

I Will Survive

Meenakshi is the eldest daughter in a family of seven. She is 22 years old and has completed her seventh grade education. Her maturity, sensibility and clarity far exceed that which one would assign her age, but, for Meenakshi, life forced her to grow up early.

Meenakshi's father never contributed to the family earnings, instead spending his meager income as a driver to feed his alcohol addiction. Her mother and her younger sister work in a Badam (Almond Oil) factory which provides them with a meager monthly income of about \$33 (INR 1500). Meenakshi's parents' quarreling turned the home environment into one exceedingly unpleasant and negative, and she has had to suffer alone the abuses of her volatile and physically abusive father far too often. On more than one occasion he has thrown Meenakshi out of the house late in the night and she has had to seek refuge at a friend's place. Sad and depressed, Meenakshi was struggling to maintain her mental balance and considered suicide.

During a community outreach meeting, a counselor from PCI came into contact with Meenakshi, who shared with the counselor the pain and the psycho-emotional distress she suffered daily, as well as the fact that she had gone hungry for two days. The counselor immediately sought ways to help Meenakshi and motivated her to start working with PCI as a Peer Educator (PE). As a Peer Educator, Meenakshi could gain useful skills, establish an identity for herself and play a critical role in her community.

After working as a Peer Educator, PCI also helped her to find a job as a Security Guard at a restaurant at Nizamuddin Station called 'Comesum', where she earns a monthly salary of \$122 (INR 5500). The job has not only helped Meenakshi economically, but she has earned the respect of her parents, and especially her father, now takes her seriously and treats her quite differently than before. Meenakshi today is a confident young woman working to complete her education through open schooling and is seeking to enroll for a computer literacy course.