

What can help M.?

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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In recent columns, Nicolas Kristof has [taken up](#) the cause of a girl in India, the daughter of a prostitute, whom he refers to only as "M." M. is ten years old. Thanks to an organization called New Light, she was attending school in Calcutta.

But recently, the girl's family suddenly withdrew her from school and bought a train ticket for her to return to the country, where Kristof believes they intend to sell her to a sex trafficker far from the spotlight of international scrutiny. In one scene Kristof describes, he, actress America Ferrera and the founder of New Light gather in the family's small hut and beg them--unsucessfully--to change their minds.

Their failure struck me powerfully, and it seemed to strike Kristof as well. He has been [working](#) on this issue for more than a decade, and he knows well the dynamics of economics, shame and complex traditions that he is confronting. Kristof's platform at the *New York Times* shines an international spotlight on M.'s fragile situation. Add to this a hardworking, on-the-ground NGO and the power of Hollywood. If this cannot save this child, what can?

Sex-trafficking is an intractable problem, and clearly this family is calculating its future in terms that are painful--if not inscrutable--to those of us watching from the other side of the world. What more, I wonder, can be done?