

Successful story of a 16 years old girl in Elimination of Gender Based Violence shelter, Yangon, Myanmar

Mu Mu (not real name) is the elder daughter of the two siblings and her family is extremely poor. Her mother divorced her father and married another man. She has a son from this second marriage. They live in a remote area where there is a lot of criminal activity. She quit school after grade 6 and looked after her step brother whom she loves so much. Her mother earns income by washing clothes from house to house to provide for the family while her step father is working odd jobs.



One evening, her mother sent her to her aunt's house to do an errand. On her returning home, she was snatched by a drunken man (who is married with children) in a dark place and raped. She tried to defend herself but was not successful as he was stronger than she was. She rushed home and told her parents everything that happened to her in tears. As soon as her step father, who has been sick for many months, heard this inhuman act, he had a stroke. Her mother got very angry. The very next morning, her mother went to ask help from the women's association in their township. The person in charge took her to Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) that works for women and girls' rights. A police report was made, the criminal was arrested, and is now in prison. As the case is ongoing, the girl is in danger because the man's relatives are quite rude and want to harm her. The association requested assistance from Good Shepherd Myanmar Foundation (GSMF) for her safety.

The young woman found her initial stay in GSMF quite challenging. She had nightmares related to her traumatic experiences and was depressed. She was crying most of the time, she couldn't express her feelings and wanted to be alone. Through the individual and group counseling, and therapeutic approach given to her at the shelter, she began to open up, shared her traumatic experiences and was able to name her feelings. Ms. Grace, an art therapist from Singapore also could help her to be healed bit by bit and later Ms. Imogen North, a professional Yoga teacher came once a week and supported her to regain her healthy body and mind. Tremendously, she gradually recovered, became happier and was able to help other women in the shelter. She came to realize that although she had experienced this tragedy, she still is a valuable person with dignity and has the ability to make choices for the future. Her mother and step father are happy to see her recovery process. She is now encouraging and helping other women, especially those who have small babies.

Also, she learned basic computer and sewing skills. She said that she wanted to express her gratitude towards GSMF by contributing her potential as much as she can. She is still in need of a safe and sound environment until her case in the court is over. As she is very much interesting in cooking, we enabled her to take a course on bakery and Chinese food. Her counselor recommended that it could be another help for her in the healing process. She is now living happily in our shelter. She now has enough self-confidence and is ready to move on toward her bright future.

In November 2019, after 2 years and 2 months of her case, the justice she has been longing for daily truly happened; the perpetrator was sentenced for 20 years. Her family, she herself and we received this news as "JUSTICE" for the women and girls experiencing gender based violence.