



Project for starting a home for pregnant, unmarried teenagers and teenage mothers in Ernakulam District

The NGO, “DIL SE”, wishes to start a home for pregnant, unmarried teenagers and teenage mothers, in partnership with “Birth for Change”. DIL SE has the knowledge and the capacity to help build new lives for up to six pregnant, unmarried teenagers and their babies by providing shelter, food, clothes, education, life-skills, counseling, career training and support. Birth for Change has the knowledge and the capacity to provide all the pre-natal and post-natal support these girls need. Also, there is currently no other specialized home for pregnant, unmarried teenagers or teenage mothers in Ernakulam, but only either homes for children or homes for women.

DIL SE will be legally responsible for this project, but both parties will take responsibility for raising funds, for finding people to volunteer time and knowledge, and most importantly, for the children’s well-being.

There will be three paid staff: one live-in, full-time housemother, one in-house social worker and one project coordinator. There will also be people from both parties who will take active participation in this project on a voluntary basis.

The home will be situated in Chirrakal, only 1 ½ km from the Thoppumpady Bridge in a house containing 3 bedrooms with attached bathrooms, living-room, dining-room, office, kitchen, work area and 2 roof terraces which will be made into vegetable gardens. The house is in a peaceful, residential area.

The provisional monthly budget is INR 47,530 and the estimated set-up costs come to INR 1,25,000.

Brief Description of DIL SE

DIL SE is a non-profit organization based in Kochi, Kerala, India. It was originally founded as an association in Switzerland in 2000 by two Swiss ladies, Marina Racine and Cristelle Hart. It worked under and alongside various Indian NGOs, giving financial, material and moral support to people at the grassroots level. An Indian Trust was founded in 2009 by Cristelle and her husband Ravinder Pal Singh to address a variety of social and economic problems faced by children in India. DIL SE’s programmes aim to give homes and education to poor children regardless of caste, religion or race.

Location

Kochi - Kerala, and Madurai - Tamil Nadu, India

Registration

DIL SE is registered as a Public Charitable Trust: registration no. 28/2009 under the Indian Trust Act Societies Act.

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DIL SE Current Activities

The activities of DIL SE Switzerland have been diverse and continue to help various projects globally. DIL SE in India works mainly with children and gives them the right to education and a loving, caring environment to grow up in. We consciously keep the number of children in our homes low, preferring quality rather than quantity. Through our financial and active aid, we guarantee material, food and educational needs so that the children may live a healthy childhood and thus have the same chances as anybody else in life.

1. Foster home for boys

In Manassery, DIL SE has a foster home (Certificate of Recognition no. 1816 valid from 01/06/2011) where currently 6 boys, aged between 10 and 17yrs, live. The home is being managed by two Catholic Sisters and the children are cared for by a couple who is responsible as much for the individual follow- up of each child regarding school, social backgrounds, etc, as in all the homely activities: cooking, cleaning, washing and repairing clothes, and taking care of the children's hygiene. DIL SE owns the house, which provides stability and long term commitment to the children.

- The eldest boy in the home, Sangeeth, came to us through Childline in 2001 and he is now studying at The Delta Study, Fort Kochi, in 9th standard.

- Kaji came to Kochi, from Mumbai, in 2001 when he was about 17 years old. He is originally from Assam and has never been to school. DIL SE helped him train as a gardener; he secured jobs at Le Meridien and the Ramada Hotel. He is currently working in a nice hotel in Fort Kochi and has been married to a local girl, Rani, for the last 4 years.

2. AFIN (Aid to Families In Need)

A network to help families started in 2002, which promotes the reintegration of some children into their families or the possibility of training for some parents or just a one-off help in a crisis. The families we have helped since the programme's beginning were mainly in need of financial aid to pay for education, medical needs or food. We helped in particular 120 families from Chellanam after the Tsunami giving food supplies, school bags and various other materials where needed. We even equipped some villagers with fishing boats and nets, and installed rainwater harvesting systems in Anthakaranazhi with the help of a Round Table club.

- Today, we are paying the school fees for Athira Suresh, who was in our care for a few years from the age of 3. She returned to her mother, Prasanna, when her situation had stabilized but they are still in quite a precarious situation. Athira is a good student in Jyothi Nivas Public School and has a bright future.

3. Orphanage for HIV affected children

Following our extended help from 2005-2008 towards HIV affected village women around Madurai, Tamil Nadu, we decided to build an orphanage for the children, victims of Aids. A very enthusiastic couple, themselves HIV+, became the substitute parents and there are currently 14 children living there. This project is being funded from DIL SE in Switzerland, through the NGO Friends of India, Chennai, but is being run under the wing of DIL SE's Indian Trust.

DIL SE Future Activities

Project Tejus Home

Unmarried pregnant teenagers

In Indian society today, hardly any unmarried teenage girls become pregnant due to consensual sexual intercourse. Most of the teenage pregnancies are due to rape and/or incest.

Making choices

The first thing to work on with these girls will be to help them make choices depending on what stage of pregnancy they are in. They may start off by not understanding and not accepting their situation. They are angry and ashamed. Their families may have shunned them when they learnt of the girls' situation, most often because of what others will think. These are the choices we can discuss with them:

- Abortion within the legally stipulated time, in a clean hospital environment
- Adoption
- Giving the child into foster care until the mother is an adult
- Keeping and raising the baby themselves

Counseling

Counseling and psychiatric assessments will be given by Dr. Janaki (member of the Child Welfare Committee) for the future young mothers who are nearly always rejected by family and society.

Formal education

The teen will be encouraged to continue her studies throughout her pregnancy. We will have tuition teachers coming to the home to concentrate on giving basic education in Malayalam, English, maths and general knowledge to the girls. For those who are capable and who wish to pass 10th standard or higher studies, we will focus all spare time on that.

Life-skills

Aside from formal education, we will be teaching a range of life-skills to the girls: teaching them a multitude of everyday things that are needed to live in today's society and that we, who are fortunate enough to come from caring families, take for granted. The subjects will range from self-confidence and self-esteem to money and household management, from

riding a bicycle to orientation, from baking to gardening, etc.

Career training

Through this type of interaction, we will find out where the girl's interests and capabilities lie, and we can then think of various career opportunities and training.

Our main aim is that we should give these girls the reins to their own independence; that they should stand up proudly and know who they are, and be stronger for what they have been through.

Pre-natal and post-natal care

While DIL SE takes care of the education of the girls, Birth for Change will be responsible for the pre-natal education and support for a healthy, safe pregnancy and delivery for mother and baby

Birth for Change

Birth Village, Vytilla, provides world class care to women using the Midwifery Model of Care, a format of maternal care that has been proven to reduce the incidence of birth injury, trauma and cesarean section. It is also a leading centre for Lamaze pre-natal and post-natal childbirth education in the country today. In their desire to make this model of care more widely available to all sectors of the population, including child mothers, Birth for Change was formed.

Birth for Change is committed to expanding maternal health services and options to all women, including disadvantaged women and families. Their inaugural project in partnership with DIL SE is "Tejus Home". Using their expertise in childbirth and parenting preparation they have designed a special curriculum and preparation activities for unmarried child mothers. Together, our goal is to lower the trauma and confusion the girls feel, and increase their capacity to nurture and care for the expectant child. Birth for Change uses the best possible practices according to scientific and cultural standards.

Birth for Change will provide material and fund raising support for Tejus Home and in-kind support in the form of one-on-one educational support for the girls throughout the antenatal period. This includes pre-natal and post-natal yoga classes, breast-feeding groups and medical care as appropriate using our extensive network of community resources to insure the best

possible outcome.

Newborns to toddlers

Imagining that the youngest mother could be 13 yrs of age and that we will keep them in our home until they reach 18yrs, one main part of our work will consist in the care for children of 0-5 years.

The midwives from Birth Village, Vytilla will be our main source of help for the health and care of the newborns. We also have a pediatrician from Tripunithura who has offered free consultations for all our children. Basic child care for the little ones will be given by the mothers themselves, who will have received advice and counseling on how to do this best (we believe the natural instinct is there even in teenage mothers). We also have an in house social worker and expect the precious help of volunteer mothers to help mentor our girls in the basic post-natal education of feeding, diaper-changing, bathing, health and hygiene, sleeping habits, bonding, infant parenting, etc.

Depending on the number of toddlers we have at any one time, we would either keep them at home until LKG or else send them to a local play school.