

Stoppage of Child Marriage

A Case History (September 2, 2017)

Our Managing Trustee, Mr. Shiva Subramaniam, narrates the case history of how SIVA Trust has been lobbying for protecting child rights and an incident on how the staff of SIVA Trust were able to prevent child marriages in one of the villages that they are working in.

Meeting the Collector and District Officials

On August 29, 2017, I and Mr. Selwyn (Treasurer, SIVA Trust) attended a meeting on child protection convened by the Tirunelveli DCPO in the Collectorate. The new District Collector, Mr. Sandeep Nanduri IAS, the DCPO, NCLP, Social Welfare Dept., police, Labour dept., Education dept., Social Defence, JJ Board, Judiciary, NGOs and those who manage children's homes represented the meeting.

Discussion on Child Marriage

The new Collector showed lot of interest and discussed with all about elimination of child labour and child marriage in the district. I appreciated the Collector for the unique efforts taken by him, by distributing postcards with the address of Collector printed on it, to all the girl students in various high schools and higher secondary schools in the district, who could report to him about any abuse or child marriage in their village. He also wanted the concerned officers to take strong action against those who arrange child marriages. The discussions hovered around the reasons for such marriages in the area and he asked the District Social Welfare Officer to conduct a study on the subject. I also explained some reasons for child marriage in our working area including family customs, migration of parents seeking work to other districts and States, insecure condition of the girl children, promiscuous conditions among the youngsters etc. I also offered to assist the SW dept. in the proposed survey.

Staff Orientation on Preventing Child Marriages

After the Collectorate meeting was over, we came to our office and briefed the staff once again on preventing child marriage in the area, as marriage season is on now. As a result of that briefing the staff members also became pro-active. Later in the evening, after completing a cultural programme organised by the tuition centre at Meenthulli, I met Mr. P.R. Rajendran, Dy.S.P., Sankarankovil and explained to him about our work and introduced our staff. He also assured to offer all cooperation to our work.

Stopping a Child Marriage on September 2

Today, our staff came to know of a proposed child marriage case in Vellappaneri village, on way to Kalugumalai, to be solemnised on Sept.3. They immediately rushed to the place, located the house of the girl P. Pavithra and counselled the parents. Meanwhile, other agencies also got scent of the news and the Ayyapuram Police station got a written complaint from the girl's step brother P. Kannan (who is working in Kerala) that her step-sister Pavithra was forced by her mother Ramalakshmi to marry K. Marimuthu Pandian of Usilankulam and that should be stopped.

The Station received the petition under No.127/2017, called both the parties and got statements from both the groups to stop the marriage, allow the child to study further and give her in marriage only after she attains 18 years of age. Her date of birth is 2-7-2002 as per school records and so she has completed only 15 years 2 months. She is studying 10th Std. in Govt. High School, Vellappaneri and she is interested in continuing her studies and not to get married. The police officials gave us copies of all the documents and requested our staff to counsel the girl as well as the parents, which they did there itself. 9 documents pertaining to the case and 2 photos of the counselling done are forwarded separately.