

REPORT OF PANAH SHELTER HOME FOR THE YEAR 2005

During the year 2005 a total of **83 women** and **40 accompanying children** were given refuge at Panah. This was a 19% increase from the previous year. The ethnic background of residents was extremely diverse and comprised, Urdu speaking 32%, Punjabi 16%, Sindhi 15% and Pathan 15%. The remaining women were of Afghan, Baloch and Bengali origins.

A majority of the women were married with their age groups ranging from 18 to 30 years. Although most of the women were illiterate, there were also 10 graduates.

Domestic violence by husbands and ill treatment by in-laws accounted for some 40% of the admissions. Legal aid was provided to 50 women. Divorce was filed and granted in 37 cases, while reconciliation with the parents was achieved in 9 cases. Jobs were arranged for 10 women and long term financial support (house rent, utensils, ration, school fees etc) were provided to 3 women.

There were thirteen girls under the age of 18 who took refuge here. Out of these there were four sisters who were sent by the jail superintendent as their mother and aunt were under-trial prisoners for the murder of their father and there was no relative willing to keep them. They stayed at Panah for three months after which long term stay was arranged for them at the SOS village. The remaining nine young girls were victims of forced marriages or had been sold by their families. They were given legal support and rehabilitated. In two cases their fathers were legally tried in and sentenced to jail through a court order.

Temporary stay was also provided to two girls both 16 years of age who had been kidnapped and brought to Karachi. Both had managed to escape from the custody of their kidnapers and were kept at Panah till they were returned to their parents who were traced in Lahore and Thatta respectively.

There were two cases in which women had escaped from life threats and the fear of 'honor' killing. Both were cases of forced marriage and came from the interior of Sindh. The girls had run away from home, filed for divorce and had sought refuge at Darul Aman. From here they were subsequently sent to Panah. Their families had filed FIR under the Hudood Ordinance, and one was falsely accused of a second marriage by forging her signature on the nikahnama. These cases put a great strain on the workings at Panah as the parties would bring guns to court thereby posing a security threat to both the residents and the staff. Nevertheless, we succeeded in sending a message to the tribes that there is a world beyond the village where a woman has basic rights guaranteed to her by the Constitution of the country, and that there are institutions where she can seek help.

Panah is also trying to arrange asylum in a foreign country for a woman from Peshawar who has married a person of her choice. This so enraged her father that after killing her husband and brother-in-law, he is determined to kill her and her infant son. She had taken refuge at a shelter in Peshawar, but when he started threatening the staff there she was sent to us. He is still searching for her in Karachi while she stays at Panah whiling away her time learning computer and English.

Some women needed long term rehabilitation due to their inability to live alone because of young age or small children. Here our linkages with other organizations like Gosha-e-Afiat and SOS village helped in the subsequent rehabilitation

During this year Panah has held several meetings with the judiciary and the police to work towards initiating gender sensitivity training. We have been successful in incorporating this in the curriculum of the Judicial Academy. This was possible due to the keen interest shown by the **Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, Justice Sabihuddin Ahmed** and the **Director General Sindh Judicial Academy Justice(r) Dr. Ghous Muhammad**. The project leader for this training is **Justice(r) Nasir Aslam Zahid**.

The programme will be launched at the World Social Forum in March 2006. It is planned that in three years all the 455 judges of the lower judiciary of Sindh will be trained in gender sensitization. We also intend bringing in judges from other countries of the subcontinent to help in training. This will not only raise the profile of the training here but also create a networking of this work in the region. It may be noted that this is the first time that structured training on gender sensitivity will be imparted to any institution in the country.

The Additional IG police **Mr. Nayyar Hasnain** showed interest in incorporating gender sensitivity training as part of the curriculum at the Police Academy. Hopefully we should be able to start this after the judicial training is underway.

The Ida Rieu Association which had given us rent free premises for three years graciously gave us extension for another year. We are looking for rented accommodation which is safe, central and big enough to accommodate 30 women and an office complex.

Our team of 14 panel lawyers and 5 doctors continue to give us free legal and medical services. The SMS security service, Eastern Federal Union Insurance and Trakker have also continued their complimentary services for the fourth year running. The new brochure was not only designed but also printed free of cost by The Creative Unit. Total cash donations were **Rs. 1,921,781**, out of which Amnesty International Austria, U.S.A. and Germany contributed 61%, Infaq Foundation 18%, while the rest was through individual donations. The cash expenditure was **Rs. 1,425,287**.