

Supporting Survivors to Reintegration

Overcoming a dark phase of life through counselling support

Sixteen year old Mohini was referred to Vihaan by a partner organisation for tele-counselling in May 2021. When the sessions began, Mohini was quiet, traumatised and devastated by a certain incident which she refused to share about. An interaction with Mohini's mother, helped the counsellor understand the struggles she was going through. The incident was related to her school which came to light during the lockdown when Mohini stopped attending school. Mohini suddenly became very restless, irritable and began shivering uncontrollably. Her parents immediately took her to the doctor who diagnosed it as withdrawal symptoms. It was revealed that Mohini was injecting drugs and weed. One of the teachers had pushed Mohini into addiction and then exploited her sexually repeatedly and blackmailed her into silence.

The background information helped the counsellor focus on rapport building and gain Mohini's trust. When the counsellor started with the therapy sessions, she was still grappling with her fears and the belief that her future held nothing but darkness. The extreme stress and trauma of being cheated throughout had understandably left her in a state of complete despair. She was frightened to study or concentrate on any activity. Due to anxiety, her biological functioning was disturbed which led to insomnia, loss of appetite and low energy. She used to be on her bed most of the days and just interacted with her mother and younger sister.

Mohini was hanging by a thread when the counsellor began the sessions, a thread of hope in limited possibilities for her life. Today, she is a changed person. The fact that she recognizes her ability to trust has been restored has opened a whole world of possibilities for her. She is blooming and interacting and has started studying online. For her parents, this is the best improvement they had witnessed since lockdown.

A fighter knows her fight

Swathi, a teenager was living happily with her grandparents and sisters, after the death of her parents, in a small village in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka. One day, her grandparents while returning from the temple, was approached by a middle-aged couple with a wedding proposal for Swathi. Since her grandparents were growing old, they felt it would be good to see their grandchild settling down in marriage and accepted the proposal. Swathi too agreed to the wedding. Unfortunately, she had just completed her ninth standard and was only sixteen years old.

However, soon after her marriage, her hopes to a blissful life were shattered as her husband started abusing and torturing her for trivial reasons. Unable to bear the violence, she decided to end her marriage and return to her grandparents. To find some solace, while at home, Swathi subscribed on Facebook and began connecting with people. One day, she received a friend request from a lady named Sahana and began chatting with her. Swathi spoke about her life, her failed marriage and threats from her husband. Sahana in return offered her sympathy and a job in Bangalore. So,

Swathi left home with new dreams but instead of Bangalore, landed in a brothel in Delhi and was forced into prostitution.

She was rescued after a few days, on 18th March, 2021, by Vihaan and the local police during an operation along with 13 other girls and placed in a safe shelter. A fighter, Swathi, spoke at length with the social workers about her ordeal and was full of gratitude to the entire team for rescuing her. Soon, our team in the North collaborated with the South team for organising a home visit in Chikkamangaluru and completion of Swathi's social investigation report (SIR). After submission of the report to the Child Welfare Committee, she was transferred from New Delhi to a child care institution in Chikkamagaluru.

Once in Chikkamagaluru, Swathi decided to complete her tenth standard through National Institute of Open Schooling. She studied diligently and passed the examination. She is currently pursuing the admission process for a three-year fashion designing course at the Bengaluru Women's Polytechnic College.

Simultaneously, Vihaan has been following her legal case in New Delhi. She was supported by the team to acquire her identification documents, open a bank account and file for victim compensation under the New Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme. Recently, she has awarded INR 6,00,000 as compensation by the Court.

*All names have been changed to protect identity of the survivor