

Parami and Malani

In early 2002 Parami (28 years), and Malani (17 years) from Colombo, visited the WSG drop-in centre for advice and assistance as they were in a desperate situation.

Parami and Malani started a relationship five months before the visit, when Parami worked at a beauty salon, and Malani attended school in Colombo. Malani, at that time lived with an older sibling and her mother. Her home environment was highly stressful. Her mother had had suspicions of her relationship with Parami, and had put pressure on her to continue a former relationship with a 40-year-old married man. Malani says that she had refused to do so, and left home unable to bear any further emotional or physical abuse.

Parami is the youngest of a family of four. Despite a relatively secure family situation, she left her home to be with Malani. They had a little money, and were initially able to make some temporary arrangements to lodge with a friend. Malani's mother had reported her to the police as missing from home, suspecting that she had left home to be with Parami. When Parami and Malani learned that Malani's mother had contacted the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) for help to find them, they approached the WSG for assistance. They were also temporarily homeless at this time.

At an emergency meeting of the WSG, a lawyer was contacted (attached to another NGO) to discuss Malani's legal status as a 17-year-old (being a minor under Sri Lankan law), and what immediate measures were needed to be taken about the police entry made against Parami by Malani's mother. We were advised to persuade Malani to record a statement with the police in the company of a lawyer, following her 18th birthday which was to be in two weeks, to the effect that she had left home of her own free will due to a stressful environment.

The WSG also found secure lodgings for Parami and Malani, and settled their living expenses until it was safer for them to go about in public and seek employment. Despite these temporary measures, the situation turned sour when the police were sent to Parami's workplace and she was arrested. The police then arrested Malani as well. The WSG, with assistance from lawyers at INFORM, aided Parami and Malani and had them released from custody on the promise that they would both live with Malani's mother under her guidance.

This, however, did not work out. By March 2003 they were living separately and Malani's mother met their landlord and divulged information about their relationship to him. They were then asked by the landlord to leave this place. The couple visited the WSG requesting us to find housing and a job for Malani. However, the WSG advised them that although they could assist in finding employment for Malani, they could not assist in finding housing. Subsequently, Malani found employment for herself in a private company. Parami continued living with her family. They have now ended their relationship.