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Saheli
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Saheli Annual Report 2007-08
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Chair’s Report

Having been involved with Saheli for the last three years and the latter two as Chair, I can say the journey has not been easy. Saheli has been through a period of radical change, excitement, predicaments, and I am proud to say, a massive achievement. There have been challenges but I believe there is no achievement without the challenge.

In the last three years Saheli recruited a brand new Management Committee with a broad range of skills to include finance, legal, project management, event management and human resources. The MC has worked closely with the staff around improving policies and procedures, research and event management.

The last two years were particularly exciting for Saheli. We were successful in being awarded funding from OXFAM and NIHME and for research. The Oxfam research focused on poverty and women with no recourse to public funds, whilst the National Institute of Mental Health funded research looked at Emotional Well-being in Asian Women. The outcome report of the Oxfam research was launched to an audience of service providers, commissioners and health professionals earlier this year. The NIHME report is due to be launched later this year. Saheli also organised a fundraising event last year which was a great success.

During the last year Saheli faced its toughest challenge when its main Commissioner, Manchester City Council, announced the possibility of all the current domestic violence services being put out to tender and the indication that the Commissioners were looking for one provider. Saheli worked closely with the other refuges in Manchester to work out a way forward. The overall consensus of the refuges was to merge into one organisation, which posed a great difficulty for Saheli because we did not want to lose what had been built up over thirty years, including our independence as a specialist provider. Saheli actively contributed to the refuges working together group and it strived in its efforts to save its existence by promoting Saheli’s importance to others and the Commissioners. The grey cloud of uncertainty that had hovered for months suddenly cleared when Saheli’s contract was renewed for a further two years.

Amidst this difficult period, the team at Saheli continued to provide a first class service, demonstrated by the achievement of a level B in the QAF assessment, and I am proud to say that Saheli was the only refuge in Manchester to receive this quality mark in all core and supplementary objectives assessed. Well done to the team!

The MC, staff and volunteers have worked together to discuss our strategic agenda for the next five years with free support from the Manchester Council for Race Relations.

We have reviewed and revised our mission, vision and values to focus on the new strategic agenda and the challenges that lie ahead. Over the last two years as Chair I have seen so much change in the voluntary sector and the commissioning world that I know our biggest challenge will be to keep pace with this change.

I will not be reporting to you next year but I am hopeful that the new Chair, the MC and the staff team will continue to build on the good work that has been started to realise the new vision and deliver on the strategy.

I feel privileged to have served as the Chair of Saheli and I am grateful to the MC, staff and the volunteers for giving me this opportunity. We would not have achieved what we have without them. I extend my sincere thanks to them for their commitment and support.

Qurab Ahmed
Chair of Saheli
Service User’s Contribution

Before I came to Saheli

I was miserable. I used to cry myself to sleep every night. There seemed no purpose in life. One day dragged slowly into the next.

I was constantly told that I was useless and ugly. I had to beg my in-laws for everything, from nappies to money for sanitary towels.

I was not allowed to go out of the house without causing trouble for myself.

They kept saying that something was wrong with my mind.

They tried their best to turn my kids away from and against me.

The children had no respect for me. But it wasn’t their fault. They were learning the behaviour from everyone else around them.

I used to be hit in front of my children and I still hoped against hope that things at home would get better. I kept trying to please everyone. I learned the hard way when I was asked to leave the house in the middle of night with nowhere to go and no one to ask for help.

After I lived in Saheli for 8 months

I was very lucky to come to Saheli and be among my people. I was shocked to see other women and children who had come to Saheli to be safe.

The workers have really helped me, and they still do. My aftercare worker comes to see me and always phones to see if I am alright. She has assured me that if I should ever need help and advice she will gladly give it me.

The refuge worker and children worker did not forget us and kept their promise to take us along on the easter and summer play schemes.

The children and I are now happy and settled in our own home, where love and laughter and happiness rule. We have made friends and a new life without fear and pain.
Saheli has continued to develop, progress and focus on delivering an excellent service for Asian Women and Children in a very challenging climate. Many policy changes are having an impact on the voluntary sector, even more impact has been on the specialist service sector. The biggest challenge for Saheli has been to sustain our independence in the continuing changing climate, which saw many specialist organisations being forced to merge, be taken over or lose their funding.

Saheli has continued to empower Asian Women and Children by providing practical and emotional support within a culturally sensitive, confidential and non-judgemental framework, so women are able to make choices about their future. Saheli received over 1277 calls from Asian Women seeking information advice and support.

**Developing Excellence in Service Delivery:**
Saheli has been developing and implementing the Quality Assurance Framework within the organisation with a view to achieving excellence in service delivery. The framework has been developed by the Supporting People Team, who are one of key funders and are part of Manchester City Council. Saheli was successful in achieving level B across all eight objectives on which we were assessed. These included:
- Support Planning and Needs Assessment
- Dealing with Abuse
- Responding to Complaints
- Health and Safety
- Fair Access and Equal Opportunity
- The Living Environment
- The Service User Involvement
- Support Planning and Needs Assessment

The Saheli team, service users and management committee all worked as a team to develop these standards and put them into practise. We were complimented by the Supporting People team for achieving such high standards and were invited to deliver training to other providers on implementing the Quality Assurance Standards Framework. The whole process has been very time consuming but at the same time very rewarding for all involved in developing high standards of service delivery to women and children who access our services.

**Securing our Independence and Steady State Contract:**
2007 was the time when the Supporting People Team decided to tender the domestic abuse service in Manchester. This was a very difficult time for the organisation, as we struggled to maintain our independence as a specialist provider of domestic abuse services to Asian Women and Children. Saheli consulted with our service users, staff team, management committee and all our ex-residents to find a way forward to deal with this very difficult situation, which could mean that excellent resources which have been supporting vulnerable women and children for over 30 years will be lost forever. It was a very difficult time for everyone involved in the organisation. After much negotiation with the Supporting People team, Saheli was able to secure a steady state contract for the organisation for two years. This contract has been awarded to Saheli for demonstrating high quality service provision, value for money and strategic fit to the Domestic Abuse Strategy in Manchester City and for demonstrating need for the service. We, however, still face an uncertain future for our outreach service. We are looking into different ways of diversifying our funding streams over coming months. Our expertise, which has been developed through delivering frontline service to Asian Women and Children, is being used by the Police, social services, schools, universities and solicitors to meet the needs of very vulnerable women, continues to benefit women experiencing domestic abuse.

**Saheli Achievements in 2007-8**
This year we also produced a significant piece of research which will build strong evidence on the need for specialist support provision for Asian Women and Children experiencing domestic abuse.

Our first research project was “Forgotten Women: Poverty and Women with No Recourse to Public Funds.”

Saheli, in partnership with Care Service Improvement Partnership North West and Oxfam’s UK Poverty Programme, undertook research into the discrimination and hardship experienced by Asian Women who are subject to immigration control in UK and are experiencing domestic abuse. This project will contribute to recognising the plight and poverty that “Forgotten Women” who have no recourse to public funds experiencing under current legislation and the “two year rule”. The central aim of the research project was to increase awareness and develop recommendations which will enable these “Forgotten Women” to:

- Access support systems including welfare benefits, housing and cater for the needs of their children.
- Assist in the development of appropriate and responsive services by key agencies.
- Create opportunity for real change by influencing national, regional and local policymaking.
- Further key agencies in taking a collective responsibility and accountability by ensuring that these women and their children become visible and not forgotten.

Research Project on Emotional Well-Being of Asian Women who have experienced Domestic Violence:

This research project was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMHE) under the Department of Health Delivering Race Equality Programme and the project was supported by the Centre of Ethnicity and Health, University of Lancashire. The research was conducted on the community engagement model developed by the University of Lancashire and managed by Saheli. The field study was conducted by community researchers who were trained and supported to do the research. Eighty women from South Asian backgrounds were interviewed in Manchester. 72 out of the 80 women interviewed (90%) reported having endured domestic violence at some time in their life, while 31 (39%) were still living in an abusive relationship. The research report including the key findings and recommendations are going to be launched early next year.
Developing the organisation

Saheli has continued to focus on developing the organisation by exploring ways to improve our service delivery and give a strategic direction to our organisation. All this has been done through consultation and involvement of our service users, staff team, management committee, volunteers and ex-service users.

Saheli received funding and support from MCCR (Manchester Council for Race Relations) under the Reaching Communities programme, to look at different ways of developing the organisation, and revisiting our aims and objectives to ensure that we are continuing to meet the needs of Asian Women and Children. We had an away day with all members of Saheli and the consultation process was very informative. All the information collected is being used to develop a new business plan for the organisation.

Partnership Working to Support the Needs of Asian Women:

We have continued to make links and work in partnership with various agencies to meet the needs of Asian Women experiencing domestic abuse. This year Saheli has been successful in making links with Oxfam GB, Care Service Improvement Partnership, University of Huddersfield, University of Salford, Manchester University, Manchester Partnership, Department of Health (Delivery Race Equality Programme), Black Health Agency, Women Aid Refuges, Imkaan, South Hall Black Sisters, Apna Haq, Roshni, Sure Start, Willow Bank and so on.

Volunteers:

Saheli has always believed in supporting the volunteers and we greatly value their contribution to the organisation. Saheli was successful in recruiting six volunteers for our research project, some of whom were our ex-service users. Hosla project also has two volunteers this year focusing on group work and research launch. Three volunteers were recruited for the fund-raising event. Volunteers attended training and coffee morning with the residents.

Team Building and Staff Development:

Saheli had two away days this year to look at ways of involving the staff team in the development of the organisation. We have been able to incorporate the feedback into the new vision for the organisation.

The Saheli team has been looking at developing capability within the organisation to support women with complex needs. The staff team has received training on Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol. We have linked up with the Black Health Agency to train the team on using a tool kit to screen the needs of women who present themselves with complex needs along with domestic violence.
Refuge Work

Saheli has been supporting Asian Women and Children experiencing domestic abuse since 1976. This year has been a challenging as well as rewarding year for refuge projects. We have continued to support Asian Women and children experiencing domestic abuse by providing refuge accommodation, information, advice and support which is delivered within a culturally specific framework to meet the needs of Asian Women in a holistic way.

We at Saheli believe that to have happy and healthy families, violence and oppression must be eliminated from our communities.

Saheli received 1277 calls from women seeking support, information and advice. Many of these women contacted us directly and some contacted us through friends, family members or agencies like the Police, social workers, schools and solicitors etc. Saheli received 242 direct requests for refuge accommodation. We accommodated 38 families and 35 children.

“I was hiding in the park. A woman found me there and called the Police. The Policewoman could not understand me, but she was very nice to me..... They got someone who could speak Urdu and I stayed at the police station for few hours. Then they took me to social people (social services) who are helping me. I don’t know about my future but I am safe, I am alive and he is not hurting me anymore.”

Saheli Forgotten Women: Domestic Violence, Poverty and South Asian Women with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Some of the highlights of the refuge work include:

- Trips for the Residents: Various trips were organised for the families and these included the following visits to
  - The Trafford Centre
  - Bowling
  - Blackpool

Cooking Sessions: Monthly cooking sessions were organised for the residents and these included preparing different types of food that enhance your well-being and promote healthy eating. Cooking session included

- Manchester Town Centre
- Chester Zoo
- Walks in the park

Saheli offers the following services:
- Emergency refuge accommodation to Asian Women and Children fleeing domestic abuse.
- Emotional support in a culturally familiar environment where women and children are supported to make positive decisions for themselves.
- Support with housing application and benefit applications,
- Resettlement support for women who are re-housed in the community.
- Liaison with external agencies, where appropriate, such as immigration, housing, Department of Social Services, Police, law centre etc.
Chinese, Indian and Continental food. Health promotion workers from the NHS came to give talks on eating habits and healthy ways of cooking food.

**Art Sessions:** A regular arts session group has been running to help women and children to use art to express their feelings and involve with other members. Special sessions to make cards for Eid, Diwali and Christmas were very popular. We had very positive feedback on these sessions and are hoping to continue them in the next year.

**Resettlement Workshops:** Resettlement sessions were held on a regular basis as they provided essential basic life skills. Many residents had no control of running the homes they had left. Therefore they were not given the opportunity to have responsibility and control in the day to day running of a home. The sessions have proved to be extremely valuable as the residents knew they would be leaving Saheli one day and the skills they have learnt would enable them to start a new life independently and confidently. Such skills included, changing light bulbs, reporting damages, shopping, applying for TV licenses, Sky, broadband, buying items, deciding where to buy items from and so on.

**Showing Residents around Different Areas of Manchester:** Residents never had the chance to familiarise themselves with the localities they were residing in and therefore did not have the opportunity to become confident and independent in going out and seeing localities. We felt this was vital to enhance independent living so we have been accompanying residents and showing them a variety of locations including schools, shops, colleges, doctors, hospitals and recreational facilities.

**Celebration Meals for Religious Events:** Saheli believes in the importance of equality and diversity. Therefore we celebrated a variety of cultural and religious events. This raised awareness for the residents and better understanding about the diversity of the communities.

**DVD Sessions:** DVD sessions provided an informal time with staff and residents - a time to relax, enjoy and feel very comfortable. We also expressed the importance of mothers spending quality time with their children in watching DVD movies together. This increased better relations and understanding of each other. It also allowed mothers and children to create a stronger bond with each other by giving quality time away from the day-to-day routine.

**Sewing Sessions:** Residents were very interested either to learn how to sew or to expand on their skills. Sewing sessions
were held and these were a huge success. It provided an informal space for everyone to be together, including staff, and not only benefit from a new skill, but also provided fun, effortless quality time filled with lots of fun and laughter, within a safe, warm and comfortable supporting environment. This enabled residents to see and feel that there is life after abuse, that they can laugh, smile and begin to enjoy their lives.

**Photography Sessions:**
Photography sessions were requested as women wanted to not only capture moments in their life but also wanted to learn something completely different. This provided excitement, enthusiasm and lots of fun. Residents learnt about the different parts of a camera, how to upload, download, print, make movies, edit pictures and so on – something they may not have had an opportunity to learn.

**Introduction to Computers Classes:** Those who had knowledge of the English language enrolled on IT courses to learn about computers. Residents felt they needed to know about computers as they have become essential machines as part of every day life. They also wanted to support their children now and in the future. Saheli has received a donation from Salford University and we now have some computers available for the women and children.

**How to Use Public Transport:**
The need to learn to use public transport was a must if residents wanted to take control of their lives. Using public transport was the only way to get around as most did not have their own transport. Sessions were given on how to use buses, taxis, coaches and trains. Timetables were brought into sessions and these were gone over thoroughly. The way to use them was explained to residents. Telephone transport was also discussed and support was given when residents finally decided to take the step and try to use public transport. This resulted in enhanced confidence and independence.

**Introduction to ESOL Classes:**
Learning English was vital to some of our non English speaking residents who wanted to make a change in their lives. ESOL classes were provided for some residents who found the classes extremely valuable. They learnt English, made new friends, and continued to become more confident and independent by making simple steps, e.g. using public transport, communication with other people without their support workers help.
I started my time at Saheli as a voluntary outreach worker at the Hosla Project, which provides outreach support to Asian Women in the community.

**My duties were:**

**Group Work:**
The Hosla Project set up group work to support Asian Women experiencing domestic violence in the community. Many of these women feel very isolated and often have no contact outside their extended families. Many women lose contact with all family and friends after leaving the abusive relationship. Group work was set up to help and support many of these women to make contact with other women and learn various skills in a supportive and confidential environment.

I helped set up a drop-in group for women and children with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). This was, I felt, a really significant achievement in the sense that it gave the women a sense of belonging and empowerment which I felt was a very important aspect of them gaining some sense of independence and self-worth. I tried to do this by encouraging the women to decide for themselves what they wanted the group to represent. What activities they would like to do. The group met on a weekly basis.

We also arranged for assertiveness training and confidence building training for those attending. Lots of information was made available including accessing ESOL classes, immigration advice, computer classes etc.

**Trips out to the cinema and Trafford Centre:**
I found this group benefited the women, who at times felt they had no-one or nowhere to go during the transitional period of shedding their old life and trying to secure a new life for themselves and their children in the United Kingdom, away from the abuse and violence. I felt this group helped tremendously with the women’s confidence and esteem at a time when I could safely assume that it would be at its lowest ebb.

I was involved in organising coffee mornings with occasional pampering sessions thrown in.

**Volunteer Contribution**

I had further opportunity to develop my skills in office work and attending training. Some of the other work included the following:

**Accompanying Staff on Outreach Visits:**
- This involved visiting women in and around the Manchester area.
- Attending monthly meetings.
- Answering and dealing with telephone calls.
- I also attended the following training sessions:
  - Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Training;
  - Forced Marriages Training.

**Refuge Work Statistics**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Call Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Calls received for Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Advice</td>
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<td>Request for Refuge Space</td>
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<td>Forc[ed Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women with No Recourse to Public Funds</td>
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Hosla Project – Outreach Project

What is Outreach Work?

Hosla Outreach work provides practical and emotional support to Asian Women and Children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence in the Manchester area.

What Services do we Offer?

We provide support on issues including:

- Forced marriages
- Housing
- Immigration
- Referrals to other refuges, outreach projects, agencies and organisations
- Legal issues
- One-to-one service
- Outreach visits
- Group work
- Drop in sessions
- Activities
- Lesbian, transgender and bisexual issues
- Drugs and alcohol
- Honour killings
- Abduction
- Divorce
- Mental health issues
- Parenting Support

The Outreach Project has also provided training to agencies and organisations on domestic violence and the Asian community. We have discussed issues relating to the Asian community, women, children, immigration issues and forced marriages. The training is now an ongoing process and interest has steadily increased to raise awareness of domestic violence and its effects in the Asian community.

Immigration

Over the past year we have had an alarming increase of Asian Women suffering from domestic violence with no recourse to public funds. The Hosla Outreach Project has continued to fight for such women and the cause of immigration on the whole. The two-year rule has only added to their problems and finding a way out has been almost impossible. The language barrier has also hindered women from coming forward and accessing support they very much needed. Hosla staff are bi-lingual and therefore have been able to offer support and advise to the women. We are level 3 Specialist OISC registered.

Training

Training has been provided to organisations and agencies throughout Manchester.

Training has especially been requested on the issues of forced marriages in the Asian community as well as domestic violence.

Agencies and organisations who have benefited from our training include:

- Greater Manchester Police (GMP)
- Secondary Schools Staff and students
- 6th Form Colleges Staff and students
- Colleges Staff and students

Forced Marriages

Due to the alarming increase of forced marriage cases the issue has now taken the limelight on national and regional levels. The Hosla Outreach Project has been involved in helping to raise the issue and the seriousness of it. Close consultation with other agencies and organisations have contributed to raising the issue of forced marriages. We continue to work together to find a solution to help reduce and eradicate this form of abuse.
Speeches have been given in a variety of places to raise awareness of domestic violence in the Asian communities.

This work is ongoing and we now aim to reach to other regions where interest has been shown.

**Drop-in Sessions**

We have been holding drop in centres at GPs, health visitors and various other projects, where an outreach worker will ‘drop in’ every 2 weeks and be available to the women for 2 hours. Also, leaflets and other publicity material is left there and is readily available to the women. We are now getting a lot more referrals from the Trafford area and our services are now available to the Asian Women there.

![No. Of Women Using Drop-in Centres](image)

*Sources of Referral for Women using Drop-in Centres*

![Sources of Referral for Women using Drop-in Centres](image)
Child’s Contribution

I am Saima
This is my mummy

We have lived in the refuge for six months now and we are going to get a new house from the council. I have made new friends in the school and I will invite them to my new house.

We are going to miss Saheli and all the workers. They made us laugh and played with us in the playroom.

I am not scared anymore because my mummy is with me and she loves me very much.

Acknowledgement

The whole team of Saheli continues to be touched and inspired by the hope that women and children have given us. We would like to thank them for sharing their pain and achievements with us.

All women and children who have used Saheli
All Saheli Volunteers, Staff and Management Committee Members,
Moss Care Housing Association
Old Moat School
Women’s Domestic Violence Helpline
South Manchester Law Centre
Women’s Aid Federation
Imkaan
Southhall Black Sisters
Apna Haq Project
Black Health Agency
Oxfam GB
Manchester Partnership
Supporting People
Domestic Violence Unit- GM Police
Community Accountants
University of Lancashire
Willow Bank
Sure Start
South Regeneration Project
Windrush Millennium Centre
National Institute of Mental Health
Manchester Council for Race Relations

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