

Ruwanthi & Anisha

The WSG was approached by a member on behalf of Ruwanthi and Anisha for help in mid-2008. They were both 21 years old and lived in areas close to Colombo. Ruwanthi's family (including extended family) knew that she is a lesbian and she is not allowed to bring home girls who look 'feminine'. Her extended family took care of her because her mother works in West Asia. She had been previously employed by V, a tennis coach. Anisha lived with her sister, brother in law and grand mother and is of mixed parentage (Sinhalese and Tamil). Anisha has had an extremely protective upbringing and has never been employed while she was with her family. Her mother is also employed abroad.

Ruwanthi and Anisha met a little over a year before they came to the WSG when they both attended a course at the Foreign Employment Bureau. They stayed in touch via the phone as meeting was difficult due to the protective nature of Anisha's family. However, Anisha's sister became suspicious of the phone calls. After being confronted by her sister about this Anisha took her clothes and left home. Ruwanthi took her to her own house, but her extended family refused to let Anisha stay. They both left Ruwanthi's house and stayed with a friend of Ruwanthi's, V, who also employed Ruwanthi.

Over the following year they stayed with several friends and other boarding places. Anisha started work in a garment factory but quit after a few weeks. They also visited Anisha's family once but they didn't seem inclined to keep her. A few weeks before they came to the WSG, Ruwanthi's mother came back to the country and demanded that Ruwanthi come back to stay with her. They found a boarding place – a room – for Anisha to stay for a month. However, Anisha didn't feel secure and Ruwanthi took her back to her mother's house at this point. After a fight between the couple and Ruwanthi's family, Ruwanthi and her mother took Anisha back to her family. Anisha stayed at home a few days, but left home again.

By this time, Ruwanthi was also unemployed and they didn't have a place to stay. Their friends found it difficult to give them shelter. They were going through severe financial difficulties, and a friend brought them to the WSG.

The WSG gave them financial and emotional support. They initially found the couple a place to stay. A WSG member also found employment for Anisha at a residential garment factory in a suburb of Colombo. Ruwanthi went back to her family. She now resides abroad with her mother.