

REPORT OF PANAH SHELTER HOME FOR THE YEAR 2007

The main focus on the year 2007 was in looking for new premises. The All Pakistan Women's Association graciously offered to give us 1500 sq. yards of land to build the shelter, and the Governor agreed to hand over the government run shelter the 'Darul Aman' to us. We took the latter as the building was custom built on 8000 sq. yards. We were given the possession in December. It needs considerable renovation and hopefully we should be able to move there in four months time.

A total of 115 women and 45 children took refuge here. In addition, 35 women who did not need protection were provided legal aid and guidance on how to get their rights and whom to approach.

In December we received 13 cases from Darul Aman where they had been there for over a year, and by the end of the month 7 had their cases resolved and gone home and another 6 are expected to go home in January.

Divorce was filed in 65 cases and legal proceedings for maintenance or custody was started in 3 cases. Reconciliation with parents or husbands occurred in 50 cases. Jobs were arranged for 15. Four women were provided jobs as House Mothers at SOS Village. Financial support to set up home was provided to 5 women. We continue to keep in touch with all our ex-residents to guide and help them when the need arises.

We go beyond just providing 'Women Shelter'. For assistance a young girl of 18, who was being sexually harassed by her father came to us. She had suffered a major traffic accident at the age of 5 when she sustained perineal injuries and was since passing both urine and faeces through one opening. She has had one operation and appointment has been made for her second one.

One case from Quetta posed great security threat for months. A widow's brother-in-law sold her 3 daughters' for Rs. 1.5 million each, whereupon she wrote to her brother in India, who came to Quetta take the entire family back with him. The police at Jacobabad intercepted the bus they were traveling in. The brother was badly beaten; the passports and identity cards of the family were confiscated. The Senior Superintendent of the Police upon knowing of the incident sent the family with a police escort to us in August. The tribal gunmen however followed and have been outside the shelter for over four months, harassing the staff, even offering bribes to some, following their movements, tapping the office phones, etc.

The brother while crossing the Indian border was sent back as the exit from the police station was not there. We then gave him shelter in our guard's room, got the exit, but meanwhile the visa had expired. That was arranged and he was sent off via Lahore border. The ID cards of the family had to be made and fortunately the mother's

passport was miraculously saved. Tracing from it the ID cards and then the passports of the entire family were made without their going to Quetta. They are now awaiting their visa so that they can go to India.

Panah is proud to pioneer the gender sensitivity training for the judiciary at the Judicial Academy, Karachi in June 2007. The Chief Justice of Sindh Justice Sabihuddin Ahmed had incorporated this in their training curriculum. The first batch trained had 22 judges ranging from Civil and in-Service Judges to Judicial Magistrates. Some comments from the judges are: -

'The discussion was an eye opener. It made us realize numerous problems being faced by female gender; some areas of gender bias were highlighted. I strongly recommend this programme for my colleagues, and also for senior judges. There should be workshops on this topic in all districts and provinces.'

'Very good step towards making us understand the problems relating to the gender sensitivity. It broke some of the prejudices in my mind – created strong sympathy towards women – hopeful to do justice on the basis of equality. This type of workshop should be given to police officials on a priority basis.'

Due to the judicial crisis in the country, the Judicial Academy was closed and further training could not continue. Hopefully once the situation normalizes this will restart, not only at the Academy but also in the interior of Sindh. We also intend starting gender sensitization of the police later in the year.

Our team of 14 panel lawyers and 5 doctors continued to give free legal and medical services. In addition we were fortunate to have the services of a team led by a neuropsychologist who visits twice a week. The literacy side has been upgraded by the addition of a professor from the Women's Degree College who comes in weekly.

Panah was invited to UK by Judge Marilyn Mornington to give presentation at the 'Raising the Standards Conference' where bureaucrats and judges from all the provinces of UK meet annually to discuss measures to reduce domestic abuse. During that trip a presentation was also made at the London School of Economics and Political Science at its Seminar on 'Behind Closed Doors' on the topic of 'Gender Identity and Status in Islamic Societies and its relevance to abuse of women particularly in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.'

Nationally Panah takes part in workshops and seminars to raise awareness about domestic violence and women's rights and to create networking among different NGOs working on these issues. It has also taken part in many television programmes to create awareness amongst the general public about women's rights, highlighting the fact that they need not suffer in silence, as help is available to them. One TV channel has made a documentary on Panah. A visitor from a shelter in Germany made a documentary,

which was shown in the Town Hall there, and a write up was published in the newspaper. They have also twinned their shelter with ours.

Several students from law and social welfare department come for internship here. We also had two girls from abroad. One internee from Switzerland who was majoring in Social Services came here for five months practical training. The other internee was from UK who came for a month prior to starting law studies there.

Panah is one of the NGOs nominated by the Government of Sindh to be on the Committee set up by the Women Development Department to recommend the release of funds for women and juvenile prisoners for bail money from the revolving fund of Rs. 20 million set up by the President.

Zainab Panjwani Hospital, Eastern Federal Union Insurance, Trakker and Soya Supreme have continued to give their complimentary services for the 6th year running. We work in partnership with the Edhi Foundation, by taking cases that need legal help from their center and sending destitute women from our shelter to theirs. In addition Edhi Foundation helps us in times of crisis and also provides us meat and other edible items. Creative Unit does all the designing of the brochures, banners and folders free of cost.

The total cash donations were **Rs. 3,295,000** out of which AI contributed **Rs. 1,416,000** Fund for Global human Rights **Rs. 606,600** and private individuals from abroad **Rs. 405,100** and locally **Rs. 868,500**. The cash expenditure was **Rs. 1,800,000**. The main capital expense this year will be in the renovation and refurbishing of the new premises for which we have been given an estimate of **Rs. 10 million**. The running expense will more than double, as with our taking over of the government shelter 'Dar-ul-Aman', all women needing refuge in Karachi will be accommodated at Panah.