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What "Slumdog Millionaire" Doesn't Tell You About India

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As Slumdog Millionaire swept the Academy Awards with eight wins, including the prestigious Best Picture award, international aid agency World Vision urges Americans to learn more about how poverty affects children in India, and do something about it.

"It's not enough to watch India's poverty on screen; we need to get involved and get our hands dirty," said Jayakumar Christian, World Vision's national director in India.

According to the agency, which has worked in India for 50 years, the popular film neglected to mention the following key issues facing impoverished children in India:



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Children sit in front of their house in the slums of Mumbai. Over half of the city's population live in slums.

1. HIV and AIDS threaten India's poor. Stigma remains a huge obstacle for better testing, family acceptance and the care of orphans. Some 2.4 million Indians are HIV positive.
2. The global food and economic crises have only deepened the misery of India's poorest children. According to the World Bank, the prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world. In 2007, 46 percent of children under age 5 were underweight.
3. Traditional standing of girls and women: Traditionally, boys are favored over girls in Indian society, leaving girls to suffer the worst effects of poverty. Girls are more likely to miss out on food, education, immunizations, health care and other necessities.
4. Early marriage: By law, women in India cannot wed until they are 21, but poverty and customs push thousands of young girls into marriage before their bodies are ready or education complete. World Vision education programs in India have been shown to reduce the frequency of early marriage when barriers to girls' education are addressed along with dowry issues.
5. It's bigger than Mumbai: Across India, 180 million children live on less than \$1.25 a day. World Vision works in close to 50 slums like Dharavi, depicted in Slumdog Millionaire, as well as communities across India, assisting street children, people living with HIV and AIDS and families in need of clean water, education and economic opportunities.

"World Vision can attest to the fact that children have an amazing ability to overcome their circumstances, just like Slumdog Millionaire shows, and we're asking people to partner with the children of India so that breaking out of poverty doesn't have to be a one-in-a-million miracle," Christian said.

World Vision's Senior Vice President in the United States, Atul Tandon, who himself grew up in poverty in India, expressed enthusiasm for the film's multiple Academy Awards, but called on American moviegoers: "Don't just be entertained; instead do something, get involved, change the situation."

"If people leave the theater feeling inspired to take action, to help just one child who's facing a childhood of poverty, then that would be the most exciting thing I could imagine resulting from this movie," Tandon said.

The public can donate or learn more by visiting World Vision's [webiste](#) or calling 1.888.56.CHILD.

