandhi celebrates that a girl has been born in the village.

Annandhi was allowed to live

Annandhi can't remember how old she was when one day her mother said: "We were planning to kill you, but we let you live." Around the same time Annandhi found out that she had a sister, who was buried right beside their house, under the jasmine bush.

That could have been me," thinks Annandhi. Sometimes she sits there and talks to her sister, when there's nobody around. She doesn't want to make her parents feel sad or guilty.

"Don't be angry," whispers Annandhi. "Dad wanted to kill me too. He didn't know any better."

Annandhi's birth was celebrated with a party in the village. The women's group gave her two coconut trees and two goats. The family sell the goats' milk and the money

has made a big difference, especially since Annandhi's father injured his back, making it hard for him to work.

Annandhi becomes a 'mother'

A few months ago the goats had kids. The mother goat was old and she died giving birth, so Annandhi became the kids' new 'mother'. She gave them milk, and lots of love. Now the kids don't need her any more, except one. Annandhi calls her Shri, which means 'holy'. Shri is

poorly, and isn't growing the way she should. She follows Annandhi wherever she goes, even to school.

Her mother and father don't love Shri in the way Annandhi does, but they do want her to survive. Unlike the male kids, Shri can give the family milk and new kids in the future.

"It's not logical," thinks Annandhi. "Adults only want to have sons, and they kill their daughters. But it's the other way round with animals. Female animals, like cows, are the valuable ones. The bulls are killed and eaten. Why can't people see that a girl is valuable? She can take care of her family just as well as a boy, maybe even better. I hate that attitude. I'm going to go far, to show that all girls have value and right to live."

Hard to sleep

The family's home has large holes in the wall and ceiling that they can't afford to repair. When the monsoon rains come, the house leaks. Everything gets wet and the mud walls start to split. Once when Annandhi was nine, a chunk of the wall fell on her head while she was sleeping. Since then, she has been afraid of the house collapsing.

Annandhi often lies awake, wondering how her family will survive until she and her older sister finish their education and start to work. One night, after overhearing an argument between her parents about money, she doesn't sleep a wink. Her tears fall in the darkness, but when her mother comes in she pretends to be asleep. The following morning she sits down at the



Annandhi loves her goats, who see her as an extra mother!



Annandhi with her father, mother, big sister and grandmother.

jasmine bush and whispers:

“If they had let you live and killed me instead, you would be suffering as I am. At least you’re safe now.” Then she goes to school, with Shri the goat kid pattering along behind her.

Men are the problem

There’s no school in the village. Annandhi and her friends walk a few kilometres to the school in a neighbouring village. On the way they see a group of men who shout:

“Come and dance with us!”

It is common for men to try to talk to the girls on their way to school. Sometimes they follow them and pull at their clothes. Annandhi’s mother has told her to scream and fight if she is attacked. That used to be unthinkable.

Before, a girl could never say no to a man. If a girl was attacked, it was always her own fault. That was one of the reasons why girls couldn’t go to school – their parents were too afraid to let them go.

Annandhi has a good day at school, and on the way home she is happier. She tells her father that the teacher praised her.

“You are so talented!” he says. “I can’t imagine that you would not have been here with us.”

Don’t beat me!

Every evening Annandhi goes to the local night school, which is run by the villagers. The mothers from the women’s group help out with homework and organise games, plays, singing and dancing. Both boys and girls





Annandhi is one of 12,000 girls whose lives have been saved so far in 210 villages in southern India, thanks to Rosi's and her partners' struggle.

→ learn about their rights and that sons and daughters are equal. Before, in Annandhi's village, almost all the men used to beat their wives – sometimes even to death. Nobody was ever punished for it. The boys took after their fathers and treated their sisters and other girls badly. Annandhi's father used to drink and beat her mother too, but with the help of the women's group she told him to stop. She threatened to

leave him if he didn't stop drinking and abusing her. And it worked!

Wedding can wait

Annandhi doesn't plan to get married until she is at least 25. First, she wants to finish her education and get a good job.

"They might try to marry me off earlier, but I'll fight it," she says. "My husband must be kind, and share the housework. And his family are not getting a dowry. My educa-

tion is my dowry! I'll earn my own money."

These days, the tradition of killing baby girls has been almost completely eradicated from Annandhi's village. In the area where she lives, thousands of girls' lives have been saved in hundreds of villages, ever since their parents became aware of the importance of girls' equal value, and came together to change age old traditions.

"Now they know that girls are a gift, not a punishment," says Annandhi.

Shri won't wake up

One morning, Shri the goat kid doesn't come skipping over to Annandhi when she steps out into the garden. She has died during the night, and is lying cold and still under a tree. Annandhi can't stop crying, although she knew that Shri was sick. The tears flow for two days, and she is very sad long afterwards. It feels like she has lost another sister, or a best friend. She sits down at the jasmine bush, with its strong sweet smell.



Annandhi, 13

Best thing: Playing with friends. Going to school.

Worst thing: When baby girls are killed.

Sad: When my parents fight.

Loves: Animals, especially my goats.

Wants to be: A lawyer and fight for justice.

"I never got to meet you," she says to the sister under the ground. If you had been allowed to live we could have played together and supported each other. In the future, if anybody has a daughter they don't want, I will take care of her as though she was my own child." 🌍

At evening school, the girls and boys gain life skills and learn about their rights and equality. They also get help with homework, and they play, dance and do drama.



Annandhi's wardrobe



School uniform



Ready to celebrate



"Yellow makes me happy!"



Play and housework



A play stops the killing of baby girls

Annandhi and her friends want to put a stop to child marriage and the killing of baby girls. They have rehearsed a play that they perform in different villages, about a family who are planning to kill their daughter once she is born. The firstborn girl in the family cries and says:

"If you had killed me, I wouldn't be here."

"We can't afford another girl," says her father.

"There is help available. Let her live."

Later the father says to his daughter:

"Thanks to you I know that there is help and support. I promise that we'll take care of the baby."

After the play, the girls thank the audience for the applause!

Fighting for girls

Over 25 years ago, Rosi Gollmann and her strong Indian partners started a campaign called 'No girl is unwanted'. At that time, hardly anyone – not politicians, nor the media, nor the police – talked openly about the fact that there was only one girl to every three boys in many parts of India. Girls were killed at birth or died because of mal-nourishment and neglect. Many women also had abortions if they found out that the baby they were carrying was a girl. When it came to light that some hospitals had aborted 100 male foetuses and 7,000 female foetuses, politicians banned doctors from telling families the sex of their child prior to birth. Rosi and the Indian partner organizations focused on educating and empowering girls and mothers. Great results have been achieved in 210 villages:

- The lives of over 12,000 girls have been saved.
- 98 percent of girls now go to school.
- 5,420 girls have been trained and found jobs.
- 7,500 women have started small businesses thanks to loans from the village women's self-help groups. Many mothers support their families by making and selling things like clothes and sanitary towels. At first the men got angry that the women were earning more money than them, but now that they see that everyone's lives have improved, they are happy.



Celebrate the girls!



Annandhi's aunt has had a baby girl and the whole village is organising a welcome party for her. It was the idea of the villagers and Rosi's partners to throw parties for newborn girls, to show everyone that this is something to celebrate.

Sonia, 12, is carrying one of the two coconut plants that are given to every newborn girl. After three years, they bear fruit that the families can sell, The extra income pays for the girls' schooling and later their marriages.

The women and girls of the village form a procession along the streets towards the home of the newborn girl, singing and playing music.



The baby girl receives gifts – a new dress, food, and jewellery. And black dots on the face which are meant to bring protection from evil spirits!

Every family receives two goats, that provide milk and kids.





Surya wants to be a role model

Surya, 14, has a favourite song about a mother who sings to her unborn child.

"The father wants to kill the daughter, but the mother sings, 'My beautiful child, your eyes shine like a hurricane lamp. I will fight for your life.' My mother made sure that I was allowed to live.

Surya wants to become a teacher and help girls who drop out of school to return.

"My mother was only 14 when she got married, and she never even got to start school. I look up to our headteacher. She treats everyone equally. I too want to be a role model and show that girls are valuable. Discrimination against children makes me angry. After all, we are the future of this country!"



Pavitra wants to be a police officer

"I want to become a police officer, and punish men who fight and hurt others," says Pavitra, 11, one of Annandhi's best friends in the village.

"It makes me angry and sad when I think about my two sisters who came before me. They were not allowed to live, just because they were girls. Once my parents knew more, they realised that this was wrong and I was allowed to live. Now I look up to my mother. She fights for our rights in the women's group and she's a teacher at the evening school.

Pavitra loves to dance.

"Annandhi and I and the other girls who have been saved sometimes perform, to bring joy and to raise awareness of girls' rights. I love both modern and traditional music."



Welcome and good luck!

Girls in Annandhi's village are making a rangoli. This is a symbol of welcome and good luck that is 'painted' using different colours of sand. These images are often seen during special festivals in India. Rangoli means 'row of colours'. This is how to do it:

1. Prepare sand in different colours. (If it's a windy day you can use chalk instead.)
2. Start by drawing the outlines of your rangoli in the sand with a stick, and then fill the outlines with white powder.
3. Fill in with different colours of sand. Job done!





Thanga loves playing cricket. He also loves batting for equal rights for girls!



Venketesh can't imagine life without his sister, who was going to be killed but was saved.

Batting for girls' rights

"It used to be that girls were treated almost like slaves in our village, but that is changing," says the captain of the village cricket team, Thanga, 14.

We learned about girls' rights at night school. I have two sisters who have to do everything at home. My parents treat us differently and I think that's unfair. They shout at my sisters, but to me they just say 'Go and rest or play!' This makes my sisters sad, so I help them anyway. I usually wash clothes or peel onions. That makes my eyes sting so much that it looks like I'm crying!"

When Thanga has children of his own he plans to treat his sons and daughters equally.

"They'll be able to go to school and they won't have to do hard work. I'll never let anyone give a daughter of mine poisoned milk. I'll only let my daughters drink normal milk so they grow strong."

Thanga wants to be an engineer and build better houses for poor people.

"The houses we have now are not stable, and they sometimes collapse. That's dangerous, and it makes me angry."

Sister rescued

My sister was going to be killed at birth, but she was rescued," says Thanga's friend Venketesh, 15. "Our parents have explained to us that they didn't know any better before. Now they do. I can't imagine life without my sister. She and my mother are a part of me!"



Paul wants to bring justice

"I want to be a police officer and to fight crime. Nobody should kill or hurt anybody else. It makes me sad when I think about men who have beaten their wives to death, and families who have killed baby daughters. This has to stop. At night school, we learn that everyone has a right to be treated equally, and we don't look down on girls."

Paul has three brothers, but no sisters.

"I often think about my sisters who died. I wonder what they would look like now, and what games we would have played together."

Swati ran away

Saritha is nine years old when her sister Swati is married off by her parents. She is only 15 but looks older in her new clothes and jingling gold bracelets. The man she is marrying is almost twice her age.

Swati was forced to marry a man twice her age when she was only 15. After three years she ran away from her husband. Here she is walking with her mother and two sisters. The village women's group, which is supported by Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe, has strengthened girls' and women's rights in the village.

The wedding goes on for several days, and Swati's family have to pay for everything. The husband also demands a dowry in the form of money, household items and gold. Once the wedding is over, Swati moves in with her husband's family in a different village.

Now Saritha and her other sister Narthi, often have to go hungry. Their parents had to borrow money so that they could afford to marry off their oldest daughter. Almost everything they earn now goes to pay off the loan. Swati never comes to visit, and she hasn't been to school once since the wedding, even though her husband's family promised that she would be allowed to continue her studies.

Swati comes home

Finally, Swati turns up at home. She is crying, and looks tired and thin.

"They beat me all the time," she says. "I have to work like a slave, and they won't let me go to school."

"It's my fault. I married you off too early," says her mother, who is crying too.

But the father sends Swati back to her husband.

"If you don't go back it will be a scandal!" he says worriedly.

When Swati has her first baby, it's a girl. Her husband is furious, and demands more money. "You didn't pay me enough to take this useless wife who can only give birth to girls," he says. "I want a son!"

Swati's parents have no money left and two more



daughters to marry off. Swati's mother herself has given birth to five girls, but no sons. Two of the girls were killed at birth and are buried under the family's dirt floor.

Swati runs away

After three years, Swati runs away and comes home again, and now she refuses to return.

"They torture me every day. If my next baby is a girl, they'll kill her."

Swati's mother, who in the meantime has joined the village women's group, says:

"You don't need to go back. We have learned that there is a law that prohibits child marriage and dowries. If your husband causes trouble we'll call the police."

Swati's mother and the women's group help Swati to get job training to be a seamstress.

"Don't get married too young, finish your education first," Swati says to her sisters every day. "I'm never getting married," says Narthi, 15. "I want to be a nurse, earn money, and take care of our family."

"If they try to marry me off before I'm an adult, I'll go to the police," says Saritha.

Father's change of heart

The father and other men in the village are also getting training and support to find better jobs. He asks Swati to forgive him.

"I didn't know any better,

and you suffered because of that. I won't do the same thing to my other daughters."

Their mother borrows money from the women's group savings fund to buy a cow. The milk gives the family a secure income.

"In the past, our mother would never stand up to our father," says Saritha. "Now she teaches other girls and women to stand up for their rights, and my father supports her! I want to be just like her!" 🌐



Life on the streets

Sangheeta lives with her family on the streets of the large city of Chennai. She and her family wake up, eat, work, play and fall asleep under the skies.

Sangheeta has lived on the same street corner for her whole life. Her mother was born here too, almost 40 years ago.

“I plan to be the first person in my family to get a proper education and a good job, so that we can move into a real house,” says Sangheeta. “My older siblings started working when my father disappeared, but they only earn less than 3 dollars a day altogether. That’s not even enough for food.” Life on the street is dirty and tough. Children sleep in piles of trash where rats and cockroaches look for food. But the worst thing is when the men in the neighbourhood get drunk.

“They shout, fight and wreck things. If anyone has managed to cook some food for once, they kick over the whole pot. It makes all the children sad when their parents are involved in fights.”

Sangheeta and her family get help with education and job training from Andheri-Hilfe and their Indian partners. Sangheeta has learned about everything from life skills to football.

“I want to be as good as Messi at football, and play for India. But my studies are more important. I get good grades, especially in science. But nobody at school knows that I live on the street. They would stop talking to me if they knew, because they look down on poor people.”

06.00 Wake up call

“Sometimes I’m really tired in the morning,” says Sangheeta. “The worst thing is when drunk old men come and lie down beside us at night. We shout for our parents to help us, but it’s hard to get back to sleep after that.”

Sangheeta, 15

Likes: Football and school
Hates: Living on the streets
Favourite footballer: Lionel Messi
Loves: My family
Wants to be: A social worker



06.30 Morning routine

Sonia, 10, brushes her teeth with toothpaste on her finger.



Men and boys wash at the local pump, but girls are not allowed to take their clothes off with people watching so they have to pay to use the toilets at a nearby train station.

Generations of families on the street

At least 40,000 families with 75,000 children live on the street in Chennai. Many children are injured or killed in traffic accidents. Others, especially girls, are raped. Some are kidnapped and exploited as sex slaves. Diseases like scabies, typhus, dysentery and cholera, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are common. Rosi Gollmann and Andheri-Hilfe supports street families, helping them to help themselves.

In December 2015, Chennai was hit by the worst flooding in a hundred years, and hundreds of people died. In Sangheeta’s neighbourhood, the water level rose by 1.5 metres and families had to flee for their lives.



A mother checks her daughter for lice before school.



07.30 Time for school

"I have two school uniforms, so we can wash and dry one of them every day," says Sonia. "It's hard when it rains, because if both uniforms are soaking wet I can't go to school. I never invite my classmates home with me, because they don't know where I live."



08.00 Get to work

Many of the older boys have had to quit school and work instead, doing things like delivering water to local companies and households.

15.00 Homework

Sanju, 12, helps his younger friends with their homework.

"I want to be a teacher and help all the street children to do better at school."

14.30 The street is my playground

Hopscotch is one of many popular street games. But you have to get off the road quickly when fast cars and motorbikes appear. Every year, many children are injured and some are even killed in accidents.



16.00 Hungry

Almost all the family's money is spent to buy food. "We have nowhere to store things like rice, flour or oil, because the rats eat everything. That's why we can't cook our own food," explains Sangheeta.



16.15 Protect your food!

Every time a gust of wind comes along, the children lift their plates high in the air to protect their food from dust and dirt.



16.30 Training

Sangheeta teaches the younger children on her block to play football.



Sangheeta and her friends gather for a team photo. Sangheeta's grandmother is not in the team, she's just resting!

17.30 Children's meeting

In the Children's Parliament, street children learn about their rights and fight together to defend them, with support from Andheri-Hilfe and local partners.



Valuables and school books are kept safe in padlocked boxes.

19.00 Evening chat

The leader of the street families gathers the children together. She gives them some supper and asks how they're getting on at school, and whether anything is troubling them. Then it's time to sleep.



20.30 Night-time treat

Sangheeta treats her little sister to an ice pop before bed.

"Right now it's OK, but during the rainy season we have to sit up under roof canopies. It's hard to sleep sitting up, but you get used to it!"



Children like Shalina, who can't stay with their families on the streets, can live safely at Karunalaya children's centre, which has been supported by Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe for 15 years. The children receive education, life-skill training, support and love. And they get to play football!

Rescued from the street

Shalina's mother planned to sell her to a neighbour. Then the Karunalaya centre gave her a safe place to live. Now she goes to school and loves playing football!

I grew up on the street with my family. My parents worked all day long as trash pickers. My father used to promise my mother: 'I'll go and buy food'. Then he wouldn't come home for hours, and when he did appear he was drunk. All the money had gone on booze. Over and over again, my little brother and I didn't get any food, just water.

"Once my mother found lots of money when she was collecting trash. She didn't want my father to take it, so she asked a neighbour, a young man, to keep it safe. Instead, he spent all the money and said to my mother: 'Give me your daughter then maybe I'll pay.' My mother was so desperate she agreed. Then I ran away and found safety here at the children's centre. After a month, my mother found out where I was and came to visit me. She

said: 'Forgive me. Stay here and go to school.'"

Wants to be a free doctor

"I had never gone to school, so first I had to learn to read and write. Now I'm in Year 9 and doing well. I like being able to read the newspaper and find out what's happening in the world. Sometimes I get angry, especially when I read about girls being beaten and raped. One girl even got attacked by police officers, who should have been protecting her! Girls and boys should work together and help one another instead.

"My dream is to become a doctor and help poor people for free. When I lived on the street and got sick, there was never any mention of me going to the doctor, I just lay there. Lots of people die because they can't afford medicine. I plan to change that!"



Street Child World Championships

The 2014 Street Child World Cup took place in Brazil, and a team from Karunalaya went to represent India! Gopinath explains: "I got to fly for the first time. At first I was really nervous, but everybody welcomed us and saw us as human beings, not as inferior, as many do here in India. I made friends for life and we won the 'Fair Play' trophy because we played fairly and with respect."

Moses is not a punishment



A doctor said that Moses would never be able to look after himself. Now Moses is training to work in a restaurant and enjoys life.



When Moses' family discovered that he was different, they were afraid that their neighbours would look down on them. Some people believe that children who are born with a disability are a punishment from God because the parents have done something terrible in the past.

Moses was born with brain damage, which meant that he did not develop as quickly as other children. When he couldn't keep up in school, the teacher beat him. Other boys teased him and hit him. Moses became afraid and stopped going out. His mother took him to a doctor, who just said: "Your son is an idiot, he'll never be able to look after himself."

Moses gets help

One day, when Moses was twelve years old, some of Rosi's partners came to the village. They asked if there were any children in the village with disabilities.

"We don't have any crazy children here!" said the villagers, and tried to chase them away. But Moses' mother asked for support. Moses then got the chance to start attending a special school.

With the help of the teachers there, he developed in leaps and bounds. Moses' mother also got to learn how she could best support her son. The village people slowly became aware that there are no "disabled" children – only children with other abilities.

No more teasing

After two years attending the special needs school, Moses is confident enough to take the bus by himself every morning. He has completed Year 8 and is now trained to work in the restaurant sector. He already runs the café at the centre, makes tea, serves food and takes payment. The village people slowly realised that there are no "disabled" children – only children with other abilities!

"I used to be scared of everything and I hated my life," says Moses. "Now I'm calm and happy. Nobody makes fun of me any more. Lots of people look up to me now!" 🌐

The hidden children

Some parents hide their differently abled children because of prejudices. Some are even tied or chained up. India has strong laws stating that children with disabilities have the same rights as other children, and should receive the support they need. But poor families rarely know that they have the right to support. That's why Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe work with Indian organizations to support children with different abilities and to raise awareness of their rights.

Alagumani's new language

"I was born deaf," says Alagumani, 14, who lives and studies at a boarding school for children with disabilities, supported by Rosi and Andheri-Hilfe. "I couldn't go to school and I had no proper clothes. My siblings pretended I didn't exist. It felt like living in a prison. I used to get so angry because nobody cared about me that I would hit my mother. Then she'd hit me back. Finally, I got to come to the special school and learn sign language. For the first time, I can make myself understood and understand others! That made me so happy. I go to school and get good grades! And my mother has started to learn sign language so we can finally get to know each other."





Balachandran and the other children in the village attend the village night school for help with homework, time to play and life skills lessons.

When Rosi Gollmann met Balachandran she encouraged him to get an education – the key to the future.

Child labourers' children in school

When a block of stone fell on Balachandran's father, crushing his legs, the family had to borrow money for an operation. But when the father's boss found that he couldn't work as quickly as before, he was fired from the quarry where he'd worked since he was a child.

“Since then we have probably been the poorest family in the village,” says Balachandran. “We have to pay off the loan and we can't afford a proper house.”

Twenty years ago, everyone in Balachandran's village worked at the quarry, but now it has closed.

“The holes became too deep and dangerous. The company just moved out without even putting any fences up. Sometimes children fall down there and die,” says Balachandran.

Father hurts

Balachandran's father has to travel a long way to find work and he only comes home a few times a year. His mother thinks that's for the best.

“He drinks too much, to numb the pain in his leg. Then he gets drunk and beats me. If it wasn't for you chil-

dren I wouldn't want to go on living.”

Back when the quarry was in use, local politicians opened an alcohol shop in the village and earned money through the workers spending their wages there. The quarry is now shut, but the alcohol shops are still there.

“Once I got down on my knees and said ‘Please father, stop drinking,’” says Balachandran's big sister. “He cried and said sorry, but he just couldn't stop.”

No more child labour

All the parents in the village used to be child labourers, and even some of the children, but now that is over. For a while Balachandran worked in a bakery after school, but that was dangerous, with burning hot ovens and oven trays. Then Rosi and her partners helped the

children with school fees, and organised job training for Balachandran's mother. Now he and his sister are concentrating on their education so that they can get good jobs.

“I want to work as a police officer and protect poor people. I'll be a fair police officer, I won't accept bribes and I plan to make sure the alcohol shops are shut down.”



Balachandran and his mother.

From child labour to education

In the past, children in the village worked for up to 15 hours a day from the age of six. Nobody went to school. Many were badly injured by rockfalls. Some got shards of stone in their eyes and went blind. Rosi Gollmann and the Indian partner organization set the child labourers free, and supported them by providing school fees and extra lessons. Today, many of the former child workers are studying, well on their way to becoming engineers, social workers and nurses.

The children's secret

Kalieshwari, 14, shares a secret with other children from the slums of Madurai. They meet once a week to talk about what it's like to live with HIV/AIDS. Children who reveal their secret are often excluded by their friends and teachers.

"I like meeting other children whose lives are like mine," says Kalieshwari. "I never tell anyone else. They'll think: 'maybe I'll catch it from her'. Then they'll avoid me. That makes me angry."

One of Kalieshwari's friends, Tharani, 11, was infected with HIV when she was in her mother's tummy, but her younger brother was born healthy because their mother received medicine while pregnant.

"I take loads of pills," explains Tharani. "Sometimes I'm so tired I fall asleep in school. But I don't dare to tell anyone why."

Lost her job

Kalieshwari's mother got infected with HIV by her husband.

"My mother was a teacher. When she told the school about her illness they fired

her," explains Kalieshwari. "We had no money for food or medicine. When my father died I had to take care of my mother. I was so afraid that she was going to die and leave me all alone. Then we got help from Rosi Gollmann and her partners, and found new friends who accepted us fully."

Kalieshwari's mother now volunteers for Rosi's partner organisation in India, that fights for the rights of people with HIV/AIDS.

"My mother shares knowledge about HIV and AIDS, to help people who are ill and to combat prejudice. At work she met another teacher who had been fired because he had HIV. They fell in love and got married! I am proud of them because they try to help people understand that everyone should be accepted and treated equally."

Frequent moves

Kalieshwari's family have been forced to move house seven times in eight years.

"The worst part is chang-



Kalieshwari and Tharani support one another.



Kalieshwari's had to move seven times in eight years because her parents are HIV-infected.

ing school. Once I tried to refuse to move. My best friend cried and begged me to stay. But it was impossible."

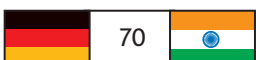
Kalieshwari is fighting prejudices too.

"We children put on street plays at schools and hospitals. Lots of people are scared of

us. They think that you can catch HIV by sharing a glass or a school desk! We explain that it's only transmitted through blood. Once people know the facts, they treat us like everyone else, and that's all I want." 🌐

WHAT ARE HIV AND AIDS?

HIV is a virus that breaks down the immune system. A person with HIV can live a long, healthy life, but without treatment the immune system eventually becomes so weak that the body can no longer protect itself from common, curable illnesses. This final stage, when the person often dies of something like a lung infection, is called AIDS.



A pink palace for mum

Mahalakshmi's mother had HIV when she was expecting her. Rosi and her partners encouraged her to get help from the government hospital. Thanks to a special medicine, Mahalakshmi was born healthy. She explains: "Nobody will let us rent a house because my mother has AIDS. I dream of having a house of our own, a two storey pink palace with a refrigerator, soft beds, a washing machine, a swimming pool and glass windows. I would invite everyone who's been rejected, and take care of them. And my mother could just rest, like a queen!"



Rosi and her two brothers grew up in Germany during World War II (1939–1945). Both had to become soldiers and the eldest was killed at the age of 21. Between 42 and 60 million people died. More civilians – ordinary people – than soldiers died.

TEXT: CARMILLA FLOYD PHOTOS: ANDHERI-HILFE

gone, but she grieves for the many millions of innocent people who have died.

Democracy abolished

Rosi was only six years old when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party came to power in Germany in 1933. They abolished all democratic rights and persecuted, imprisoned and killed everyone who didn't 'fit in' to their dream society. The Nazis believed that they belonged to a particular type of people, an 'Aryan race', which was superior to all other races. Some groups were seen as a threat that should be eliminated. For example, six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of Roma died in the Nazi attempt to 'exterminate' whole ethnic groups. But Nazi Germany was dangerous for anyone who didn't agree with or do exactly what the Nazis said. Rosi's parents believed that Hitler's racist

ideas went against everything in their Christian beliefs of humanity and dignity. They listened in secret to radio broadcasts from other countries, to find out the truth about what was going on. But their neighbours, who were Christians too, were committed Nazis. One of their boys used to play with Rosi's brother.

"Be careful what you say when he's here," said Rosi's parents. If the boy told his parents that Rosi's family didn't like Hitler, they could all end up in a prison camp. The Nazis banned all political parties and burned books that they didn't like. They banned all youth organisations and instead started Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth). When Rosi and her friends broke the rules and met at their local church, some boys from the Hitler Youth gathered outside, shouting slogans and attacked Rosi and

her friends when they came out. Rosi was angry and wanted to speak out against the Nazis, but a young priest talked her out of it. It was too dangerous.

A tough choice

When the war ended in 1945, Rosi and her parents returned to Bonn, where 90 percent of the buildings had been dam-

aged or destroyed. Rosi's home was still there, but three homeless families had moved into their old apartment and now they all had to share the space.

Rosi studied to become a teacher. In her spare time she worked in a slum in Bonn helping poor children, young people, and the elderly. Everything was scarce – shel-



© Bettmann/CORBIS

The Second World War was a difficult time for children. Here are some school children hiding under their desks after hearing an air raid siren.

© Bettmann/CORBIS