

Children pick up slack in Kyrgyzstan mines

Sari Schutrum-Boward | Staff Writer

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, countries such as Kyrgyzstan have not managed to recover. Some villages only hope for economic survival is to pull their young boys out of school to work in Kyrgyz coal mines.

The coal mines were abandoned during Soviet Union, however after it fell Kyrgyzstan was left with a crumbling economy and no answers. After the government failed to restore the economy, the civilians took this problem into their own hands.

Civilians dug out the mines without permission from the government, but were often difficult to work in and too narrow for adults. So, fathers started taking their sons to work to help earn their family's income.

"People are taking their children out of

schools and sending them to work at mines," said Zulfia, a miner's widow, to BBC News. "There is simply no other way to make money here."

Zulfia's husband died when he was trying to rescue two little boys trapped inside a mine. He was only able to save one child and died with the other boy. After her husband died, the workers at the mine offered her son her late husband's job.

"Of course I won't let him do this, because I know what the price is, but other people do," said Zulfia. "We are just so desperate here."

BBC News visited Kyrgyzstan's coal mines and reported, "Locals say the government refuses to acknowledge the problem. Officially these (problems) may not even exist. Yet we saw them at every coal mine we visited."

No one is sure how many children are

working in the coal mines. The children work all year round, no matter in what kind of weather.

One townsman, Nurbek, said to BBC News, "Sometimes in the winter the caves get flooded, and people have to dive in and swim to the end of the cave to bring a pump and get water out."

BBC News talked to one little boy, Kylych, who has been placed in a position to support his family with income. He makes a small amount of \$3 USD a day. He works in the mines in the mountains of southern Kyrgyzstan. He has seen what many others do not have to encounter. He has witnessed his friend's death and he experienced being trapped in a mine.

"I'd rather go to school, of course, but I need to help the family," said Kylych.

The people in Kyrgyzstan are afraid to ask for help from the government because the economy could become worse. Nurjamal Mambetova, creator of a local non-profit organization, has been trying to find a solution to the main problem.

"We worry that they will close down the mines, or blow them up, and that won't solve the problem," said Mambetova. "People will just start going back to them and digging again because they have no other way to survive."

Like many children the little miners have dreams too and can see past their current circumstances.

One child miner, Uluk says, "When I grow up I want to become a policeman, so that I can catch thieves and protect children."



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CHILDREN HAVE REPLACED THESE ADULT MINERS IN KYRGYZSTAN.

SEX ED

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talking about sex much harder."

N. N. Nayar, the principal of APJ school near the city of Mumbai, said to BBC News that the school was ordered to educate children about "social evils," such as premarital sex, homosexuality and promiscuity.

"Our endeavor is to make children aware of these evils such as drug addiction, alcoholism and other dangerous things," said Nayar to BBC News. "I am of the opinion that sex education by itself is not important, what is important is a holistic approach to the issue of social evils."

He went on to say that most children are already aware of these issues through television and the Internet.

"It doesn't matter whether we tell our girl child to be careful and not mingle with strangers," said Nayar. "She already knows she should not do it."

Gandhi said that the main problem is that the parents don't want their kids to be exposed to sex because they think it would cause them to be more interested in experimentation.

"Parents do not accept sex education because they never had it when growing up," said Gandhi. "It can only start being accepted in schools when the parents themselves are educated. This issue needs more advertisement and positive publicity so they can learn about the positive effects it can cause."

BBC News reports that Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing Hindu association, blames "a Western mindset behind the move."

"We run about 26,000 schools across the country. Our teachers have studied the curriculum and they find it obscene and objectionable," said RSS spokesman Ram Madhav. "The whole curriculum is designed to suit the lifestyle in Western countries, where there is a general free atmosphere. In our country we live with families."

Even though many think that sex education will corrupt Indian youth, others, specifically those who are appalled at the increased AIDS infection, believe that sex education could help with prevention attempts.

"Sex education is definitely one of the most critical aspects of reducing the spread of AIDS," said senior David Norton, who is one of this year's project coordinators for the AIDS Fellowship.

"Research shows that comprehensive sex education programs do not result in increased sexual activity, and if anything it reduces harmful activities," said Kathy Tritschler, professor of sports studies, who also teaches sex education.

Norton agrees and said that "Countries that have switched from abstinence education to comprehensive sex education policies have a decrease of HIV positive cases."

"India is a country of about two billion people and there needs to be sex education in order to prevent over population and the



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WITH TWO BILLION PEOPLE, INDIA FACES A SERIOUS AIDS PROBLEM IF LEFT UNCHECKED.

spread of sexually transmitted diseases," said Gandhi.

Norton said that not only does sex education play a large role in the prevention of HIV, but it is also crucial to the treatment of the disease.

"It is always very important when someone gets diagnosed with HIV for them to be educated about the disease," said Norton. "Further education can provide them with ways in which they can stop the spread of the disease and ways in which they can treat themselves."

The RSS has a completely opposing view on the issue.

"Giving sex education on the pretext that India has a large number of AIDS patients is illogical," said Madhav.

Instead, he favors the sheltering of children by organizing workshops for AIDS awareness strictly for adults, so they can realize the consequences of leading a "promiscuous" life.

Even though many are lobbying for sex education in the hope to decrease cases of AIDS, there are a multitude of additional benefits to keep in mind.

"Overall, sex education can improve your relationships with other people," said Tritschler. "Once you understand that sexuality is part of who you are a human being then you can understand what you want to do with that sexual drive and what is meaningful for you. Through education you will be able to determine whether it is worth the risks."

Midwest floods

Damage estimated in millions

Tim May | Staff Writer

On Aug. 23, 37-year-old Jered Lorenz was thrown from his two-door Grand Prix by harsh winds in Lewiston, Minnesota. His car was found upside-down next to Rush Creek with the front bumper torn off and the license plate ruined. According to Fox News, Lorenz was discovered by the Winona County Dive Rescue Team four miles away from his car, tangled in a tree.

Russ Marsolek, the team leader, said to the West Central Tribune (Minn.), "It appeared the car was driving on a gravel road when it crossed a bridge over the creek and was swept away."

All of last week, the Midwest was struck with violent storms. Roads were flooded, schools were cancelled, and people were picked up by rescue boats to escape their flooded homes.

"A preliminary survey by the American Red Cross in Minnesota identified about 4, 200 affected homes," said Kris Eide, Minnesota's director of homeland security, to MSNBC.

The floods resulted from two different storms: one in the upper Midwest, and the other being the remains of Tropical Storm Erin.

Fox News reported that winds in Des Moines, Iowa destroyed buildings, cut off power, and left roads and homes submerged. In Mansfield, Ohio, the U.S. Postal Service halted mail delivery. Thirty postal vehicles were trapped underwater, but no mail was destroyed.

According to CNN News, the lethal combination of the two storms resulted in millions of dollars in damages, and 22 deaths.

Despite seemingly constant flooding from violent storms in the Midwest since May, there hasn't been much discussion about these events on a national level.

"Kansas has been flooding all summer," said Senior Courtney Hutchison of Lawrence, Kansas. "It was substantial. People had to move out of their homes."

According to the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA), the storms in May destroyed houses and damaged farms in southwest Kansas.

Twenty-five-year-old A.J. Bryce of St. Louis, Missouri, had experienced one of the worst storms in Missouri's history in July 2006 that wiped out St. Louis' power for three days.

"The mayor of St. Louis called it a national emergency," said Bryce in an interview. "It was called an inland hurricane, and the wind was 70 mph. It was creepy because we didn't live close to the ocean."

"It's crazy that no one has heard of it," said Bryce. "St. Louis is a big city, but it's caught in association with the Midwest and people don't care."