



# half the sky

Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **HALF THE SKY: TURNING OPPRESSION INTO OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN WORLDWIDE, A SPECIAL TELEVISION EVENT, PREMIERES OCTOBER 1-2, 2012 ON PBS**

*Eva Mendes, Meg Ryan, Gabrielle Union, Diane Lane, America Ferrera, and  
Olivia Wilde Join Authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn on a Global Journey to Turn  
Oppression into Opportunity for Women and Girls*

(San Francisco, CA) — *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, a Show of Force LLC and Fugitive Films production developed in association with the Independent Television Service (ITVS), is a special television event that uses in-the-moment investigations and emotionally explosive storytelling to confront the greatest moral challenge of our time: the oppression of women and girls around the world. Filmed in 10 countries and inspired by the best-selling book by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, the series is driven by the growing awareness that empowering women is the best way to increase prosperity and stability around the globe. Six talented actress-advocates — Eva Mendes, Meg Ryan, Gabrielle Union, Diane Lane, America Ferrera, and Olivia Wilde — join Kristof as he travels to Asia and Africa to meet face-to-face with inspiring individuals working to bring about change and the women and girls who confront extreme gender inequality in their daily lives. Introduced by George Clooney, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, which will broadcast nationally as a special presentation of *Independent Lens*, premieres on Monday, October 1 and Tuesday, October 2 from 9:00 PM-11:00 PM ET on PBS (check local listings).

Women and girls around the globe face threats — trafficking, prostitution, violence, and discrimination — every day of their lives. Says WuDunn, “In the same way that slavery was a

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moral challenge for the 19<sup>th</sup> century and totalitarianism was a challenge for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the challenge that women and girls face around the world is the moral challenge of our time.” As we see in the series, hope endures as fearless women and men are developing innovative ways to turn the tide.

*Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is a landmark transmedia project with robust content across multiple platforms, including the four-hour PBS and international broadcast event, a Facebook-hosted social-action game and mobile games created by Games for Change, two websites, 20 educational video modules with companion text, a social-media campaign supporting over 30 partner NGOs, and an impact assessment plan. The project is part of the **Women and Girls Lead** initiative, spearheaded by ITVS in partnership with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS.

In addition to ITVS and CPB, major funding to date for *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* has been provided by the IKEA Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Coca-Cola, the MacArthur Foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Nduna Foundation, the Seedlings Foundation, the Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Nike Foundation, the NoVo Foundation, the United Nations Foundation, The Hanami Fund, Ina Brown Bond, and Fran Hauser.

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### **Episode One (Monday, October 1 at 9:00 PM ET)**

**Eva Mendes** and Nicholas Kristof investigate **gender-based violence** in **Sierra Leone**, a country where most of the assaults and rapes go unreported. They meet with **Amie Kandeh**, who works with the International Rescue Committee and runs three of West Africa’s sexual assault referral centers. Kandeh reveals that the vast majority of the center’s rape and sexual assault cases are young women under 17, with 26 percent under age 12. At the police station with her parents by her side, 14-year-old Fulamatu accuses a pastor of raping her. We follow the case closely as several witnesses back up her statements, but justice proves elusive in a country where police officers conduct “armchair investigations” rather than look for evidence or confront the suspect, and where accusations of rape bring shame on the family of the victim rather than the perpetrator.

In **Cambodia**, where 30 percent of prostitutes are children, the series examines the issue of **sex trafficking**. **Meg Ryan** and Kristof meet **Somaly Mam**, herself sold into slavery as a young girl, but who is now a world-renowned leader in the anti-trafficking struggle. Mam runs a center to rehabilitate and educate girls rescued from brothels. She introduces Somana, sold at age 13 and forced to work as a prostitute, her eye gouged out by the brothel owner. When Mam learns that underage girls have been discovered in a brothel on the Thai border, she organizes a daring raid with the help of local authorities and Kristof and the cameras capture this dramatic and dangerous effort to free underage girls being held as sex slaves. Working tirelessly to bring the

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voices of these girls to the world, Mam uses innovative approaches, such as a weekly radio show, to raise awareness. “We’re going to change Cambodia,” she says. “We want you to hear from us. If you don’t listen to us, we’ll keep on talking. We’re not tired at all.”

**Gabrielle Union** and Kristof visit **Vietnam** with former Microsoft marketing executive **John Wood**, who started Room to Read, an organization which works to promote literacy and equal **education** for girls across the developing world. In Vietnam women have been traditionally devalued, and many girls are kept at home to tend to household chores while boys continue their education. Duyen, a teenage girl in the Room to Read program, travels 17 miles by bike and boat to get to school from her rural home. Nhi, age 14, is the primary earner in the household, put to work by her father selling lottery tickets seven days a week. Phung, also 14, rises at 3:00 AM to care for her younger brothers and sisters while her father works as a day laborer. But she is going to school, encouraged and supported by her father, because they understand that education is their only way out of poverty.

“When you educate a girl, there’s a ripple effect that goes beyond what you would get from a normal investment,” says Sheryl WuDunn. “When you educate a girl, she tends to get married later on in life, she tends to have fewer kids. She takes better care of her kids. She has greater economic opportunity. She might create a business so she can contribute to the local economy. When you educate a girl, you educate a village.”

### **Episode Two (Tuesday, October 2 at 9:00 PM ET)**

“Half a million women a year die in childbirth,” says Nicholas Kristof. “It’s not biology that’s killing them but neglect.” **Diane Lane** and Kristof investigate **maternal mortality** in **Somaliland**, where one in 12 women dies in childbirth due to poor nutrition and the effects of female genital mutilation (FGM) — also known as *cutting* — a brutal ritual that has been performed on more than 130 million women around the world. They meet with **Edna Adan**, founder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital, Somaliland’s first maternal health facility. Adan saves the lives of pregnant women on a daily basis with sophisticated health care and C-sections. She also trains midwives, who then return to their communities, and works to educate women about the dangers of FGM, which causes infection and scarring that leads to difficulties in childbirth. Lane and Kristof visit the hut of a local woman who performs cuttings and learn how Adan and her army of midwives are trying to turn the tide against this dangerous, deeply entrenched tradition.

In **India** it is estimated that 90 percent of sex workers’ daughters follow their mothers into prostitution and, of the three million prostitutes in the country, 1.2 million are children. In Kolkata, **America Ferrera** and Kristof visit the Kalighat red-light district to meet **Urmi Basu**, who is working to break the tradition of **forced prostitution** passed down from mothers to daughters. Basu’s New Light shelter program was established to protect and educate young girls, children, and women who are at high risk for commercial sexual exploitation. We meet two of the shelter’s brightest girls, whose mothers are still in active prostitution — Sushmita, whose mother believes her daughter can have a different future than her own and is thriving in private



school and dreams of becoming a lawyer; and Monisha, whose mother wants her to return to her village and what Urmi is certain will be a life of prostitution. As Kristof says, “We, as Americans, have won the lottery of life and the distinction between us and people living in Kalighat is not that we are smarter, not that we’re harder working, not that we’re more virtuous — it’s that we’re luckier.”

**Economic empowerment** is key to turning the tide against poverty, violence, and the oppression of women. When women have money of their own, they invest more than twice as much as men in their families, education, and the future. In **Kenya**, **Olivia Wilde** joins Kristof to see firsthand how women entrepreneurs are changing not only their lives but their communities. **Ingrid Munro** founded Jamii Bora, a microfinancing organization for women; one of Jamii Bora’s greatest success stories is **Jane Ngori**, a former prostitute and single mother of four who is now running a dressmaking business. In Nairobi, they meet **Rebecca Lolosoli**, the founder of an all-women’s village called Umoja, which was established as a haven from rape and violence and sustains itself by creating and selling traditional beaded wares. “One of the best ways that we can deal with all of the abuses that are so troubling against women and girls is through economic empowerment,” says Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. “Unleashing the economic potential of women is a win-win economic strategy.”

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### About Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

**Nicholas D. Kristof** and **Sheryl WuDunn** are the co-authors of the national best seller *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, and two other books: *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* and *Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia*. They are the first married couple to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism, awarded in 1990 for their coverage of China as *New York Times* correspondents. Kristof, a *New York Times* columnist since 2001, has served as bureau chief in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Tokyo, and as associate managing editor. In 2006, Kristof won his second Pulitzer for his op-ed columns on Darfur. He has a huge social-media following on Facebook (five hundred thousand) and Twitter (1.2 million). At the *Times*, WuDunn worked as a business editor and as a foreign correspondent in Tokyo and Beijing; she is currently a senior managing director with Mid-Market Securities.

### About the Filmmakers

#### **Show of Force**

Dedicated to creating feature documentaries and television series events of the highest caliber, Show of Force is known for dynamic, character-driven storytelling that consistently engages, entertains, and inspires. Show of Force is a media production company represented by CAA (Creative Artists Agency), with 20 years of combined experience and excellence between partners Maro Chermayeff and Jeff Dupre. They have produced over 20 hours of television and media content per year with a staff of excellent young producers and are the recipients of numerous awards and accolades for their work on both U.S. and international media broadcasts. Show of Force is the production company overseeing the multiple platforms of the *Half the Sky* movement.

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**Maro Chermayeff (Executive Producer and Director)** is an award-winning filmmaker, producer, director, author, and former television executive. She is the founder and chair of the MFA program in Social Documentary Film at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Some of her extensive credits include the six-part PBS series *Circus* (PBS, 2010), *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (HBO, 2012), *Mann v. Ford* (HBO, 2011), *Parasomnia* (France 2, 2010), the Emmy® Award-winning series *Carrier* (PBS/National Geographic International, 2008), *Frontier House* (PBS, 2002), *American Masters: Juilliard* (PBS, 2003), *The Kindness of Strangers* (HBO, 1999), *Role Reversal* (A&E, 2002), *Trauma: Life in the ER* (TLC, 2001), and over 15 specials for *Charlie Rose*. Represented by CAA, Chermayeff is a principal of Show of Force. She is also an executive producer of the Facebook game and the 3x Mobile games for *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* with Games for Change.

**Mikaela Beardsley (Executive Producer)** has over 15 years of experience producing award-winning, critically acclaimed, and socially engaged documentary television. Beardsley most recently produced *Reporter* — a film featuring Nicholas D. Kristof — which was nominated for the Emmy® Award for Outstanding Informational Programming – Long Form. She has worked in film and television production since 1993 and has made films with Alex Gibney, Martin Scorsese, and Wim Wenders. Beardsley began her television career at WGBH in Boston, and holds a BA in comparative literature from Princeton University.

**Jamie Gordon (Executive Producer)** co-founded Fugitive Films in 2005. Her company produced *Coach*, starring Hugh Dancy, and the comedy *Wedding Daze* starring Jason Biggs. Among other projects, she is developing *Grlzradio*, a TV project about girls' empowerment. Previously, Gordon was the head of development for GreeneStreet Films, working on *In the Bedroom*, and worked as a story editor for producer Wendy Finerman, where she worked on *Forrest Gump*. Gordon has produced independent features including *swimfan*, *Pinero*, *Chicago Cab*, and *Certain Guys*. She graduated with a BA in history from Princeton University.

**Jeff Dupre (Executive Producer)** has been producing and directing documentary films for over 15 years. Together with Show of Force partner Maro Chermayeff, Dupre was a director, creator, and executive producer of *Circus*, a six-part documentary series that premiered on PBS. He conceived, produced, and co-directed *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* and produced *Carrier* and Michael Kantor's *Broadway: The American Musical*. Dupre's directorial debut, *Out of the Past*, won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival, among other awards.

**Joshua Bennett (Producer)**, with more than 10 years' experience producing film and television, has produced shoots in more than 35 countries and on all seven continents. He has produced programming for PBS, HBO, MTV, the Discovery Channel, A&E, and the Sundance Channel, as well as music videos, commercials, independent shorts, experimental works, corporate, new





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media and viral media campaigns. Bennett teaches documentary producing at New York City's School of Visual Arts' MFA program in Social Documentary Film.

For a complete listing of all members of the filmmaking team, visit <http://pbs.org/independentlens/half-the-sky/filmmakers>

### **About Independent Lens**

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by ITVS the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

### **About ITVS**

The Independent Television Service funds, presents, and promotes award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Monday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. Mandated by Congress in 1988 and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS has brought more than one thousand independently produced programs to date to American audiences. Tamara Gould is the executive producer of *Half the Sky* for ITVS. For more information about ITVS, visit <http://itvs.org>.

### **About Women and Girls Lead**

Women and Girls Lead is a multiyear public media initiative to focus, educate, and connect citizens worldwide in support of the issues facing women and girls. Combining independent documentary film, television, new media, and global outreach partnerships, Women and Girls Lead amplifies the voices of women and girls acting as leaders, expands understanding of gender equity, and engages an international network of citizens and organizations to act locally and reach out globally. By building a pipeline of some 50 public television documentaries and integrating content from partners across radio, commercial television, and beyond, Women and Girls Lead offers another model for public media to follow in serving its mission in the 21st century, connecting key stakeholders to sustain productive dialogue and participation on the most critical issues facing local communities, the nation, and the world. For more information, please visit .

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