

# Freedom

Ghana, West Africa

## What is *Trokosi*?

### What does *Trokosi* mean?

Literally, “wife of the gods”; in actuality a *Trokosi* is a child who is taken to the village shrine to live. The priest at the village shrine exerts full ownership rights over her, beating her if she tries to escape, controlling her interaction with others, demanding labor and sex from her, and denying her education, food, and health services. In reality, this child is not a wife but a slave.

### Does this really happen in our world today?

The *Trokosi* practice is very hidden. It is only possible when a village is steeped in secrecy, fear, and poverty. The Volta region in Ghana, West Africa, is the region where I.N. Network Ghana is working to free *Trokosi* women. The *Trokosi* practice also exists in the neighboring countries of Benin and Togo.

### What is the *Trokosi* system?

In the *Trokosi* system, a virgin girl is sent to the village shrine to live, in order to appease the traditional gods. This girl is the sacrifice for crimes allegedly committed by her elder family members. She lives at the shrine for the rest of her life, suffering countless abuses at the hands of the fetish priest. She is molested and raped, beaten, and denied the basic necessities. She also must raise and provide for children that are born as a result of the priest’s sexual abuse.

## I. N. Network

### What does “I.N. Network” mean?

“I. N. Network” was founded in 1974 under the name “International Needs.” “I. N. Network” is now the official name and is short for “International Needs Network.”

### Is I. N. Network a missionary organization?

I. N. Network is a (501C3) Christian ministry but is not a “sending” missionary organization. The I. N. Network ministry operates with the vision “to share the gospel by partnering with Christian nationals around the world.” For example, the I. N. Network Ghana staff is made up of Ghanaian Christians who live in their own culture and environment and have hearts to share the Lord Jesus with their fellow Ghanaians. They have their own board of trustees, their own executive director, and their own staff in Ghana. In the same way, I. N. Network USA has a board of trustees, president, and staff of Christians from the USA.

### In which countries does the I.N. Network have offices?

I. N. Network countries have different roles. *Front-line* countries evangelize, disciple, and do community development in their countries. *Supply-line* countries encourage, equip, support, and pray for *Front-line* countries.

I. N. Network USA is a *Supply-line* country which supports the *Front-line* countries of Bangladesh, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia.

### How is I. N. Network different from child sponsorship organizations?

I. N. Network’s mission is to connect Christian partners in effective evangelism, discipleship, and community development. A core part of this mission is the I. N. Network church planter, who acts as the pathfinder.

This church planter evangelizes and prays for the people in his/her country and is uniquely positioned to see and respond to needs. In some cases, a village needs a school and sponsorships for children to attend that school. In other cases, a village needs a well so villagers have safe water to drink. In still other cases, a village may need a medical clinic.

I. N. Network looks for ways to respond to those needs and share the love of Jesus Christ. Child sponsorships are an important part of the I. N. Network ministry but they are not the primary purpose.



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## **Trokosi Freedom Project**

### **How does the I. N. Network free *Trokosi* slaves?**

The first step in freeing an entire village from the *Trokosi* practice is a period of trust building and negotiations between I. N. Network Ghana staff and the fetish priests involved in the *Trokosi* practice. The purpose of these negotiations is both to free all *Trokosi* slaves and their children at a shrine and also to secure a written agreement that the priest will not take on new *Trokosi* slaves.

Negotiations can take many years. I. N. Network Ghana staff members travel to remote regions. They meet with the priests to show them how freeing the *Trokosi* slaves will benefit the entire village. They share the love of Jesus Christ with the men who keep these *Trokosi* slaves. These staff members battle the forces of evil with the power of Jesus Christ and hearts are transformed!

### **What happens once *Trokosi* slaves and their children are released from their slavery?**

I. N. Network Ghana staff members arrange a big ceremony where fetish priests officially release the *Trokosi*. The entire village is invited. The ceremony is vital because the women's hearts and minds are full of fear that they could bring curses upon their family. The women put aside their slave garb and receive new clothing, symbolizing their new freedom.

I. N. Network social workers rehabilitate former *Trokosi* women from their years of abuse and neglect. The social workers try to break through the stigma and reunite these women with their families.

I. N. Network Ghana has a Vocational Training School. Women learn a trade, which allows them to provide for their children. Women also hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive Bible teaching. These things unite to give dignity and hope to a woman who has spent many years downtrodden and abused.

### **How many students attend the Vocational Training School?**

The Vocational Training School can accommodate 350 women each year. The two year program accommodates 50 women at a time. During the two years, women specialize in a skill like bread-baking, cooking, sewing, dressmaking, or hair dressing. When they graduate, they receive a start-up kit with equipment to start their own business.

The need for this training is so great that I. N. Network Ghana created a modular skills training program in 2001. This program is three months long, rather than two years long. It introduces a skill so a woman can enter an apprenticeship after she is done at the school and complete her skill training through that apprenticeship. The modular Vocational Training program accommodates 300 women each year.

### **How many *Trokosi* slaves have been released so far?**

Approximately 31 shrines have stopped the *Trokosi* practice through the efforts of the I. N. Network Ghana staff. Over 3,500 women plus their children have been freed. There are still an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 women and girls enslaved by the *Trokosi* system, along with their estimated 8,000 children.

### **How do child sponsorships fit in with the *Trokosi* Freedom project?**

The average *Trokosi* woman has 4 children fathered by the fetish priest. When the woman is freed from the shrine, I. N. Network Ghana provides school for her children where they receive a Christian education, a school uniform, nutritious food, Bible teaching, and basic medical care. They are also nurtured by the I. N. Network Ghana staff. This education helps to dispel the ignorance and fear that allowed the *Trokosi* practice to exist for so many years. A new generation of Ghanaian children is learning that every person is of value to the God who created them to be free.

### **How can I learn more about the *Trokosi* Freedom project and child sponsorships in Ghana?**

The I. N. Network USA website has more information on how you can help free women and children who are still enslaved by the *Trokosi* practice. We also encourage you to submit a gift or commit to a sponsorship using the return envelope and the tear-off portion of the *Trokosi* Freedom brochure.



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