

United Nations Children's Fund
Regional Office for South Asia

The Girls Came Back



For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 

Meena is a little girl who lives in a village with her parents, her grandmother, her brother Raju and her baby sister, Rani. Mithu, the parrot, is her best friend.

In many ways, Meena is like any other little girl you know. She is friendly but is not afraid to ask questions.

Share in Meena's adventures as she laughs, climbs trees, asks questions and solves problems, and shows you all the things that a little girl can do.

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Meena and her family live in a village. One morning, Grandma was talking about their neighbour's two daughters, Deepa and Mita. They had just returned from working in the city.

I hear they did
not bring back
much money.

I
I hear they
haven't even sent letters
to their parents in these
last two years.

~-

Their father had taken Meena and Raju to the city once. Now the children wanted to hear Deepa and Mita's experiences.



Mama,
can we invite
Deepa and Mita
to our house?

All right, children.

A few days later, Deepa and Mita came for a visit. Meena was quite surprised to see them. The girls looked grown up and different. They also looked ill – not at all like the smart city girls that Meena had imagined.



At the mention of the city, the girls' eyes filled with tears. Grandma and Mother felt very concerned. At first, they did not want to talk in front of Meena.



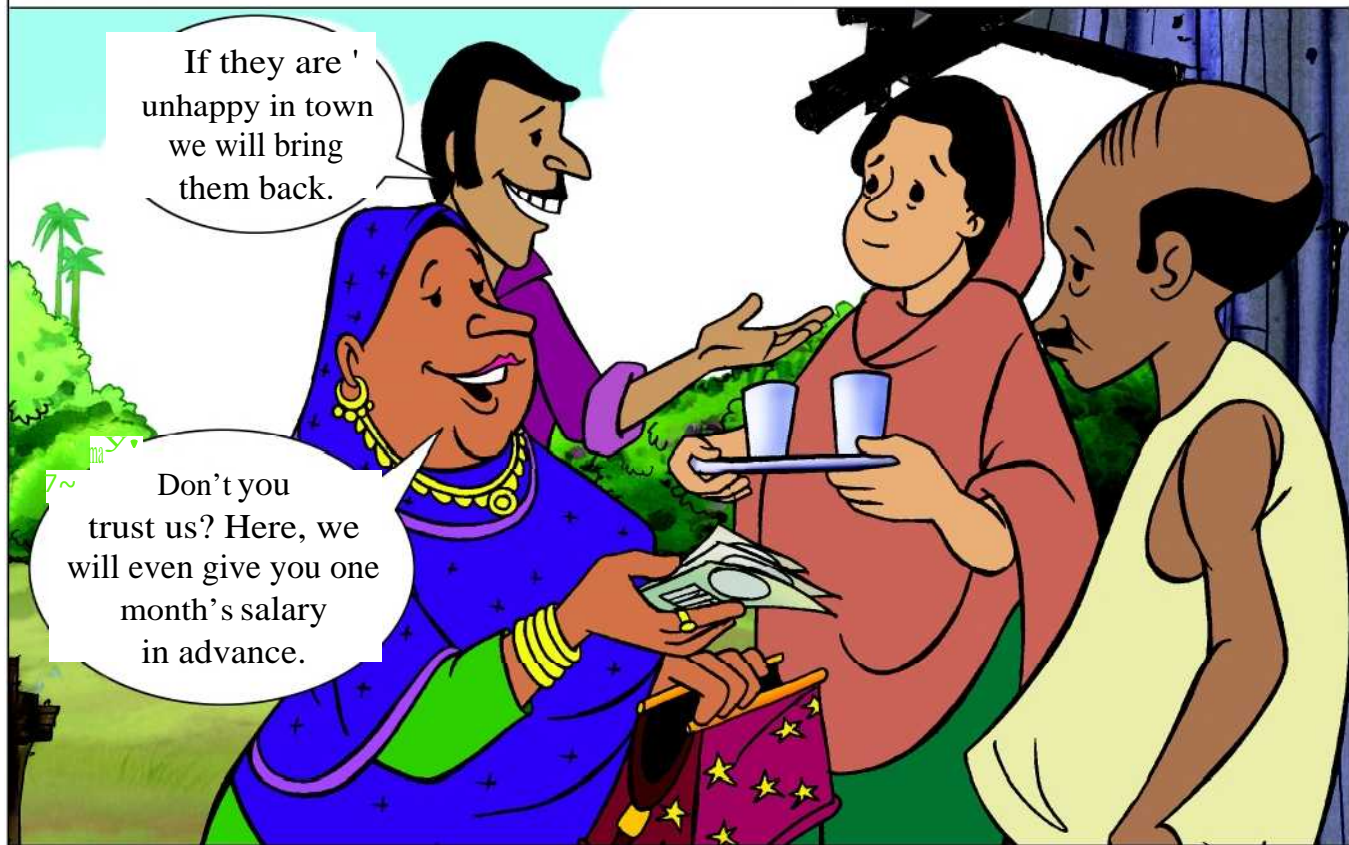
Then slowly, with a great deal of hesitation the girls began their story. Two years earlier their aunt's friend had visited their house. Her brother was also with her...



The aunt's friend and her brother were very cunning.

If they are 'unhappy in town we will bring them back.

Don't you trust us? Here, we will even give you one month's salary in advance.



The girls' parents were very poor and the offer seemed such a good one. They felt that their daughters might have a chance of a better life away from the village.



And so, Deepa and Mita left for the big city.



They arrived in the city after travelling for two days and constantly changing from buses to taxis. Here, the aunt's friend sold the girls to another man.



Deepa and Mita were taken to a bad place where they were kept like prisoners. There were many other young girls there. Men paid money to touch them and feel them.



If the girls protested they were beaten. When the girls fell ill, there was no one to look after them or take them to a doctor. It was like being in hell.



Two years later, Deepa fell very ill. When she could not work anymore, she was thrown out on the street.



Luckily for Deepa, she found shelter in a home for women. They located Mita and rescued her too.



The people who helped Deepa also took her to a doctor who spoke to her for a long time. The doctor gave Deepa some terrible news.



Deepa was very sick and did not have many years to live. When she finished speaking, everyone was very sad for her.



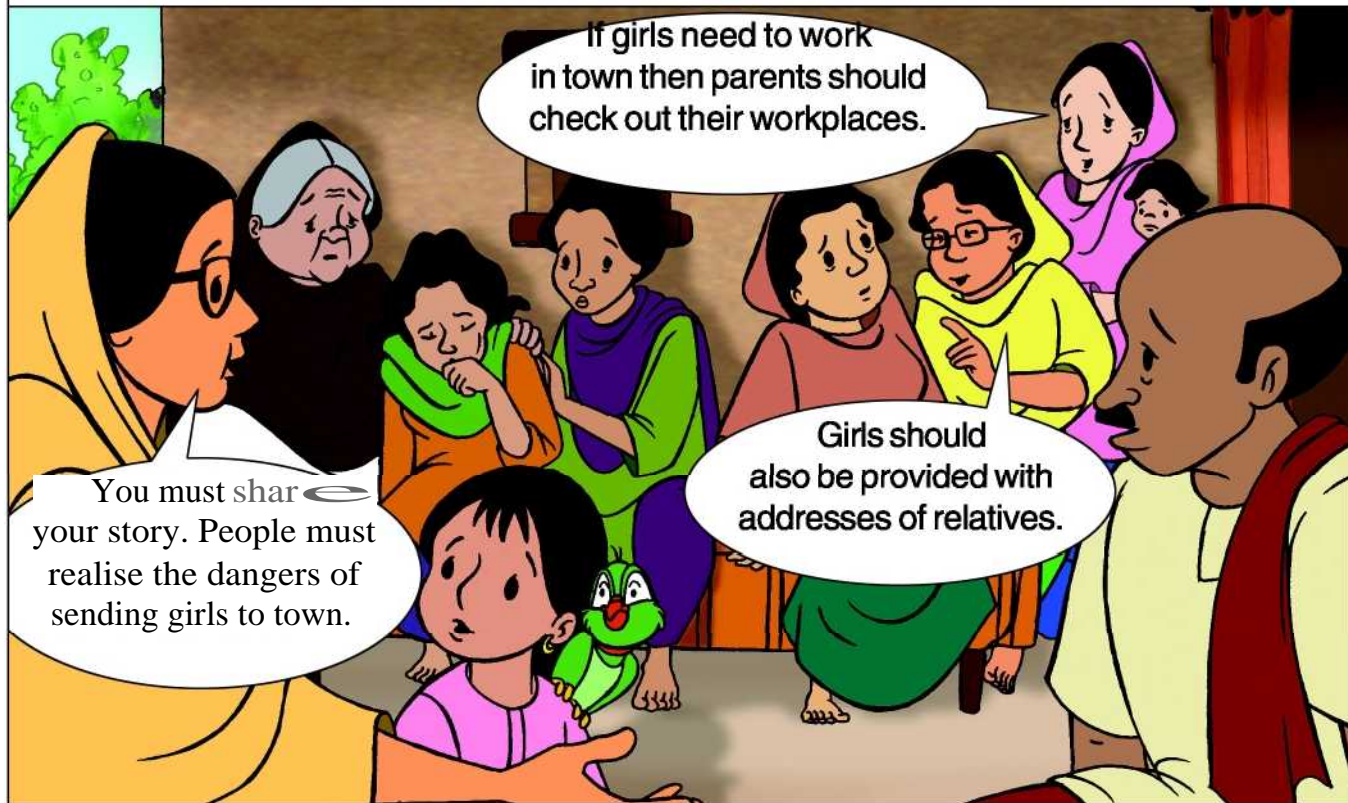
Deepa and Mita had not told their parents what they had been through. They felt ashamed and scared.



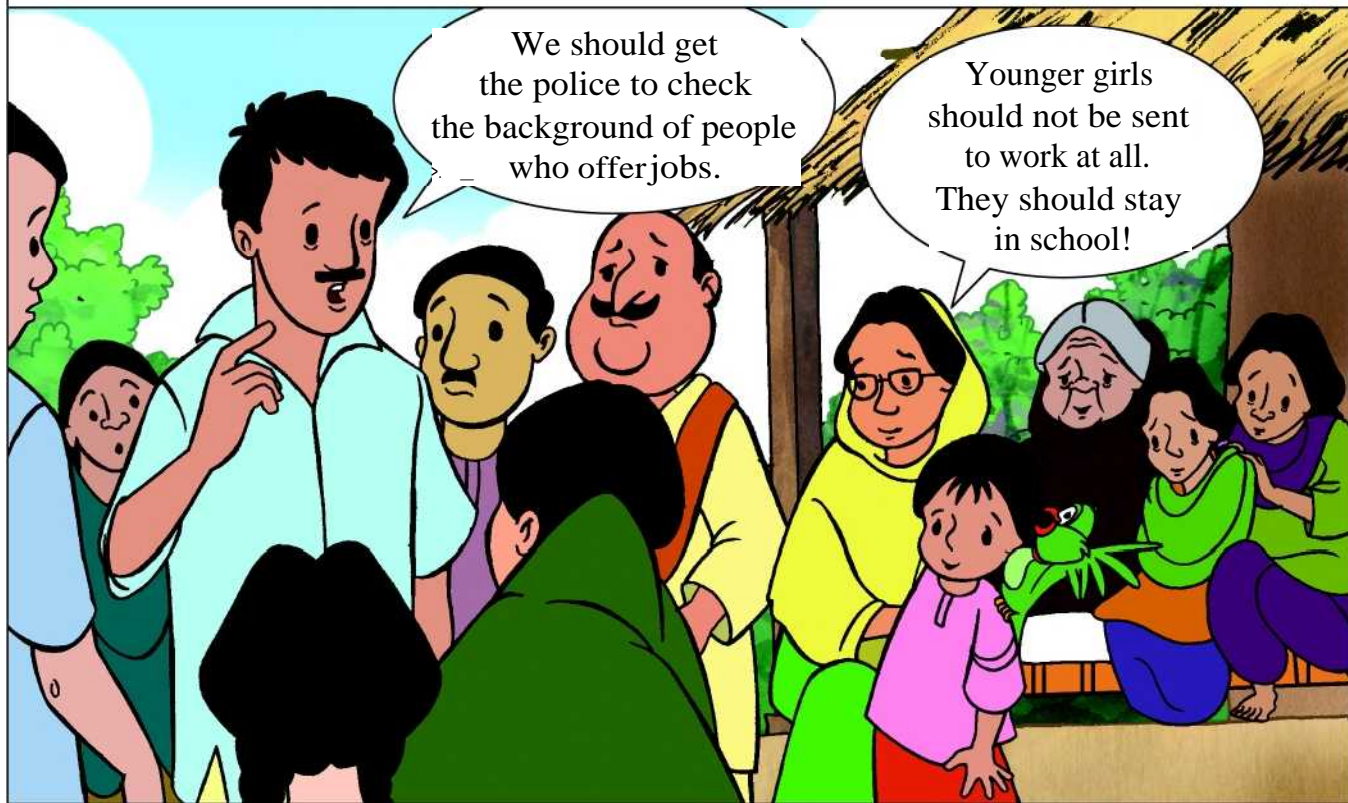
Mother and Grandma also felt that it was important for others in the village to know, so that girls would not be taken to the city like this.



The next day Grandma spoke to Deepa and Mita's parents, and that same evening a meeting was held at Meena's home. Teacher was there and so was the health worker.



They were soon joined by other villagers and even the village headman. Everyone discussed ways to protect the girls of the village.



A few days later, Meena was walking home from school.



Suddenly, she heard footsteps coming towards her. Two men were talking loudly. The men talked about taking four girls to town.



Meena tried to run away, but it was too late. The men heard her and grabbed her just as she hid behind some big leaves.



The wicked men tied Meena up and shut her in an abandoned hut amidst long grasses in the wilderness. People were afraid to go to this place. The men plotted to drug Meena and carry her in the bus, half asleep, with the other girls.



Poor Meena. She was really scared. She had never been in such danger before. How would she ever be saved?



Just then Meena heard a rustling and there was ... Mithu!



Mithu pecked at the rope and untied Meena's hands. Then Meena searched the room and piled everything she could find against the wall. She climbed up and painfully squeezed through the tiny window.



Meanwhile, the two men were spotted in the village market by Deepa and Mita's parents.



Soon an angry crowd gathered around the men. They tried to get away and run.



Just then, Meena came rushing up. She was all scratched and bruised.



When the crowd heard Meena's story, they became even angrier. They took the scoundrels straight to the police.



Late that evening, there was a lot of excitement in Meena's house. Meena had become a heroine and the bad men were locked up in the police station!



The best thing of all was that Deepa and Mita were beginning to get their smiles back. They had even decided to form a group of young girls and boys to help others like them.





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