

I lay my head down on the cold, hard mud floor of my home. I live with my grandfather and one of my sisters and her family. My name is Jyoti a fourteen year old from Makwanpur, Nepal. I am a teenager just like you, but life here is hard. While you may complain having to wake up from your warm cozy bed every morning to go to school, I sleep on a cold mud floor and when the sun rises it means another long hot day in the fields.

I used to get up and go to school every day. I would give anything to have that life back again. I dropped out of school to become a domestic worker. My family was in need of money, so I had to contribute. I hoped to someday return to school. The people I went to work for said they would allow me to attend school, but that was not the case. They were so hateful and mean. When I was not doing chores they locked me in a closet in the dark. I was to be seen, but not heard. I was given one meal a day, which consisted of the leftovers from supper. If there were not any I did not eat that day.

One day the family left and forgot to lock me in my closet cell. I took my chance and ran. I ran like a pack of wolves were chasing me down the long winding dirt road. It took me a day and a half to reach my sister's house in Makwanpur, Nepal. While I may sleep on a cold muddy floor now and work the fields it is so much better than living in a mansion with hate any day. There are others like me, but unable to escape the abuse they face behind what looks to be a beautiful home. There needs to be stricter rules to make sure children are not treated like slaves and abused or neglected. I know it is bad out there, but I am still looking for domestic work. Then I can get out of the fields and make so much more money for my family. I am hoping to earn \$9.50 a month. It may seem so little to those that have so much, but here it means food and shelter.

We work in the fields all day long and go home to rest up for another day of hard work. The fire is the only thing that keeps us from freezing at night. We sat there just soaking up the warmth. The rest

of that night I lay there wishing I will someday be able to have a real home with a bed. I fall asleep on the mud floor blessed I have my family.

So, please take time to think about how wonderful your life is this Christmas. When you get cold and turn up the heat there are others shivering. When you're hungry and just open the refrigerator, there are others hoping another meal comes.