

## **REPORT OF PANAH SHELTER HOME FOR THE YEAR 2004**

Panah Shelter Home has been in operation for three years now. In the first year its teething problems were overcome, while in the second infrastructure consolidation was undertaken. Now in its third year Panah increased its sphere of influence by providing legal and police help to women as well as actively liaising with NGOs and shelter homes in other provinces. Plans have been initiated to start monthly gender sensitivity workshops for the judiciary in 2005.

A total of **71 women** and **32 children** have taken refuge at Panah. The majority of the women were married and in the age group 18 to 30 years. We have also provided refuge to 9 minor girls. Most of the women were illiterate (56%) or have had only primary education (14%). They are the ones who have stayed the longest. With limited skills it has taken Panah considerable time and effort to give them financial independence and rehabilitate them in society.

About half the cases were referred by human right NGOs, and in them HRCP tops the list followed by Madadgar and then PAWLA. There has been significant increase in the cases sent by law enforcement agencies (eight were sent by the judiciary and six by the police stations).

Among the 52 married women, the vast majority (70%) were victims of domestic violence. Divorce was filed in 23 cases, while legal proceedings for maintenance or custody were started in 17 cases. Reconciliation with husbands occurred in 12 cases. Almost all the young girls were reconciled with their families.

Jobs were arranged for 12 women. Since most of the women were relatively illiterate, with no skills, during their stay here they were trained as domestic maids and jobs were subsequently arranged for them. In four cases traveling expenses were given to send them back to their families living in distant cities.

Moving away from statistics to the more human side of the picture, Panah has among other assistances, prevented the attempted forced marriage of one girl and offered parental counseling. It has saved girls from forced marriages and arranged for them alternate living arrangements. Divorce was filed for two girls who were sold, and parents apprised of the consequences of child marriage. Refuge was given to six girls who were fleeing violence by parents for wanting to enter marriage of their choice. One was married off, another was given refuge with her aunt, and the remaining four went back to the parents after family counseling. There were two cases of forced prostitution by the mother. One girl was sent to her father in Lahore and the other was counseled and given both a job and accommodation. In one case where the mother had died, and the relatives were using her for sex trade a job was arranged for her to work as a domestic maid cum companion. In many cases where the home environment was

adverse due to separation or death of parent, or general neglect, their families were counseled to care of their daughters rather than abuse or mistreat them.

The management and staff of Panah have a good relationship with police and judiciary. This greatly facilitates our work. Examples of two cases are cited here. The first case is of a thirteen year old girl who was abducted by a person living in police quarters and demanding few thousand rupees from the parents. At our request the CPLC (Citizen Police Liaison Committee) raided the place and procured the girl the same night.

In the other case a girl took refuge at PANAHA for a few days as she feared for her life after being declared a 'kari'. After several months the parents of the girl visited the couple in Karachi, and prevailed upon them to return to the village. She was promptly handed over to the landlord to carry out the punishment. The husband approached us, and a Habeas Corpus petition was filed in the High Court for recovery of the girl from the unlawful custody of the landlord. The girl was delivered to the Court the next day, and for the second time her life had been spared! In both the cases the girls were not residents of the shelter.

We had one security concern when the parents of the girl came to the court with guns but we managed to quietly whisk away the girls and the staff. At the next hearing, they again came with guns and this time deflated all four tyres of the van. Mercifully no mishap occurred.

Panah boasts of a panel of lawyers and doctors who continue to give free legal and medical aid. **Justice (Retd) Nasir Aslam Zahid** and **Judicial Magistrate Zafar Sherwani** are always available to help and guide us. **Dr. Iqbal Afridi** and **Dr. Atia Afaq Husain** also deserve special mention for willingly seeing our residents at their private clinics free of cost.

Credit also goes to the **Zainab Panjwani Hospital** which has been giving free medical treatment to all our patients. SMS has continued to supply security guards on complimentary basis, while the Eastern Federal Union Insurance and Trakker have renewed the van insurance and tracking free of cost. Nestle company has also continued supply of milk, as has Fontalia, the mineral water company.

The total cash donation received were **Rs. 767,626**, out of which Amnesty International Austria and Switzerland contributed 48%, Infaq Foundation 16% and the rest by philanthropic citizens here. The cash expenditure was **Rs. 1,350,961**. There was a shortfall of **Rs. 583,335**. It is imperative that in the coming year we aggressively pursue local fundraising.