

*Forgotten Girls* Excerpt  
By Kay Marshall-Strom and Michele Rickett

## What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

---

It was in a garbage dump on the outskirts of Bangalore – India’s equivalent of our Silicon Valley – that we caught sight of that smudge-faced little girl picking through piles of trash, searching for something to sell. Just as she stepped barefoot into a ditch running with raw sewage, she saw us looking at her, and she stopped. We did our best to smile. The little girl stared back, her brown eyes wide.



A rusty safety pin held the front of the girl’s dress closed. Gesturing to the dress, Kay lamely offered. “That’s a pretty color.” The Indian teen with us translated her words.

The child didn’t move, but she never took her eyes off us.

We had just come from a school for child laborers, where we had been talking to the children and asking them questions. Nonplussed by the sight of the girl’s wretched circumstances, Kay blurted out the same question she had asked child after child in the more hopeful atmosphere of the school. “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

The little girl stared.

Feeling embarrassed and foolish and overwhelmingly sad, we bid the little girl goodbye and turned to go. That’s when she spoke, but in a voice so soft we almost missed her words.

“I can’t be anything,” she said...

The rest of the story? Though life has already taught the little slum girl in the pinned together dress that she has no hope of a good future, we can enter her life with the love of God. He has granted us the privileges of freedom and resources, as well as the connection to the body of Christ in India. In a global sisterhood, we can link arms to get her into a classroom, making sure she learns about Christ while she gains the skills and tools to become the woman God created her to be. In about 7 years, she will likely be a young mother, bringing up sons and daughters who will either break or repeat the cycles of degradation. The time to intervene is now. And our grassroots interventions do exactly that: prevent crushing vulnerabilities that lead to abuses of all kinds. We invest goodness to resist the darkness and strike deadly blows at the root causes of exploitation. We invite you to join the fight, lend your time, talent and treasure for women and girls like the little Indian slum girl. You can contact us through our website, [www.SistersInService.org](http://www.SistersInService.org).