

MY EXPERIENCE DURING MY PROJECT OF LEARNING IN FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER (LIFT) : Sufeera Jan, LIFT Fellow, 2022

I was merely one year old kid when my father left this world. Being the youngest among five siblings, I was admitted in a CCI. The CCI supported not just my education but also other necessities were fulfilled. I was there until I cleared my 12th class examination. After that I moved out of the CCI and got selected for a nursing course in one of the government paramedical colleges of Srinagar. Since my college was far from my hometown and was not possible for me to travel to the college every day. So I was allowed to stay in the aftercare of my CCI.

It was only after leaving the CCI I realized that even after getting the best in the CCI, there was a lot missing in my basics. The art of mixing up with people, the formation of bond with my family and also other people, the shy nature and above all the trust issues that I think are still there. It was only then I realized that what I faced shouldn't be faced by the upcoming generation of care leavers. The yearning of giving back to my community although was there from the beginning but at this stage it took a jump. So I felt that there is undoubtedly a need to make the children in the CCI learn the basics of the life, making the outside world more exposed to them and strengthening them so that they can become strong and independent individuals after they leave the care.

This couldn't have been successful if Udayan care had not given me the opportunity of being a fellow for their fellowship. It is because of this fellowship I could make an initiation.

Under this fellowship I chose documentary shooting on the transition of care leavers in J&K as my project. So that I can make this issue a little more visible to the administration. But there is a saying that to say is easier than to actually put that in action.

I reached out to many CCIs of the UT to gather the data of some care leavers. But unfortunately not much data was available with them. Also I was denied permission to CCIs. With the help of my mentor and also other people I managed to collect the data of some of the care leavers, reached out to them and tried to convince them to be a part of this documentary and it wasn't easy at all. It took me months to convince them, gain their trust and finally make them ready for this documentary. Some of them were not very comfortable to share their experience while others were shy to face the camera.

I tried being very friendly with them, met some of them in person and I got to know that almost every care leaver's situation is the same. Depression and dissatisfaction is very common. The concept of after care is nowhere. My documentary and now the care leavers network are little steps that will help me take this cause forward

I was very disheartened after seeing the situation of the care leavers closely. Although I could feel their pain but couldn't gather words to comfort them. I realized that there is much that is needed to be done. I want care leavers in the UT should be granted all the help and benefits that they deserve but unfortunately are deprived of. I remain a care leaver champion for all my life.