

**An unique partnership model of a Local Body (Mayyanad Panchayat) and an NGO (HELP Foundation) and its fallout.**

# **Children's Home for GIRLS**

**Registered under JJ Act-2000(Care and Protection of Children), its Amendment Act-2006 and under ICPS**

**Run By Mayyanad Panchayat**

In association with

**HELP Foundation**

& also

with support from Janasakthi

We (HELP Foundation and Mayyanad Gramapanchayat) have been working very closely with for over three years to make Mayyanad Panchayat the first child friendly Panchayat in Kerala. And this is in partnership with the JJB (Juvenile Justice Board), CWC (Child Welfare Committee) and DCPO (District Child Protection Officer) of Kollam District. As an outcome of the village wide survey a short stay home for the Girl Child was setup under ICPS and it was inaugurated by none other than the Chief Minister of Kerala Shri Oommen Chandy.

As the short stay home started to function under a registered Home Governing Council (HGC), local politicians belonging to a particular dispensation took offence to such an institution functioning independently without their involvement. At this juncture a new set of elected representatives got elected to the Panchayat and a new president took charge (belonging to the same political dispensation). Under the earlier Panchayat everything was working fine.

From the very first month in office the new Panchayat President (Shri Lakshmanan) started to dismantle the home by threatening us, raiding the home and seizing registers and virtually asked us the HGC to stop involving in the affairs of the home. Since 2016 the local politicians started running the home through shoddy management and exploitation of the female staff of the home. This resulted in the Care home function being reduced to bare minimum food and shelter. All the rights of the children were violated, we are unsure if any is being upheld.

The irony is all this was facilitated though the CWC member, C.J Antony who is indeed a political nominee. The apparatus at the district level under the DCPO to was rendered ineffective due to political interests here. Such blatant acts of takeover and rights violation happened because of the Panchayat President and CWC Member unable to rise beyond petty political considerations and they still continue to work as political party functionaries. Below is the current state of affairs at the home.

- 1) None of the staff has been paid since the start of the home.
- 2) The children and their rights have been taken for a toss
- 3) The home just barely runs through the goodwill of a grocer and a vegetable vendor.
- 4) The staff of the home acts as special escorts to the local politicians.

5) The Superintendent of the home has been hounded out by the said politicians.

We have petitioned at all levels up to the Child Right Commission of Kerala with no avail. We have every reason to believe that no authority in Kerala would step in to salvage this home as the current deliberate dismantling of the home, is the handiwork of a particular political party and its local cronies.

The intent of this model was to empower the local Panchayat authorities and help them understand the Childs Rights policy and transparent implementation with the support of civil society. Since the local political apparatus is allergic to transparency, they are hell bent on disallowing the authenticated registered HGC from functioning. This is the crux of the issue and it's engineered by the District Child Welfare Committee Chairman (C.J Antony) to appease his political bosses.

The questions still remains as to how can NGOs work with Panchayats when their interest is business considerations and muscle power. Rules and Regulations are there but when they are violated by the government apparatus and the political dispensation there is little one can do. The larger question is what is holding back the Child Rights Commission of Kerala from acting on this..?

#### Various Firsts

We believe that through our work we have secured various firsts within the State of Kerala with respect To Child Rights.

1. Creation of First ICPS Committee in the State at the Panchayat level as mandated in ICPS even though the scheme was launched in 2009.
2. Unique partnership of Local Body (Mayyanad Panchayat (represented here by its President – Shiela Kumari) and NGO (HELP Foundation – by Prof Peter Pradeep)
3. Exclusive Short Stay Home for Girl Child in Kollam District.
4. Fully backed by the DCPO and CWC of Kollam thus the entire Child Protection Administration in the District.
5. Registered Home Governing Council (HGC) started to affairs of the home with Civil Society, NGO, Panchayat and Government Officials onboard.

More details about our work with respect to Child Rights can be seen at <http://helpfoundation.in/child-right.html>