

# Somaly Mam

human rights activist, bestselling author,  
and survivor of sex slavery

*“I write my story to shed light on the lives of so many thousands of other women. They have no voice, so let this one life stand for their stories.”*



- Excerpt from Somaly’s best-selling memoir, **The Road of Lost Innocence** (Spiegel & Grau 2008).



Human trafficking, a multi-billion dollar industry, is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, with over two million women and children are sold into sexual slavery each year. Born into a tribal minority family in the Monduliri province of Cambodia and sold at age 12, Somaly Mam is a survivor of sex slavery and a current-day human rights activist.

Somaly was forced to work in a brothel along with other women and children for nearly a decade, and was brutally tortured and raped on a daily basis. One night, she was made to watch as her best friend was viciously murdered. Deciding then that she would no longer “keep her silence,” Somaly heroically escaped her captors and began to build a new life abroad.

But she vowed never to forget those left behind, and she has since dedicated her life’s work to saving victims, running shelters for recovery and skills training, and empowering survivors with sustainable employment and choice. Her holistic approach ensures these women and children not only escape their plight for good, but have the emotional and economic strength to face the future with hope.

In 2007, with the help of two American men, she founded the Somaly Mam Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting anti-trafficking efforts in Southeast Asia, empowering survivors as part of the solution, and engaging governments, corporations and individuals in a multilateral solution-driven approach to end slavery.

Somaly estimates that she has touched the lives of over 7,000 victims to date, and she has been recognized as a CNN Hero, one of TIME Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People and one of Fortune Magazine’s Most Powerful Women, a Glamour Woman of the Year, recipient of the World Children’s Prize, and by the US Department of Homeland Security for her work. She has been a guest on the Tyra Banks show, Fox and Friends, America’s Most Wanted, and was featured on Oprah and CNN. She has participated in Davos activities and the DLD conference, the 2011 Newark Peace Summit (alongside the Dalai Lama) and conferences including Imagine Solutions, Womenetics, EG, and Crimes Against Children. Despite threats to her life and a complex political environment, she continues to live and work in Phnom Penh.

Somaly Mam and the Somaly Mam Foundation are currently part of PBS’ Half the Sky Transmedia Project and documentary special, airing in the US and worldwide in October 2012. Inspired by journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn’s book of the same name, the project engages mass media and educational tools to raise awareness of women’s issues and to provide concrete steps toward change, by following six celebrities and six activists in their home countries. Actress Meg Ry and Nick Kristof trail Somaly and her team in their work. The project will touch millions worldwide.

## Somaly Mam addresses issues of :

- sex slavery, from a survivor’s perspective
- her strategy to eradicate modern-day slavery
- the meaning of female empowerment
- the role of governments, corporations, activists and individuals in the fight
- Somaly is tri-lingual in English, French, Khmer



## Contact Information:

info@somaly.org  
1.347.SOMALY5 (347.766.2595)  
P.O. Box 4569 New York, NY 10163