



ACTIVITIES REPORT | 2016

Dil Se

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ART ACTIVITY AT TEJUS HOME



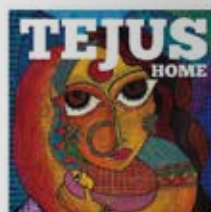
TEJUS HOME

Four years have now passed since Tejus Home first opened its doors. In that time, we have faced a great diversity of situations and issues, but this has only served to strengthen our skills and confidence in our ability to deal whatever life has thrown at the pregnant children we care for. Tejus Home has welcomed 26 girls since 2012, seven of whom were with us in 2016.

All the girls arrive at the Home via the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), but that means that they could come from any of the State's districts and be of one of many religions. The girls are united by the fact that they are nearly all from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Despite their young age, nearly all the girls carried their babies to term, and the deliveries mostly took place without medication, which is far from true with most of the births in India. Tejus Home's statistics were:

Natural birth: 75% (only 10% required medication)
 Caesarean: 20%
 Abortion: 5%



AN ADOPTION PROCEDURE OR A RETURN TO THE FAMILY

Because most of the child mothers will not have the support of their families after the birth, they choose to give up their new-born babies for adoption. Within 24 hours of their birth, the babies are taken in by a local specialised adoption agency. This time frame can vary depending on the medical difficulties experienced by the baby during hospitalised births.

THE BEST FUTURE FOR THE GIRLS

Today, half of the girls live in state boarding schools where they can safely continue their studies. Some of the girls decided to keep their babies, with the full knowledge and support of their families. Several of them had had consenting sexual relationships which, despite their young age, had reinforced the link between mother and child





GAYATHRI AND TEJUS

Gayathri and her son lived at Tejus Home for three years. Gayathri had a very tough childhood, and her pregnancy was the result of horrible abuse that perturbed her deeply. Becoming a mother at 14 years old after such an experience brings untold challenges.

In February 2016, Gayathri turned 18 and left Tejus Home to start an apprenticeship as a cook that should have helped her to begin her adult life. The solution found for her son, Tejus, was to place him temporarily in a children's home until his mother had the financial means to take care of him permanently. Sadly, Gayathri very quickly dropped out of her apprenticeship and gave up on all the aid and support that we had tried to provide her with. It has now been over six months since we heard any news from her and we have no idea where Gayathri might be. She has not been to see Tejus during that time. He is now in a founding home, and Dil Se is keeping in touch with him.

A STORY FROM 2016...

Among the very young girls who have been abused and who have then given birth with us at Birth for Change, one was passionate about the henna designs that women put on their hands at times of celebration. Let's call her Jala.

Some weeks after she had given birth, we invited Jala to Birthvillage to draw henna patterns on the bellies of expectant mothers. It was a beautiful experience for her, the mothers and for us too!

Jala had arrived at Tejus Home, aged barely 15 years old, seven months after being raped; she was terribly frightened and shy, even hiding behind the curtains when we came to visit. To cap it all, she was very sad because her step-father had suddenly died, a man who in her heart she regarded as her true dad.

After many heart-to-heart conversations with Jala, she slowly began to open up. She was able to confide in us how much she had suffered from the rejection of her own community when the abuse had been reported. Jala was given a lot of prenatal counselling, constant encouragement to eat healthily and advice adapted to her age on the subject of labour and giving birth which helped her to regain some self-confidence in her ability to face this momentous event. This young girl of barely 49 kg courageously gave birth naturally to a little boy of 3.5 kg.

When we invited Jala to come and draw henna designs on the bellies of expectant mothers at Birthvillage she literally jumped for joy. Just like any other adolescent girl on a big day, she changed clothes three times, asking the other girls staying at Tejus Home whether she looked pretty and presentable enough.

During the henna drawing, the adult mothers-to-be naturally asked Jala questions about herself, and she calmly described her personal experiences of childbirth. Some while later, at a postnatal check-up, one of those mothers told us that after listening to Jala's story, all her fears about giving birth had disappeared.

By Birth for Change

In May, Birth for Change took over full responsibility for the day-to-day running of Tejus Home. Despite relentless searching, we were unable to find a house available close to Birthvillage. With Tejus Home's rental agreement about to run out, we urgently had to find another building... which we did, 50 m down the road!





THE CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE

The Child Advocacy Centre's official opening took place on 16 March 2016. Before starting any field activities, the team spent a lot of time designing and printing flyers, brochures, business cards and stickers for our public awareness raising campaign, as well as preparing the different oral and PowerPoint presentations that we would be giving to different types of institutions. Naturally, all these documents had to be readied in English and Malayalam. In the State of Kerala, there was hardly any docu-

mentation to be found in Malayalam on the prevention of child sexual abuse

Before any interventions could be carried out in school environments, many meetings took place in order to ensure that we had all the official authorisations from diverse branches of government. Of course, this is an ongoing task. By the end of 2016, at the invitation of certain police stations, schools and parent associations, 584 adults had participated in one of our child sexual abuse prevention workshops.



CONTENTS OF OUR PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Basic child sexual abuse prevention presentations include: a definition of child sexual abuse; information on the types of worrying behaviours that might be observed in abused children; a description of Indian law, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO); how to empower children with the ability to protect themselves (knowledge of their own bodies and notions of personal bodily privacy and emotions); how adults can approach this subject without shame and ask for help from professionals when necessary.

This initial presentation can be followed up

with a more intensive, detailed workshop which can be directed towards a specific audience: for the police, this could mean training on how to listen to children and understand the intricacies of the law; for teachers, this could mean disentangling them from years of the social conditioning which is so strong in India, sharpening their awareness about certain behaviours of the children in their class and teaching them how to present and use the child sexual abuse prevention workbook and subsequently work with their students on this issue.

A VOLUNTEER'S EXPERIENCE

Despite being involved with Dil Se Switzerland since the start of the association, first as a donor and then as Treasurer, April 2016 was the first opportunity I had to visit the operations in India. I spent a month in Kochi, where I had the pleasure of meeting the staff of the Child Advocacy Centre and learning from them firsthand about the work they are doing in the area of preventing and healing child sexual abuse (CSA). In a volunteer capacity I worked with Janaki (our therapist), Pretty (our social worker) and

Cristelle (our managing director), to analyse and prepare the vast amount of data that would be used to create a new website, www.dilseindia.org. The website not only showcases the work being done, but also provides useful information to promote awareness and reporting of CSA locally. While there, I was also able to attend a CSA training session and visit Tejus Home.

Many thanks to everyone for making me feel so welcome and allowing me the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile cause.





FINANCES

In 2016, Dil Se India managed to significantly increase the share of local funds coming into the organisation: 40% came from India, 50% came from Dil Se Switzerland and 10% came from other countries around the world. In 2017, we envision 75% of our funding will come from local sources!

- ✦ Distributing 82,000 brochures to raise awareness about child sexual abuse among students from third to fifth standards in west Kochi
- ✦ Fundraising to finance the making of a short, animated film on the subject of child sexual abuse in India and destined for screening in the country's cinemas
- ✦ Launching a child sexual abuse prevention programme in Tamil Nadu

OBJECTIVES FOR 2017

- ✦ Expanding our existing public awareness raising campaigns and developing our contacts with the relevant professionals in schools, police authorities, the judiciary, etc.
- ✦ Improving our team's public presentation skills

SWITZERLAND

As planned, Dil Se Switzerland is winding down its activities to a minimum in order to encourage Dil Se India to fly solo and be self-funding by the end of 2018.

DIL SE

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LOCAL DONATIONS

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