

Kajal's story



You can see and hear Kajal at work on the Child Labour DVD
What rights are denied Kajal?

Hello, my name is Kajal. I am nine years old and I live in a city in northwest India. We have no running water or sewerage in our community.

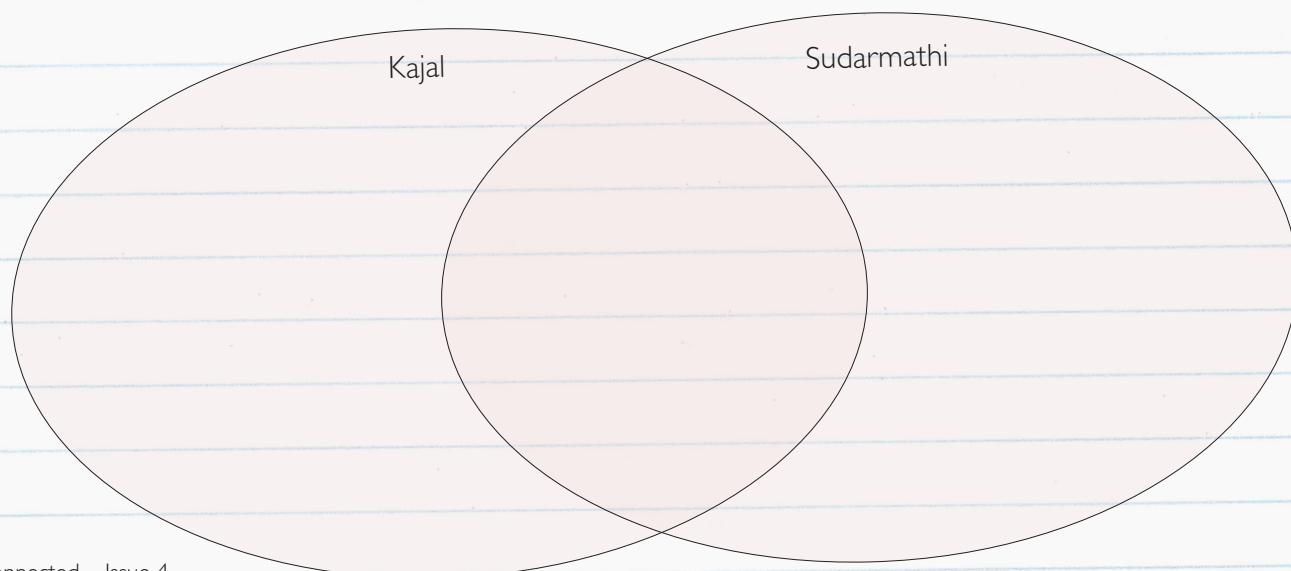
I would love to go to school, but I cannot. When my mother died of tuberculosis a few years ago, I had to leave school and take care of my younger brother and sister. My dad said that if I continue at school, then who will do the household work? So he removed me from school.

Every day I collect rubbish on the city streets to sort through for things I can sell, like glass, plastic and metal. I leave home at 5am after drinking a cup of tea for breakfast. I walk the streets, pick up rubbish and place it in a sack on my shoulder. I often have to compete with the pigs, dogs, cows and monkeys who scavenge for food in the rubbish heaps. Sometimes I cut my hands and they get infected or I get blisters on my fingers.

When I get home, I must cook, wash and collect firewood with my sister. When my chores are done, I sort through the rubbish and prepare what I can for the men who sell the rubbish to recycling companies. I earn about 5-6 rupees (20 cents) a day, which is just enough to buy food for the family.

For You To Do!

Read the information about Kajal and Sudarmathi and use the venn diagram below to show the similarities and differences in their lives:



Sudarmathi's story

Five years ago, I would get up at 4am to collect the day's water from the water tank, then help my mother prepare breakfast. At 6am I went to work until 10pm. With one hour for lunch and Sunday morning off, my life was work, work, work.

I would sit cross-legged on the floor closing the ends of beedis (cigarettes) that someone else had rolled. Doing the same thing for long hours, my fingers hurt, my legs got cramp and my back ached. If the daily target of 2,000 beedis was not reached, the boss would yell at me or beat me with a stick.

I was bonded to a moneylender because my father needed medical treatment. We owed 1,500 rupees (\$38) and I earned 10 rupees (25 cents) per day. The interest he charged made it impossible that the debt would ever be repaid.

Today I'm 14 years old and I'm hoping to become a doctor. After missing school for a couple of years, my mother joined a Self Help Group (SHG) supported by World Vision that helped to pay our family debt. The SHG provided a very low interest loan to help pay off the moneylender. Then I attended their transit school and this helped me to catch up on lost education. During my stay in the transit school I was provided with food, notebooks, clothing, and a uniform.

Now I am going to my local school and I just work at a shoe factory during the summer holidays. I cut leather into pieces to make shoes and earn 150 rupees (\$3) for 15 days of work. It isn't enough to buy a pair of shoes - they cost 500 rupees (\$12) - but it is enough to buy my school uniform and help the family. Life is definitely much better now.



Sudarmathi at school

DID YOU KNOW?

Around the world, 72 million people are missing out on school.