

Half the Sky by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn



Review by: Joy Stoddard

I read *Half the Sky* when one of its sponsorship partners invited Whole Planet Foundation to consider joining the book's [promotional efforts](#) and partners such as mutual partners BRAC (our microfinance partner in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda), Every Mother Counts (whose purpose is maternal health), and Fonkoze (our microfinance partner in Haiti), and many other change-makers. Inspired by the Chinese proverb “Women hold up half the sky”, Pulitzer Prize winning writers Kristof and WuDunn passionately take us on their journey of chronicling the suffering and strength of girls, daughters, mothers, and wives they interviewed in Africa and Asia. They offer piercing descriptions of twenty-first century slavery, the sub-culture of prostitution, rape as a weapon of war, honor killings, maternal mortality, negative impacts of American foreign policy on women worldwide, and female genital cutting.

Woven in to each chapter is a spotlight on an inspiring, hard working individual or group or institution who is working to end the abuses, including Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank and Kashf Foundation, in the microcredit sector. Reading *Half the Sky* reinforces that the transformative power of microcredit – though not a silver bullet – can reduce the occurrence of these atrocities by empowering impoverished women in the developing world with the opportunity to earn income through a home-based business and invest in the family's nutrition and education.

Finally, Kristof and WuDunn lead us to a closing chapter entitled “What You Can Do” and “four steps we can take in the next ten minutes”, urging readers to act now and get involved in the world: donate to organizations empowering rural communities around the globe, volunteer abroad, educate yourself on policies that effect the very poor, and speak out for change.