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## **SIX MONTHLY REPORTS**

**OCTOBER, 2006' TO MARCH, 2007'**

**SUBMITTED TO**

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***Inclusion is a kaleidoscope of diversity –  
Bits of colors, sounds, shapes, sizes...  
Inclusion is future!***

**– Ms. Marsha Forest**

## **BACKGROUND**

India is a land of festivals. Its celebrations, woven in the minds and heart of people, belonging to the different faiths and religions. **These are the pre – requisites boosting the spirit of change and bringing vitality.** During this phase the entire Olakh team along with its community members celebrated all those significant festivals that fell in the reporting period. They were Diwali (the festival of light and new year for the Gujaratis), Eid (the day of celebration after the holy month of Ramazan), Makar Sankranti (the festival of kite flying), the Republic Day of India and Holi (the festival of colors).

**The joy was lustrous and celebrations peaceful. There prevailed no disharmony or communal tension, as we have experienced in the past.** However, the real essence of celebration was somewhat missing due to steep rise in the price of essential commodities and drastic increase in the inflation rate (6.2%). Also there prevails a constant tension and unrest in the minds of poor people (mostly from the slums) due to demolition drive of the government that is targeting to uproot the illegal houses/shops under the plan of restructuring and infrastructural development of urban areas.

Also the Domestic Violence Act was passed in the parliament after a long struggle and persuasion from the women's movement. **However there is much reluctance on the part of government to allocate appropriate budget, human resources and machinery for proper implementation.**

Though along with all these issues at the back of our minds, we celebrated Diwali and Eid in the month of October, 2006 as both festivals came at the same time. This gave us an opportunity to celebrate diversity, co – existence and share our joys and happiness. For this occasion, we published a greeting card that gives a message of diversity, distributed sweets to almost 200 families and got together to celebrate. Our community women, friends and children decorated the new office space with flowers, lamps, traditional rangoli (designs made of colored powders) and greeted each other irrespective and beyond religion, caste and class and then ended with bursting of crackers.

Then in the following month (January, 07) we again celebrated the New Year on the 8th of the month keeping the tradition of the date marked for our creative expression days. This time too we got together for the festivities with our different women survivors, members of women's collective, Olakh team, few of our friends and well wishers. We sang and danced, shared all our experiences of the previous year and got very emotional traveling down the memory lane with a small presentation of photographs of all the earlier creative expression days.

***This indeed was a significant day for many of our collective and community women as it was for the first time in their entire lives that they had come out late in the evening by themselves!*** It showed their journey for change and making choices has begun. In fact both these celebrations have brought along so much happiness and created deep bondings that are missing in our daily lives.

To share with, at team level we are facing tiredness, burnout, dilemma and at times a stagnation of visioning and envisaging our future direction. Addressing changing circumstances and needs at personal and political level. At the same time lot of action and excitement for day to day activities with hard work and commitment. We are sorting it out at team level, discussing it with board members, talking time to consolidate , reflect and then to move forward.

Lastly, Ms. Kirsten (from EED, Germany) visited us in the month of November, 2006 where she was briefed about each department and programmes by presentations of different team members. The focus of the discussion lay on the aspect of extracting impact of our work, efforts, inputs and intervention and thereby draw future directions.

## ORGANIZATIONAL SPACE

All the procedures for transferring the papers of our new organizational space were carried in this phase that includes the cooking gas and electricity connections, house and water taxes with the Municipal Corporation and registration with the city survey department.

Here we are glad to share that we have come across a very sensitive, dedicated and enthusiastic woman architect who has prepared the initial plan for the space with inputs from the Olakh team. Looking at the needs of our resource, counseling and training centre it has been suggested that we go for a new construction. Also we are equally proud and happy to also share that she has committed to work for us at very nominal rates. This indeed is a valuable contribution and support from her for the larger cause of women empowerment!

Once the plan gets finalized we will contact Japan Embassy, few of the local corporate and others for donations. At present we have equipped these premises with need based utilities and thereby it is being used for meetings and trainings of women survivors of violence and conflict. Also, two residential workshops of NGO activists were organized in this space, one for the basic self defense training and the other on trauma counseling and healing.

*It's a very convenient, women friendly space", shared one of the participants from the trauma workshop.*

## PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Training being an integral aspect of Olakh, the following is a brief of the various perspective and capacity building trainings, talks and discussions carried out in the reporting phase for different institutes and organizations:

Sr. No.	Dates	Programmes	Organization	No. of Participants
1.	13 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> November	Gender Training	Pradan in M.P. Jharkand	120 women
2.	27 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2006	Body Literacy with holistic Health	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Anand	23 women
3.	4 <sup>th</sup> November	Talk on Women's Empowerment	Faculty of Social Work, Vadodara	25 counselors

4.	27 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> November	Perspective building on Gender, Patriarchy and feminism in context of Conflict	Medica Mondiale, Kosovo	20 women
5.	4 <sup>th</sup> December	Orientation about Olakh	Kaira Social Service Society, Kheda dist Gujarat	30 women and men
6.	16 <sup>th</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> January	Body Literacy with holistic health	Pradan in M.P. Jharkand	22 women
7.	7 <sup>th</sup> February	Talk on reproduction and menstruation	Department of Extension & Communication – field unit at Pensionpura, Vadodara	29 girls and women
8.	11 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> March	Violence and Legal literacy	Pradan M.P. Jharkand, Jagori, Himachal	32 women
9.	13 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> March	Body Literacy with holistic Health	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Dediypada dist.	30 women
			<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>

**1. Trainings with Pradan:** We were invited by Pradan, an organization in Madhya Pradesh that works for the livelihood promotion of women collectives, to train their grass root women activists. It was an opportunity for us to connect directly with ground realities and help in the process of building perspectives of the activists which in turn would be instrumental to reach to the masses. The major aspects focused in all the 3 trainings were gender, body literacy with holistic health, violence against women and legal literacy.

***“Matti wale chashme utar gaye, power wale chashme pahen liye” (The glasses covered with dust have been removed and now we have put on those with power)” – shared one of the participants.***

All the participants were from the rural areas coming from extremely marginalized communities. Most of the basic life necessities like water, wood, electricity, road, transportation, health centres, schools and even the Panchayat are far of, making them rarely accessible. Through the discussions held with these women it is known that violence and cruelty, especially with women are high.

The women showed great curiosity to know more about the various issues taken in the trainings like general health problems, basic knowledge of various laws related to women, etc. thus, all the

three training created a space for these women to discuss and gain knowledge about different silent issues of their lives and it helped in gaining confidence which was visible with their sharing with each other. All the women seemed much motivated to learn as well as to share with other women of their villages which can be said from their initiative of making songs on various issues learned in their own dialects (like ovulation, conception and sex determination).

***All the women should know about one's own body. We are kept away from our body and are ignorant about it. But we should respect and take control of our body.***

***"We were able to get information about condoms and feel strongly that it is a safe method that all men should be made sensitive towards its use."***

**2. Trainings on Body literacy with holistic health:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for all missions), a project of the government's education department invited us to conduct body literacy and health trainings for their primary school teachers. The trainings were carried out for the two districts of Narmada and Anand.

Four days trainings were planned for both the districts where, issues like status of girl child in our society, gender discrimination, knowing and becoming free with one's own body, understanding the period of adolescence, beauty, menstruation as normal body process, conception, etc. were covered. As the teachers were being exposed to these areas for the first time, much emphasis was laid on self learning.

***"The training is very much useful for my life. Earlier I cursed my life that why I have got birth as a woman but now I feel proud. Now I will teach to all the ladies and girls whom I come across to become bold and defend their life. In society every one wants boy child, I will try to change that belief".***

***I have become more confident and independent. Can understand that menstruation is a normal body process. Also understood that women are also human beings and deserve all rights and dignity.***

It was shared by the teachers that they also face gender discrimination in their families and schools. Their students came up with many issues related to sexuality which they found difficult to handle. Also, during the trainings, it was learned that in the initial stage many of them did not agree upon the aspect of imparting this education to the children as they were worried that it would make them sexually freer. But it was only after intense dialogues with them that they were convinced and they also then realized its importance in their own lives.

During the trainings, two of our publications, an adolescent diary for girls named 'Kishori Killol' and the book 'What is girl? What is boy?' was disseminated to the teachers. The training was concluded with the plan of how the teachers would take their learning with girls, their parents and other teachers. As these issues are sensitive, emphasis was laid to deal with them with the same approach, with a plan and in a team.

**3. Talk on Women's Empowerment:** Faculty of Social Work, Vadodara had organized a 5 days training with counselors of various family counseling centers of Gujarat government. Here, Olakh took up a session on women's empowerment. The major discussion centered on the aspect – 'counselors promote separation or compromises'. It was further discussed about why, for whom compromise and at what cost as women are subject to violence and discrimination everyday.

**4. Perspective building on gender, patriarchy and feminism in context of conflict:**

As you know there is a continuous sharing and exchange with Medica Mondiale Germany. Ms. Nimisha Desai was invited to conduct training with Medica Kosovo team. The training was for 5 days with therapists, counsellors, midwives – the team of psycho social care givers. The training focused on perspective building in areas of patriarchy, gender, feminism, conflict and identity politics. At present Kosovo people are waiting for independence and they believe that all problems are due to the war and not looking at the power relation is based on gender. It's completely under shadow. It has been suggested by trainer that this is a very crucial time to focus on how these women can play a role in designing the new constitution and take a leadership.

**4. An Orientation of Olakh:** A group of 30 women and men from Kaira Social Service Society, Kheda visited Olakh as a part of their exposure visit. We then shared about our activities and oriented them with Olakh's ideology of changing mindset through (literature) library, resource centre, counseling and trainings. Also few women from our community shared about the processes of collective initiative for justice at doorstep.

**5. Talk on Reproduction and Menstruation:** Department of Extension and Communication, Vadodara organized a session on reproduction and menstruation along with their students for the women and girls of one of their slums (Pensionpura) in the month of February 07. Here, one of our health trainers talked and shared the different aspects of menstruation and reproduction processes.

*"We got very deep and useful information in very interesting way".*

Students are major user of Olakh's resource centre. Through the dialogue and discussion with them we try to create awareness regarding the gender issues. With their help our resources and ideology widely spreads in society. Two hour session was organized by students of Faculty of Home Science. Here information about the changes during adolescence and menstrual cycle was discussed. Apart from giving the scientific information lot of emphasis was given to the restriction and control put on women through various social and religious practices. Women also asked questions related problems during menstruation. Women found the talk easy, simple and useful for their life.

## RURAL INTERVENTION

As shared earlier, the planned youth camp in the tribal areas of Valsad district (South Gujarat) was organized at Chandvegan village from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October 06. Here, 64 youth participants (women and men) came together. The aim of the camp was to establish rapport, get first hand information of the areas, their issues, culture, and their identity with gender perspectives. A group of resource persons ranging from grass root activists (tribal), academicians, social activists, etc. shared their knowledge, experiences and gave their valuable inputs to the group. The sessions focused on the aspects of tribal culture and art, land and forest rights, tribal identity, access to control over resources, leadership building and personality development along with sports, yoga and English speaking for recreation and fun. This was the first camp of its' kind to be held in these areas.

The follow up meeting was conducted at the end of the month that focused on the recently passed Tribal Bill and its implications on the people. In future we plan to develop a fellowship program, where dynamic individuals from these tribal areas, who desire and dream to work for social change with a gender perspective, would be supported.

## RESEARCH

As shared earlier, the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft study report on our research “Participatory Action based Research on Gujarat Carnage, 2002’ – Marginalized Women’s Perception on Safety and Security” was finalized during this phase. We now plan to publish the same in the form of a book. Thus, the final version with expert inputs is in the process. The plan to organize a dissemination workshop for the same would be done in the coming phase.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During this reporting period too we continued to look at our work of 10 years and initiated the process of organizational planning. The process started with organizational mapping where activities done in each area were listed. This was done to know, realize and reflect on our mission, vision and objectives and see the activities in the light of their sustainability along with the change and growth needed at the individual level. This was a crucial as well as insightful exercise for all of us.

In next three months, we plan to compile our stock, plan for new human resources and on going programmes. We are also trying to explore areas, at individual levels that could enhance each one’s skills and expertise, give inner joy and take the organization in a new direction of growth.

## CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEAM

We at Olakh believe human resource is the most valuable resource and we constantly invest to enhance their perspectives and skills. Olakh team members participated and represented in the following trainings and forums:

Sr. No.	Dates	Programmes/Activities	Name of participants
1.	21 <sup>st</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> November, 2006	Health Assembly	Taslim
2.	27 <sup>th</sup> October, 2006	Meeting on Forest Bill, Tamachadi	Nimisha
3.	29 <sup>th</sup> October, 2006	Final architectural plan for new	Olakh team

		organizational space	
4.	13 <sup>th</sup> November, 2006	Organizations biography and creativity with Andréa, Simon	Olakh team
5.	16 <sup>th</sup> November, 2006	Meeting on Women and Land Rights , Ahmedabad	Mamta
6.	6 – 8 <sup>th</sup> December, 2006	Muslim women and Law, WRAG, Mumbai	Manju, Taslim
7.	9 <sup>th</sup> December, 2006	Meeting for Gender Budgeting	Mamta
8.			
9.	16 <sup>th</sup> December, 2006	ONGC fair	Taslim and women survivors
10.	10 <sup>th</sup> January, 2007	Planning commission meeting	Nimisha
11.	11 <sup>th</sup> January, 2007	Manas Mental health meting, New Delhi	Nimisha
12.	6 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> February 2007	Spirituality and Healing, Nishtha, Himachal	Nimisha
13.	20 <sup>th</sup> February, 2007	Disaster management workshop, Nadiad	Manju and Zainul
14.	24 <sup>th</sup> February, 2007	Women' movement conference at Baroda, poster women exhibition	Nimisha and Mamta

**1. Health Assembly:** This national event was organized by various groups working on issues of women's health. Here they focused on concerns of basic health due to privatization of health sector, the need to emphasize on mental health issues and to make comprehensive plans and strategies.

**2. Meeting on Forest Bill:** A meeting was organised with the help of facilitator who has an expertise in area of tribal bill. 125 youth participated in the same. Now survey has been initiated in 6 villages and which will be useful for advocacy.

**3. Final architectural plan for new organizational space:** As shared earlier, our architect is a very committed and enthusiastic woman who believes in team work. As the new organizational space would meet the needs and specifications of all our programmes and activities, she carried out a day long collective process to know, understand and plan for the same from all the team members. It was an insightful process where the inter change of ideas and opinion keeping in mind the goals was done.

**4. Organizational biography and creativity:** This was a day long workshop with Olakh team facilitated by Andrea an art therapist from Switzerland. An exercise with colors was carried out my each member to represent their past, present and future in Olakh. The team thoroughly enjoyed the process and we gained an idea about the times when we had clarity or confusion, stagnation, excitement and so on. It was then suggested by the facilitator that such exercises should be carried out on regular bases to help the team in future visioning.



**5. Meeting on Women and Land Rights:** This was organized in Ahmedabad by groups working on women and land rights in the month of November 06. The major focus was on sharing of research findings on women's land ownership in rural areas of Gujarat. Though the information of their urban counterparts is unavailable. It was concluded that there prevails lack of land ownership for single women, there are social and legal constraints and that there are a few groups that play an important role to support women to access land ownership. Lastly, we shared Olakh's concept of creating physical and emotional spaces at the community level.

**6. Muslim Women and Law:** This workshop was organized by WRAG, Mumbai. This organization primarily works on the rights of the Muslim women. The major focus of the workshop lay on concepts of Islamic laws, the view of Quran on the same with emphasis on the implementation of the revised 'Nikahnama' (certificate of Muslim marriage as per the Muslim laws) and the interventions required with community and religious leaders that could give more security to the women. Also the strategies used by various organizations across the country were shared there.

***"This was very help to understand as we faced many hurdle when dealing with talak issues", shared our counselor.***

**7. Meeting on Gender Budgeting:** This was organized by an organization UNNATI in Ahmedabad in the month of December 06. A representative of the Swiss Development Corporation shared her views on gender budgeting when sanctioning grants to different organizations. Various members from women's groups, the state government and donor agencies were present.

**8. Spirituality and Healing:** This was organised at Nishtha, Himachal Pradesh in a place which is cool, peaceful and full of natural beauty. This was about renouncing, reconnecting, regaining collective energy in women's movement. 10 women came together and did the retreat through yoga, meditation and various practices of spirituality collectively.

**9. ONGC Fair:** Like the previous year, the ladies club of Oil and Natural Gas Company (ONGC), Vadodara organized a fair in the month of December 06 where, this year also we with the help of our women survivors and volunteers set up a stall to provide information about Olakh's counseling and documentation and resource centre with library.

**10. A meeting of Women's Empowerment Committee of the Planning Commission of India:** This was held in the month of January, 07 was represented by Ms. Nimisha Desai. As you know Ms. Nimisha Desai has been appointed as a member of the women's empowerment committee of planning commission of India from Gujarat. This time the major focus was on suggestions and recommendations on 11th 5 year plan of Women and Child Development. The major recommendation was first to review the existing scheme, women's empowerment and child development should be a separate department and allocation of funds to be done accordingly. Apart from this the discussion was on review of self help groups, what is the impact of SHG on women's life and whether it reaches to the most marginalised, poorest of the poor. Inadequacy of Swadhar- a central government scheme for temporary shelter for women in crisis in implementation process was discussed and government how needs to modify the process was recommended.

**11. Women and Mental health:** A day long session on this issue was organized by Manas, a Delhi based group working on mental health issues in the month of January, 07. The major focus was on awareness and access to mental health care and to address the issue of stigma around mental

health and create a sensitive environment. Ms. Nimisha joined as a resource person and shared her experiences of working with women on mental and emotional health issues.

**12. Disaster management and preparedness workshop:** Oxfam has developed a **computerized package on Disaster Management**. It covers information on support services available during disasters and kind of record system needed during disasters. One day training was organized on 20<sup>th</sup> February where two representatives participated.

**13. Meeting on women's movement in India:** was organized in Vadodara on 24<sup>th</sup> February. The aim was to build knowledge about women's movement among young activists. Along with it a poster women exhibition was organized by Zuban, Delhi. This exhibition is about posters designed on women's issues. Olakh representatives attended the same.

### **National Workshops and Programmes:**

- **Sustaining Hope, Translating Rage: Walking together on a trauma organized planet**

This was organized during 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January at our newly acquired organizational premises. 24 women working as counselors, therapist, psychiatrist, academician and activist addressing issues of mental emotional health of women joined from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal. Anita Melin a feminist therapist from Canada facilitated this workshop. The major thrust was on how to change our thinking, attitudes and behavior which are so violent (Jackal's world) and how to build non violent communication and society (giraffe's world). There is need to change culture of domination and need to promote more gentle world. It's a heartfelt experience but very difficult to practice and break our own stereotypes.

- **Personal Safety – Wenlido (TOT 1<sup>st</sup> Phase)**

'Wenlido' translates as women's path of strength. It helps women to connect with their strength, overturning centuries of conditioning which convinces women that they are the 'weaker sex'. As much as learning techniques of physical self defence, Wenlido training involves the ovulation of a woman from passive victim into a strong capable individual who can control her own life.

Those who are interested in learning and taking this skill to other women have to undergo an in depth and long training for almost 27 days training which takes place in 3 phases. As it is an effective tool for women's empowerment, Olakh supported the Training of Trainers (TOT) by organizing a 2 days basic and phase -1 training.

The days basic training was conducted in order to find out appropriate participants who are keen, having long term commitment and interested in taking step further to making many more girls and women safe. Total 12 participants took part in that. As it was national TOT Phase -1 had 20 participants from different organizations and states. In this phase emphasis was made in learning advance Wenlido skills, deepening the understanding of violence against women and assertiveness. Need base communication and trauma healing was also a part of the training.

The TOT had 20 women associated with different organizations working in areas of women's rights, community development and providing health services joining from the states of Gujarat, Jharkand, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The focus areas were perspective building in areas of violence against women, physical and emotional techniques to ensure personal safety, non violent communication and how to create the violence free world. It was a very intensive workshop where women shared their experiences of violence in personal lives and trauma. Group support and collective healing was initiated. The long term goal of Olakh is to train instructors at

regional level where in the long run local women's group continue to impart personal safety skill to other. One of the participant views from evaluation.

- **Celebration of International women's Day with 1000 Peace Women Exhibition**

On the occasion of International women's day Olakh organized the 1000 peace women exhibition in collaboration with Faculty of Fine Arts (Vadodara) and SANGAT (New Delhi) during 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March. The exhibition was arranged by students of Faculty of Fine Arts in a very creative manner. Cards of Peace women were displayed both in Hindi and English languages. The inauguration was done by 6 women nominated for Nobel Peace Prize from Gujarat. They shared their experiences and contributions made to the society. This was followed by peace messages from eminent academicians, artists and Gandhians. A film on these 1000 peace women was also screened.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March a peace walk was organized where 300 people comprising of government officials, teachers, school students, activists and women from our communities participated. Before we began the march, peace and harmony songs, slogans were recited. The participants carried placards with peace messages on them through the entire march. At the end representatives from each group came forward to share their peace messages. During these three days around 1400 people from different walks of life visited the exhibition. Also the contributions of our 15 volunteers who put in lots of hard work with creativity to make this exhibition a success, is noteworthy.

- **Documentary on the Women's Collective Initiative for Justice at the doorstep**

Daniel, a documentary film maker and Ms. Sybille from Medica Mondiale, Germany visited Olakh to make a film on the Alternative Justice System from 25<sup>th</sup> February to 9<sup>th</sup> March, 07'. During Olakh's earlier visit to Germany the process of alternative justice system and journey of women from survivors to change agent was discussed. They found it very useful and innovative and hence planned to make this film. The processes of collective initiative for justice at doorstep, role of women's collective in dispensing justice, how this system is different from the mainstream justice system, perception of police and lawyers for the same were recorded. The first visual footages are ready and the processes for the final documentary will be ready in the near future for larger level dissemination.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

We are glad to share that in this phase one male member joined us as an administrator. We also hired a consultant for accounts and governance whose inputs for financial analysis and planning to design administrative systems are helpful.

Further, we received services from various **volunteers** like a college student who assisted in updating our accession register in the resource centre, **two of the counselees** provided excellent services for food, hospitality and training centre maintenance during national workshops and ten women (including the counselees) provided support for managing the 1000 peace women exhibition. It was an opportunity for learning, sharing and gaining new exposure for them and a great support for team work to Olakh.

Also, during this phase, 4 **international trainees and one national trainee** (from Himachal Pradesh) completed their trainings with us. They were involved in developing the SPSS (a software for doing data analysis) package in the counseling centre, organizing of the youth camp and 1000 peace women exhibition.

**Ms. Janet, a retired professor** from the US spent 10 days with us and gave her inputs on the organizational policy, developing space and program proposals. Our counselor due to personal reasons left Olakh in March 07.

During the last six months we had 61 visitors at Olakh that comprises of individuals who were students, researchers, activists, NGO and institutional members (national and international), government officials and other individuals from the society. They came to seek information and support of different kinds.

#### **ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE**

During this period the half yearly audit for the period of April to September, 06 was completed. Financial analysis of 18 months and the tentative budget plan was done. Progress reporting to EED and other partners (World Day of Prayer, Germany) was done. We are very happy to share that both our partners have shown an interest to support us in the future.

Further, two Board meetings were organized on 20<sup>th</sup> January and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2007. The major focus was on development of newly acquired organization's space, resource mobilization for the on going programmes and the new premises, as well as reflections on these programmes and activities.

As part of the social security for the team, we introduced the Gratuity benefit scheme at Olakh, renewed the accident and medical policies. Apart from this we put our energy in developing the new space as a training centre with essential, minimum facilities.

#### **Assets:**

For effective and efficient programmatic functioning we need appropriate facilities. Keeping this in mind we invested in furniture and fixtures, equipments like refrigerator, water purifier, water heater and digital camera.

## FEMINIST DOCUMENTATION AND RESOURCE CENTRE

During this period we focused developing the user friendly software with the help of professionals for adequate search and data management. We also acquired new resources like books, films and documentaries, posters, etc. for the centre. Our book “What is Patriarchy? “ (In Gujarati) and a leaflet on “Male Responsibility to Stop Violence against Women” have been given for reprinting.

Apart from the following material has been generated from the various trainings, workshops, exhibition organized by Olakh:

- Readers for personal safety and trauma counseling.
- Cloth posters on peace
- Draft presentations on gender, patriarchy and feminism

### **Material development on Body Literacy with holistic Health:**

Olakh since its beginning has been working for adolescent girls issues like body literacy and sexuality. It has addressed diverse groups of women and adolescent girls in terms of regional area, age, education and language. This has brought in fruitful and meaningful impacts from all over. Thus, it has been realized these areas need to be focus upon where material is an important aspect for the training. Many organizations also demand to have such training as well as material once they come to know about it. Looking at this need of the hour, Olakh with the help of a grass root expert, Ms. Daivshala who has a wide experience in area of women's health and disseminating information through adolescent girls fair, initiated the process of material development in the months of February and March 07'.

This process involves much brain storming and discussions. During this time we were able to conclude upon the needs of the adolescent girls, and then collected appropriate pictures, designed posters, games and activities. Stories, slogans and captions were also collected. The process is on going and would be finalized in the coming phase.

### **On going works:**

#### **• Collection of material:**

An approximate of around 1, 066 new resources that includes collection of books (872), posters (27), films and documentaries (26), music for relaxation (22), etc. was made during this phase. **(Annexure 1 – resource positions).**

#### **• Circulation and Dissemination of the material:**

##### **• Facilitation for Users (external):**

In this phase a total of 48 individuals (an average of 8 users per month) made use of the resource centre for their different programmes, activities and self learning. This includes students (19), home makers (8), women survivors (2), individuals from organizations (4) and others (17). **(Annexure 2 – circulation and dissemination of resources with users).**

In this phase, a total of 639 (includes external and internal usage) resources were referred and circulated was made. Through this circulation and dissemination a total of 2, 337 individuals were reached to, both with our external and internal users.

The various forms that were largely referred to were posters for imparting more information, awareness, books for references, films and documentaries for gaining a deeper insights into

different issues like body literacy, legal matters, sexuality, conceptual clarity on gender, violence, etc.

The major programmes and activities through which the dissemination and circulation has been possible includes the capacity and perspective building trainings of the community survivor women like body literacy, gender, sexuality, legal and conceptual trainings of violence, patriarchy, etc. Further, it also includes the training inputs given to other organizations and groups like violence and gender, health awareness and legal trainings with Pradan, self defense TOT (phase 1) done in collaboration, body literacy for school teachers (Anand, Dediypada) and Trauma workshop. This along with use by students, other NGO activists for their programmes and activities.

## FEMINIST COUNSELING AND INTERVENTION CENTER WITH HEALING AND SUPPORT

Olakh continued with the services of helpline and face to face counseling.

### FACE – TO – FACE COUNSELING

Over the last 6 months Olakh has continued to provide a space where women can drop in as and when they wished. This space is safe, secure and non – judgmental and is a place where they can express their worries and distresses and gain advice on how to solve their troubles. During this period, Olakh has also provided temporary shelter as well as referrals for particular cases. Referrals were made to lawyers, psychiatrists and shelter homes. Olakh has also facilitated, with other parties intervention into cases. 1 home visit was also carried out.

A total of 23 new cases were addressed in this phase. Counselees ranged in the age group from 16 to 60 years. 21 of these were registered by women and 2 were registered by men. Of the women who registered cases, 16 were Hindu, 2 Christian and 4 were Muslims.

Of these 23 new cases, 12 cases consisted of only 1 session. In these cases the counselees needed a one – off space to express themselves and voice their problems. In 7 cases the counselees were taking their own line of action to resolve their problems and so came to the Counseling Centre on irregular basis, according to when they needed to share and obtain advice. 3 of the 23 new cases have been solved and 1 is continuing. Also there were 26 follow-up cases. 17 cases consisted of 3 to 10 sessions. In 9 cases there was just 1 follow-up session. The average length of a session is 1.5 hours.

- Issues faced by the counselees

- Denied property rights after separation from husband
- Denied child custody
- Severe beating by husband
- Bigamy
- No compensation or care by sons
- Harassment by neighbors
- Parents restricting on mobility and education
- Mental and emotional torture inflicted by parents
- Forgery by husband or boyfriend
- Mental health problems i.e. paranoia, depression

***“I came to know about Olakh’s Helpline through the Yellow Pages Phone Directory. From there I searched for Olakh. During this search the word ‘Olakh’ was always in my mind and I realized that I am a woman who has lost her identity” Darshana, a counselee who had been beaten up and severely tortured by her husband.***

***“When I entered Olakh I read on a poster ‘Male dominance destroys a woman’ and I felt that I was in the right place. It gave me a lot of courage and confidence. Then I enjoyed the food and eating together with everyone. I have never experienced so much love.”***

***“I saw a poster in the Olakh Counselling Centre, it read, “Do you experience violence, abuse or discrimination? Do you experience loneliness, helplessness? Call or Visit us at...” I realized that this was my space” Kaveli, a counselee who had a lot of suspicion of her husband and parent in-laws, shared with us.***

- Challenges

- Middle class women are dependent financially, emotionally and physically. They cannot act independently and do not make decisions for themselves.
- High self pity in counselees.
- Protection of perpetrators by counselees i.e. ‘my husband is good, I don’t want to punish him’.
- The roots of violence against women being in the institutes of marriage and family.

### **HELPLINE**

The toll – free telephone Helpline is a space where callers can express their anxieties and share their dilemmas and worries. The callers (also the face to face counselees) make use of the Helpline to inform Olakh of the progress of their cases.

The counselee’s worries typically concern ill – health or children’s education. They cry, voice their anger, helplessness and insecurity to the counselor. Calls are made by women but also by husbands, in – laws, friends and very occasionally by their well wishers. During this phase, a total of 710 calls were attended. **(Annexure 3 – Quantitative analysis of calls)**



## COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

### PROMOTING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION MECHANISMS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### **Present Scenario:**

As shared with, in the last phase along with the city, our community and the collective women also experienced unrest in their lives. As a co – traveler, we too realized the hidden pain, fear and insecurity of the self, loved ones and the community. Though in this phase the environment fell back to normalcy as people on the large have accepted such incidences as a part of their lives and thus they have learned to cope with them for survival.

This phase witnessed the culture of co – existence and interdependence of each other as the festivals of Diwali and Eid, the major festivals of both (Hindu and Muslim) communities were celebrated together with the sprit of love and sisterhood. The families saw a good flow of income due to the festive season, businesses were booming in new heights and spirit, the whole city experiencing a bright, joyous mood.

The following months also observed the same flavor as the festivals of Moharram, kite flying and Holi fell during the same time. They too went off without any disturbances or conflict mainly as these occasions involve large gatherings of people and have a history of violence and riots emerging out of them. This was with the efforts of the law enforcers that had made adequate arrangements taking precautions and the masses at large obeying the laws. A feeling that “time is the best healer” prevailed in everyone’s heart. Though it is also felt that still differences prevail as there is only a very thin line in between. One incidence of minor conflict can any time spark of great problems, like earlier times.

Further, the government’s continued plans for the city’s beatification by removal of slums, widening roads, has created much panic in the lives of the peoples as now the phase wise demolition is on its way. Every day they witness the areas being measured and marked, notices being displaced for date to vacant the localities. The people have to either move their belongings or if they are not willing to co operate, their houses, shops, etc. are raised down to the ground. So it is like a sword hanging on people’s heads. People are thus in a distress with no alternative place to go, the houses having built by saving on every bit with hardship and suddenly out of no where they stand loose with nothing in hand. This agony is killing them day by day. We at Olakh are standing by all our communities and have joined hands with other organizations who are working on this particular issue to negotiate with the authorities, stage the needs and demands of the people and the protests.

Now moving on to the on going programmes of the community work. We continued with the capacity and perspective building of women survivors of violence and conflict, in the process to make them change agents.

#### **WOMEN’S COLLECTIVE INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE – DOORSTEP COUNSELING:**

This being one of the major works of the community, the concentration is laid on collective building process. Today the women’s collective function from only Kalyan Nagar (the urban community) as it’s has created it’s identity as a space and platform to seek justice primarily to women and marginalized section of the community. The strong belief that every woman is capable of bringing change and can make her own decisions over runs the collective. It functions twice a week (Thursday and Friday)

The major change in the pattern of operation of this body is that unlike earlier times when the functioning was done from a one room centre in Kalyan Nagar, today the collective operates from an 'open space' under a tree, near a temple, opposite this one room centre. The selection of this open space was also planned and done with the collective consent of the women. The reasons behind are firstly to strengthen the already developed identity of the collective and its women as an alternative justice system in and around the community, increasing confidence of these women to face the public domains and lastly to increase the participation of the locals. This saw a major change in our women as it needs great amount of strength and willingness to sit out in the open and face people from your own community, the general public. The women have thus learned to support each other also as few come from other communities (Maretha and Fagvel Nagar). Also, now the area leaders have started showing interest in the collective's processes.

In these six months a total of 65 cases were addressed by the women's collective where, 35 were new cases (10 Hindus, 9 Muslims and 17 Dalit) and 30 have been the follow up of earlier cases (8 Hindus, 7 Muslims and 15 Dalit). On an average a minimum of 5 to 10 sessions are taken for various cases. The time involved in these sessions come up from 2 to 5 hours. The sessions involves the processes of taking oral history, call for individual counseling, dialogue with different parties, making agreements, documentation, fact finding, and home visit to the counselee and also visits to police stations court or other services, etc.

The major issues that were addressed are domestic violence that includes physical emotional, mental harassment at in – law's house as well parental, restriction on mobility, not giving food, extramarital affair, property rights, Stree Dhan recovery, heavy restriction on self decision making, police atrocities, insecurity of spouses, attempt to suicide, forcible sex in marriage, drug addiction, isolation, acute depression due to violence, etc. Apart from these there have been issues of fights and conflict within the community as well as with other communities.

More over understanding of various women's issues has increased – single women, decision making, identity of divorced women, right over child's birth – to go for abortion, raising voice against violence, unwed mothers, rape with marriage. For an example ***Ramila (named changed) a sister of one of our collective women had conceived and was 8 months pregnant. Her boyfriend ran away from the village and her parents were not ready to keep her so she was brought to the collective by her sister. The collective very warmly accepted her and discussed with her about her opinion of having the child so that they could negotiate accordingly with her family. After she decided firmly that she did wanted, she was brought to her sister's house where she delivered a boy. The collective contributed funds towards the same that she can also utilize for the health care of child and herself. Meanwhile, they women negotiated with her parents, her estranged husband and the family of her boyfriend. But sadly the child died due to illness and then with much discussion the parents (Ramila's) took her back with them as she refused to go with her husband.***

The processes like writing of letters, home visits ,fact finding, meeting and visiting police station for registering complains, meeting advocates, documentation of the oral history, and so on now sees an increased involvement of women from the collective. Thereby, increasing the opportunities for their capacity and perspective building. For an example; ***Pushpa who is a survivor herself, has fought for seeking her divorce and Stree Dhan through the collective, has now become one of the a strong pillars of collective due to her increased understanding of the issues, active participation in discussions, trainings, meetings, taking initiatives, etc. now she also assists in documentation and seeing her others have started taking initiatives.***

And we are very happy to share as mentioned earlier that during this phase the major achievement of the collective and its women was the recording of the documentary of their processes, along with different aspects of the women's lives, the area features, etc. This has created a great opportunity of making their work visible at the global levels. As observed, the uniqueness of the collective lies in women's representation from different castes and religions, sitting together along with survivors of violence in a public domain to address issues of justice. They find a possible way out of the crisis, and empower the counselees to take control over one's life and face the consequences of their decision. The collectives give more importance to human relationships rather than social identities.

### **CREATIVE EXPRESSION DAY:**

This activity saw its completion of one year on this 8<sup>th</sup> of March, on the International Women's Day, where women have kept their promise to meet once a month to celebrate, rejoice and share their life experiences and get information on different issues of their lives. During this phase also the trend continued where on an average participation of women was around 60 to 70.

**October 06:** As we generally see that women in order to keep their family healthy most of the times neglect their own health. Keeping this in mind, an 'Eye camp' was organized for the collective women and their families. The doctors voluntarily supported us for this cause. Our women along with their family members came for the checkup. They also got the glasses at reduced rates. Now we see them using the glasses they work at home or outside.

**November 06':** In this month no specific day was celebrated as we continued with the capacity and skill building trainings. Though this month a meeting with Kirsten from EED, who was on a visit to Olakh, was organized with the collective's women. We also invited women from Mahila Patch Work organization (Ahmedabad) who have been involved in imparting training of patch work to our women. They shared about their experiences and time spent with the women. The collective women to express their gratitude presented Olakh with an aquarium as they felt that they have also become alive like those fishes after they got associated with Olakh. But as we do not believe in creating boundaries around ourselves, keeping the fish in an enclosure was not advisable. So it was discussed with the collective and they agreed upon the same.

**December 06:** The focus of the month was to build an understanding about the Domestic Violence Bill that is now an Act, where as per the demand of the Act a protection officer from the police had not been appointed and that majority of women and their family member are involved in the unorganized sector so what could be the law for them. More the aspects like provinces made by Government for the citizens were also focused upon. So a collaborative programme was organized with the officials of the Labor Court, police, Faculty of Law where they shared the information regarding like minimum rate of labor at urban work field and rural i.e. agriculture related work, if compensations are to be met, where to apply, whom to meet. Secondly, the police role towards supporting the issues of violence when they approach the officials. This is a good beginning for creating support from these government structures.

**January 07:** To start the year with new strength, energy and joy we planned a New Year party along with collective women in the evening. Here we danced, sang enjoyed together. It was heartening to see that women had negotiated with their families to come for this celebration as it was held in the evening hours. Moreover, they had never had the opportunity where they were the special invitees, were welcomed and paid special attention to. Also, no one had to face any type of violence before or after the celebration unlike the usual times so this too was a new beginning.

**February 07:** This month, as already shared before, saw the initiative of the collective sitting out in the open space. The women were involved with the selection, the cleaning, leveling of the ground for this. Said one of the collective women Khuslawati, ***“Women’s issues are always discussed in the closed homes, in the four walls, keeping them very confidential. But now as we have started sitting in the open which needs much strength, confidence. Though we have been able to build our identity and make our voices heard”.***

**March 07:** This was the period to celebrate a year’s journey of creative expression days that we celebrated together, to share, learn and in the process empowered ourselves. So to mark this day and also to acknowledge the contribution of women from different parts of world in different fields, the 1000 Peace women exhibition was organized. The collective women apart from inviting their families and friends went in different communities to spread the word around, asking and inviting people to come to be a part of this event. On the last day they also joined hands in the peace march with much enthusiasm.

## **WOMEN LEADERS**

As mentioned in the last phase, the selected women leaders have played an important role in the planning of the different activities of the community programme like creative celebrations, festival celebrations, participation and representation at different forums like demolition protest rallies, liquor prohibition rally, etc. They are also consulted for the planning, scheduling of the perspective and skill building trainings including the financial aspects of conveyance, stipend, etc. They also sit together to plan, to reflect and discuss on how to involve new women as leaders, etc. Though they have started making their presence felt in the community and outside, but they still have to learn much.

## **LIVELIHOOD SKILL BUILDING AND CONCEPTUAL TRAININGS**

**To continue the process of skill building (patch work) started of in the last phase, the first batch of women were further trained** for 10 days to sharpen their skills of which 15 have been selected who can perfectly carry out the given assignments and also 11 of these 15 women have made it a dream to have a career in this field. So they were given further 15 days to practice and start with a small assignment to boost their confident.

At present they have an on going work on hand. At present, the focus is also on neatness and correct art work along with need to increase in the speed. In this regards even an exposure visit was organized to see and visualize the other groups working with these skills.

These women were then also trained by the students from the department of Clothing and Textiles, Vadodara for three month (twice a week) on different methods, types of clothing, etc. they were able to prepare 20 such articles that were put on display in the department’s exhibition. And now the focus lays on making them expert artisans so further skill of understanding concepts of color, cloth texture, different design, different art forms, etc.

In this phase, along with patch work, we **also initiated the training for Stationary articles**. This at present focused only on paper bag making in which 15 women have acquired the skill but only two can be further trained.

Lastly, the group was also exposed with the alternative livelihood skills of a mid day meal program (like a catering service). It provides these services to the aganwadis (day care of the government) and school, which creates scope of employment for the women.

### Conceptual trainings:

The first phase of conceptual trainings was done with the **understanding of gender and patriarchy from 27<sup>th</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> December 06'** that included topics of institutions strengthening patriarchy, difference between sex and gender, discrimination and violence created by structures and dream to create self and collective and knowledge of the women's movement. **We had a total of 43 women participating in this training.**

Through this training a visible impact can be seen as the women have now gained a clear understanding about sex and gender, i.e. biologically we women are equal to male where only reproductive systems are different, which is our strength. They also now understood how various institutions play a role to control their reproductive rights and sexuality and hence result in all this discrimination. Most women have clearly understood the violence done on them in family and state yet to build the understanding on issues by religion and others, needs to be further furnished. Shared an active member of the collective, Jashoda, ***"Now I have understood that fasting is an impose process by the religion which further oppresses the women. But now on I will never do it and neither will ask my daughter to do so in the pretext of getting a good husband"***.

This training has started the momentum within women to come together to run the collective initiative for justice and sensitive towards the process and make strategies to combat violence and in the process build solidarity. Said one of the collective women Pushpa, ***"I will never point at any women saying that all is your fault but will stand by her side, as I have understood that all this is created by the societal structures"***.

In the next month, from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> December 06 body literacy training was carried out for the women where 35 of them participated. The issues included knowing one's body, body mapping, menstrual cycle and pregnancy, sex of a child, reproductive rights and control, different methods of contraception, nutritional diet, etc. As Rukmani, a collective women stated, ***"I have become a mother of 12 children but I have not seen my entire body. So after training gets over, I will buy a mirror to see my entire body"***. Even Kanta stated, ***"I will teach my daughter clearly about menstrual cycle and how one gets pregnant. We all take a pledge that we will never call a women banja (one who is unable to conceive) and blame her for not bearing a male child"***. On discussing the aspect of sexuality, Kalpana shared that, ***"When my husband use to touch my vagina it gave me much pleasure, I like it"***.

The third training held in this phase was on Legal literacy from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February, 07' where 40 women participated. The information shared was about different legal structures of court, difference between criminal and civil courts, where women issues are fought, reform made by women movement in the law, the constitution's structure, difference between NC and FIR, different justice giving systems in society, difference between justice and punishment. This training has strong impact on women as they have understood the difference between NC and FIR, the procedure to register ones complain, maintain important documents, proofs, importance of witnesses, etc. Most importantly, they now have a better understanding of the way justice is being rendered by their own collective.

### Other exposures and capacity building programmes:

- Personal safety training where two counselees, were promoted to gain basic and advance training for 16 days at Pune in Maharashtra.
- Play on female feticide was organized by United Way of Baroda on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec, 06' at Maretha village where collective women from all the three communities shared about the alarming

situation in Gujarat as female girl child's ratio is reducing which will effect the society. Around 200 people joined in to observe and learn from this play.

- Rally and protest against the government's demolition drive was organized by Jan Andolan on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 06' where our collective women participated and joined in to raise their voice for demands of alternatives to be provided for communities whose houses were being up rooted. 10 women from our women's collective participated there.
- A protest against liquor was organized by on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 07' at Ahmedabad. Gujarat has a vast coastal area and special economic zones are coming in a big way. To attract the foreign investments and sustain their needs the government plans to bring off the liquor prohibition policy in the state. The state which was known as dry state will have open sell of liquor. It will have adverse impact on lives of common people in general and women in particular. Here, 30,000 people across the state joined from different groups and movements. 10 women participated from the women's collective.

## CONCLUSION

This phase was full of exciting programmes and activities like the documentary on the alternative justice system, 1000 peace women exhibition, trainings of women survivors of violence and conflict and trainings of other organizations as well as designing plan of the new space.

*Holding hands, nourishing hands,  
Sorting hands, discreet hands  
Generous hands, enabling hands  
Relaxing hands, comforting hands  
Creative hands, dreaming hands  
Praying hands, soulful hands  
Weavers of human tapestry  
All women's hands...*

*By Maria Socorro Pauline*

## Refference

### **Expertise Building of Team members**

Capacity-building is an ongoing process for team members, achieved through attending conferences and seminars or taking systematic courses. Because we have faced so many crises in the past five years, we have not been able to to focus on building individualised capacities for the team and so, we have tried to do by sending various members for specialised trainings as they become available. Two members Ms. Mamta and Ms. Bela had an opportunity to attaned very intensive courses on Feminist capacity building on gender, peace and sustainable development and Personal safety.

## ANNEXURES

### Annexure 1: Resource positions

No.	Resources	Stock
1.	Books and reports (Fiction, non fiction and issue based- in Hindi, Gujarati, English)	5, 609
2.	Magazines in Stock (English-107, Hindi-43, Gujarati-60)	210
3.	Regular magazines (English-11, Hindi-4, Gujarati-13)	28
4.	Posters	473
5.	Organizational reports	131
6.	Leaflets (Violence, health, Gender)	143
7.	Brochures	511
8.	Catalogs	149
9.	Films & Documentaries	210
10.	Audio cassettes	76
11.	Kits (Health, law, violence, child rights)	72
12.	Planners	19
13.	Diaries	31
14.	Calendars	31
15.	Directories	14
16.	Dictionaries	28
17.	Maps	24
18.	Issue based articles	1, 048
19.	Other material in form of greeting cards, badges, stickers	-
20.	Total double copy material : Books a. Gujarati - 1511 b. Hindi - 485 c. English - 544	2, 540
	Total	11, 315
21.	Total missing items	123
	<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>11, 192</b>

### Annexure 2: Circulation and Dissemination of Resources (external)

Months	No. of Users	Forms of resources	No. of resources
October, 2006	6	Books	10

November, 2006	7	Books	7
		Posters	6
		Films/ Documentaries	4
December, 2006	10	Books	14
		Films/ Documentaries	4
		Leaflets	2
January, 2007	4	Books	6
February, 2007	15	Books	11
		Films/ Documentaries	3
		Posters	34
		Magazines	18
March, 2007	6	Books	4
		Films/ Documentaries	7
		Posters	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	-	<b>135</b>

## Annexure 2: Quantitative analysis of Helpline calls

Number of Calls per Category

Month	Follow-up calls	New calls	Blank calls	Wrong Nos.	Administrative calls	Total calls
October, 06'	61	5	18	4	14	102
November, 06'	89	-	22	4	32	147
December, 06'	88	9	17	7	15	136
January, 07'	66	12	18	20	14	130
February, 07'	76	8	12	18	-	114
March, 07'	35	3	30	3	10	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>710</b>