

Child labour

Background on Pinky and her family

SOS Children's Villages supports Pinky and her children

Pinky lost her husband in 2001 and was left alone to care for her three children aged 15, 13 and 11. Her educational qualification was only up to year 5, which made getting a job really tough.

'We were leading a happy family life. My husband Nandan had a good job in administration, and I stayed at home to look after the children and the household. One day Nandan complained of chest pain, and even before we could go to the doctor he collapsed', Pinky recalls. 'Life was full of ups and downs after Nandan's death', she continues to say. The young mother was clueless about how to feed her children and provide for their schooling.

For a few months Pinky's parents supported her, but soon their savings ran out. She started working as a domestic help to sustain her family. 'I was doing washing and cleaning in two houses and this earned me Rupees 1,000 (£50) each month. With this money I could meet the basic requirements of food and shelter', says Pinky. But as a result of Pinky working two jobs, she was never there to look after her children. This meant they started dropping out of school.

'During the day I was away at work and the kids were at home. Soon my son, who is 15, started roaming out with street children. I was noticing changes in his behaviour, even my daughters were reporting that his circle of friends wasn't good,' said Pinky. This was a major tension for the mother. Pinky knew that the only way to mend his ways was to send him to school but she didn't know how to turn this into reality. One day, Pinky's son told Pinky that he had been given a job at a textile factory, sewing sequins on to clothes. Pinky was sad about this, but also relieved, as it at least meant that he would be off the streets. Without Pinky realizing, her two daughters took up work at the same factory.

'The first thing I knew about it was when my son one day came home with 200 rupees. I realized he couldn't have earned all that money himself, and started quizzing my daughters. They denied it. Then one day my youngest daughter, who is 11, came home crying with her hands bleeding. She finally confided in me, saying that she had only meant to help me, and that the factory owner had beat her with a stick for dropping some sequins. I knew this had to stop.'

Pinky was lucky, and came in to contact with an SOS worker on a routine survey of the area. The SOS co-worker arranged for Pinky to receive an interest free loan from SOS Children's Village in Bawana, which she used to buy a sewing machine. Her children have now stopped working, and she walks them to school every day before working from home on her sewing machine. She is now able to earn 4,500 rupees (£100) per month. The SOS worker has also helped her to get a widow pension from the state government, which she didn't know she was entitled to. Pinky is now able to provide for her children, and put some money aside for them to go to university one day.