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**REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OF**

**OCTOBER 2007' TO MARCH 2008'**

**SUBMITTED TO**

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**Our Abode, Our Space...**

**O almighty, by putting forth this family in our care, you have put immense trust in us,  
We are thankful for that and would like to have your blessings to keep this faith shining  
always...**

**Give us now the sweetness in the heart that we keep this abode lively,  
That none of our faults, stubbornness or lack of sensitivity would disturb the peace and joy  
of this home,  
And we perform our responsibility of always keeping the people, for whom it is, happy...**

**Give us the strength of love by which we can create such a home where no one feels the  
burden or pressure from the other,  
Where everyone blossoms like a flower and dialogue in the tunes of music,  
Where everyone has the opportunity to be a free individual,  
Where each one realizes the balance between freedom and responsibility,  
Where everyone and each other have the motivation,  
Where from a child to the known, all are recognized as they are,  
Where the most privileged or the most down trodden are looked with the same care...**

**And give us that simplicity where we can enjoy the innocent and pure joys of life together:  
The joy of the open air, the sky of the falling evening,  
The joy from gazing the stars and the joy of singing songs on a full moon night,  
The joy to love flowers, trees, animals, books,  
The joy of making others happy,  
The joy of finding some time always from work to get together and pray...**

**Not what magnificent or marvelous or creative 'space' that we have build,  
And how much wealth we have gathered –  
But for how many has this holding been a shelter in need,  
How many have felt consoled, cared for and belongingness in its air,  
Should be our sense of achievement...**

**We would not give those who come here any wealth or materials to keep for,  
But pure humanity, love and immense trust as a heritage,  
And that in one of their lives turning point, they welcome you,  
And when they fly away to build their nests,  
At that time, the web of this home, this culture is spread,  
And then this home is filled with your peaceful loneliness...**

**Translated from 'Param Samipe' by Mubasshera**

***Rejoice...Celebrate...Enlighten the Soul...***

As we all know that almost every achievement and success is an outcome of a long dreamt, visualized and desired mission resultant from the circumstances that either an individual or a group faces. The same is what happened with Olakh which, faced and experienced different 'ups' and 'downs' in the last 5 years.

To begin with, the roots of visioning our own, independent organizational premises were laid after the 2002 communal carnage that struck the state of Gujarat and gave it a hard blow. Olakh, following its path of humanity and compassion had plunged in to help, support and guide the victims and survivors in the hours of need. This is when, we experienced the first stroke of resistance and dislike from our neighborhood (a Hindu dominated, residential area) for the nature of work that we undertake which involves intervention with the poor and marginalized people, who come or are brought to our office.

Apart from harassing the team members by breaking their vehicles, we also faced their wrath in terms of daily arguments and conflict over petty matters. We had never imagined or dreamt until then of having our own premises as for a feminist women's group, functioning in a patriarchal, male dominated society, is a challenge for a lifetime. Thus, working from a rented or own space would not mean or change the over all scenario for us. And also, to find a rented place would mean another challenge by itself especially when you are working with the poor and minority groups, in residential area. And buildings in commercial areas are then just out of question with their high market rates as far as the rent is to be considered.

Though, the constant pressure of the neighborhood did make us realize that it would be a 'little' different and somewhat 'free' feeling, to be grounded in our own premises, where we get to decide what should or shouldn't be done, most of the times.

Also, functioning from the rented premise (with support from funders), we did face other limitations and hurdles. The major difficulty was that being a rented place we were always uncertain as to when we would be asked to move out by the landlord due to the unsure renewal of our contract. And this did create lot of anxiety amongst the team as this necessary shift would mean moving all the resources and infrastructure. This, of course would lead then to a major drain on our limited human, money and material resources. And to share with, we have moved (physically) twice considering the need and demands of the work.

Besides over a period of time we also came to know that apart from day to day functioning, our office was being used as a drop in center and half way home for women in crises with no where to go, the women who were rescued from a violent situation and so on and who were then kept in the office until she could find or make alternative arrangement for herself. This made us feel conscious of the fact that we might be leaving the women half way through her struggle with no roof on her head...

And to add to this, the small rented space severely limited our efforts to conduct trainings, workshops and meetings with different groups. For half way home and drop in centre this space was too small and inadequate forcing us to limit them and carry them out in other places as and when the need arose.

Thus, the roots of having our own space were laid. Though after this thought not much was done in the time that came after until two of our board members, Ms. Abha and Ms. Vibhuti along with our friend and well wisher Ms. Alpa came across this old building (now our new office) and decided to go for it. It was their prompt initiative and decision that the premise was bought.

And here, we would like to mention the timely support that we received from Bread for the World, Germany (one of our funders), our every co operative board, our dear friend Ms. Kamla Bhasin, and the team that brought in its entire savings, which enabled us to purchase the building.

As it is said, one right decision in good faith always leads to a just destination. So similarly after the decision to have our own premises, which was earlier never even imagined, was taken, the place was bought. This was a day of joy for all of us and even a time of relief when we purchased our own building on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2005. And then, the days came of our first day in the home, the tree plantation, getting the home in our name and then the first residential training in the centre.

Even, when we look back today, a clear visualization of all these significant events just moves in front of our eyes. All the days had the presence of our team (past and present), the board and well wishers which has always brought in collective strength and energy.

Now though the premise was bought and deal finalized, the question of making it appropriate as a women's centre with all the facilities that goes with it, came up. Olakh, being a trust and comparatively small organization, could not afford to build up the entire premise, a new or even go for major renovation all of a sudden. And once again, the board, team, friends and family stood strong by our side, along with the support of funding partners like Medica Mondiale, Germany and EED, Germany, the renovation was planned for.

As the initiative had been taken alternative spaces for women ethnicity, on which lies Olakh's **very enthusiastic and (now a dear friend and board showed immense interest and Olakh's vision and mission.** and selfless inputs, efforts and day she entered our office. The has nurtured out of her mind to recognize the contributions of much pain in the entire renovation plan with color done under her closely supervision with giving her professional time on day to day basis. **All this for free as volunteers and contribution towards the women's cause.** If it is to be analyzed, the entire expenditure till date would have come around **Rs. 1 lakhs if she has not offered her volunteer service.**



with a great spirit of providing across religion, caste, class and uniqueness, **we even found a committed women architect member) Ms. Punita, who given volunteer services of in** She has been giving us her timely much needed support since the new office is mainly a creation that and heart. And here we would like Ms. Punita an architect who took designing and implement the combination and arrangement **All this for free as volunteers and contribution towards the women's cause.** If it is to be analyzed, the entire expenditure till date would have come around **Rs. 1 lakhs if she has not offered her volunteer service.**

**And today, we are joyfully roofed under this lively, warm and energetic 'haven' that is ours and for those who are in need and are at those crossroads of life where they have no one to hold on to and no where to seek shelter. And everyone who is with us in the march towards justice, peace and humanity.**



And thus, we take much pride to share that this period was one that Olakh will surely remember and cherish for a lifetime. The final renovation plan for the office premises was passed and implemented. All the legalities for the name transfer were fulfilled and with much efforts of the entire team for packing, cleaning, shifting and organizing, on the significant day of 8<sup>th</sup> March, International Women's Day, we finally moved in to **our own, new organizational 'space'.**

**A space that we had dreamt for long today stands up front for us.** With Olakh's foundation laid on providing and creating emotional and physical spaces for women, this 'holding' of its own gives a new, energetic feeling to move towards our vision and strive harder for the mission set.

As we have mentioned, this dream has been now realized with the keen efforts, commitment and good wishes of our funding partners, our ever supportive board members, Olakh team (past and present),

students, trainees, volunteers, family, friends and all the well wishers. Beginning from the renovation plan, the carpentry, color, electrification to even plumbing, much hard work and deep sense of determination to get the best things done were put in.



*The renovation in progress...*

To share with, our new space is a **colorful, lively premise** that gives all the people coming in a warm, welcoming feeling along with much **positive energy and vibes** to the team that works here. Every corner has its own significant and special story to share and this is spoken from the excellent portraits and pictures that have been put up all over. Even the resources (in the resource centre) look like a capturing attraction for everyone. And with different 'spaces' defined for every purpose, working and spending time here has now gained a complete new meaning to it.

At present, the **renovation is 50% through** and the **arrangement is going on** along with the day to day programme and planned activities. We hope to complete this renovation by June 08' before the on set of monsoon. Thus, we can say that the present premise fulfills the basic requirements of functioning.

The entire designed training area is being utilized as the resource centre with library at present and it still has no adequate bathroom or sanitation facility. We plan to construct a 1<sup>st</sup> floor above, a part of which could then be the resource centre with full facilities of reading space, A.V. area and so on. Also, an emergency shelter cum half way home for women in crises and others is planned. **Though the actual planned structure needs additional resource mobilization, for which the efforts are on.**

So now we can say that the primary 'moving in' with the arrangement is done and the outcome is more work on hand as many documents from all the departments have been retrieved asking for additional efforts to put in by us. **Thus, this will take us another 3 months to finally set ourselves in the new 'space'.**

### **Team Members**

Here, we would like to share with you the present situation of Olakh, where in the midst of renovation, packing, moving in and then settling down in the new office has almost drained all of us. We have been working day and night, like for almost more than 15 hours a day and this has now created an important hour of the need to sit back, take a break and rejuvenate ourselves.

All this has made us realize that now we all feel that we need to sit back for a while and enjoy thoroughly the new beginning in the new air, with the routine work but with a little slow pace. Now nature has also forced us to act in this situation and we have decided to calm down a bit for three months to gain the breathing space. Even the board members have suggested taking a month's break as this is the need of the hour. We all need to take care of ourselves and each other and this, we find to be the best period. Thus, the new appointment also, we plan to begin from July 08' with a new action plan, new energy and new strength.

And to share with, most of the old team members who had been associated with Olakh for more than 8 years have left for different circumstances and few are completing their respective responsibilities and assignments before they leave. Though this has been like a turning point in Olakh's journey.

## The Germany Visit

- Planning for the Justice conference – ‘Seeking Justice, Getting Law’:** Nimisha travelled to Germany during October – December 07’, firstly for the planning of the justice conference with the above mentioned titled, planned to be held in September, 2008’ by Medica Mondiale based in Cologne. She is part of the planning committee and would be presenting a paper on the alternative justice system with focus on grassroots’ women’s initiative called the **Collective Initiative for Justice**.
- First phase preparation of the module on ‘Diversity, Trauma Healing and Conflict Transformation’:** Then, in association with Medica Mondiale, Germany she participated in the first phase workshop to develop the above mentioned module as expert personnel. The next phase of the same is planned to be held in June, 2008’.

- Gender training:** Thirdly, she conducted Gender for the Afghanistan Germany.



conducted training on team of Medica Mondiale,

- The Human Rights Award:** And lastly, to the joy and honor of all of us, she (Ms. Nimisha Desai – one of the founder members and present co-ordinator of Olakh) was honored with the Human Rights Award at Weimar city, Germany on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 2007 – International Human Rights Day.



This indeed was another memorable day for us and we all felt much joy for the recognition that she has been bestowed upon for her hard work, commitment, vision and love for the human kind. This achievement was widely covered in the international media. Also, Ms. Nimisha was interviewed by the German radio, over the telephone in India and by the media during her visit there.

### Resource Mobilization

During this period we have been able to mobilize 50% of the ongoing project grant and are continuing our efforts for the remaining 50% for which we have send across the proposals and waiting for a response from the respective organizations. And looking into Olakh’s present situation with the decision of our board members, we have also reduced our activities and grant request accordingly.

Also, to share with we would like to bring to your notice that as far as the building grant is concerned, we have been blessed to have the support, in cash and kind from our board, the team and well wishers. As we have mentioned earlier about the volunteer services of friends like Ms. Punita, we would also like to

recognize the contributions of Ms. Sayeda, Ms. Kamla and Ms. Abha, who have been all through and gave us immediate loans towards the same when we were in a dire need. The team members too immediately put in their entire savings towards the building grant, as a sense of solidarity for the cause.

**Thus, today we are roofed under this new building, where the immediate needs and facilities for daily functioning are fulfilled but we need around Rs. 30 lakhs for making it a full fledged women's resource and training centre with a fully equipped training centre, emergency cum shelter home and the resource centre with A/V and reading spaces.**

And lastly, to draw your concern towards the situation of funding in a state like Gujarat which is a considered to be very advance and developed is quite difficult and challenging for Women's Group especially feminist groups like ours. The world at large knows about the state's growth but the very problem lies in the fact that for whom is this growth and development and does it reach to the most marginalized, down trodden and up rooted masses? Thus, for us to raise funds for such victims and survivors, either from government or other parties, is both a challenging as well as difficult task to take up.

### **Presentation on Olakh**

The planned presentation of Olakh, sharing and describing the journey so far, is complete and now requires the final touch up with the new, up dated photographs and translation in Gujarati language for wider reference and use. We have been successful in coming out with a 'hand out' presentation where the core aspects of Olakh's ideology, an over view into its journey, the programme and activities have been detailed. **(Annexure 1 – Over view and Annexure 2 – Program and activities).**

### **Website**

The proposed and planned work on the Olakh's website is through with the partly content being ready. Here, as we have shared that with less number of team members with us, we have been stuck with many deadlines for the same, as a long term technical person has been missing. Now we need time to sit with the designer to finalize the same and hopefully we will be able to launch it by August 08'.

### **Action Based Research**

The first draft for the planned book on the action based research is complete. It's a 700 pages exhaustive document, an in depth material on the study that was carried out with its findings. Now the document needs final editing with experts inputs, suggestions and feedbacks. By August 08' the second draft will be completed and then we plan to have a day long sharing and discussion meeting for the same. And here too it should be mentioned about the inputs of Ms. Vibhuti and Ms. Janet, both of whom are professionals serving and working at national and international levels, who have given their much needed guidance towards the research work from their very busy schedules, voluntarily.

### **Film – Documentary on Olakh**

As we had shared with you before, friends from Germany Ms. Sybille (from Medica Mondiale) and Mr. Daniel (a film maker) had taken the initiative to document the different activities, programmes of Olakh, focusing on the alternative justice system initiated by diverse women survivors of violence and conflict from the grassroots – **Collective Initiative for Justice.**

The extensive coverage that they shot comes around to 45 hours, from which according to the requirements, the translation (from Gujarati/Hindi) in to English has been done. To share with, this was a completely new experience, learning and sharing for us, as it brought out new insights into our work and new skills (of the team) were developed.

As shared by our film maker friend, the film is being made in three languages (subtitles) – English, German and the original version in Gujarati. Also, apart from the justice system **the film also throws light on the different stages of women's lives** (especially those who had approached the collective with their issues), their journeys from victims to survivors to today's empowered women. And lastly, **how the women** by themselves and with collective strength and support **find and create alternatives.**

Now we hope that by August 08' the documentary, the first for Olakh, will be ready to share on a large scale with other like minded people. And here we would like to recognize the contributions of Ms. Sybille and Daniel, who took much pain in the entire coverage of the film, the editing and other aspects without much help from us along with giving their professional time to the project. **All this for free as volunteers and contribution towards the women's cause.** If it is to be analyzed, the entire expenditure till date would have come around **Rs. 6 lakhs if we would have taken the initiative by ourselves to make a film or documentary which till date they have already borne after this project!** This surely is one of the best examples of true friendship and solidarity for the larger cause...

### Rural Intervention

After the identification of a potential fellow (Ms. Madhu) for the rural intervention, during this phase she moved around 250 villages of Dharampur and Kaprada blocks of South Gujarat and from this first phase, 5 villages have been selected so far. To share with, she has been inactive since the last 3 months as she has undergone a major surgery but is back in action. And thus, in the month of July, 08' (hopefully 1<sup>st</sup> July) we plan to carry out a '**plantation drive**' just with the onset of monsoon with the 'mango' plants.

The entire idea is to create common responsibilities amongst the people of the villages, especially the women and youth and also a livelihood opportunity for them. Along with giving common plants to the villages, few families would be given additional plants especially the women for their future livelihood options that would bear fruits after 5 to 6 years.

### Board Meetings

During this period, 2 board meetings were held, one in the month of November, 07' and the other in March, 08'. It was discussed and planned that as Olakh has entered a new phase and many changes have taken place, we would now have more of the focus on capacity and perspective building courses at regional, national and international levels. Also, our friend and architect, Ms. Punita was invited on the board for bringing in more energy and new insights. She has been associated with Olakh for more than a year and after her dedicated and selfless inputs, this decision was taken.

Along with, it is also planned to start with a formal **training of women 'masons' – the very first attempt of it's kind, to create role models.** As it is known that women are never considered to be skilled laborers and are considered to be the 'weaker' sex and so are assigned with the stereotypical gender roles. Thus, to challenge these social taboos, this attempt is being planned and to bring such women on the forefront.

### Networking and Advocacy

In the month of January 08' a young girl was gang raped by her professors in the Patan city of Gujarat. This incident created much upheaval in the entire state with many groups, organizations and sensitive citizens came out and protested to seek justice for the girl. Olakh also joined hands in solidarity.

The team along with the collective women went for different protests, meetings and also prepared by women survivors of collective initiative for justice a **short play called 'Bol tare shu kehvu che?'** (What do you want to say?), on this episode. The play was performed in a public fair and at a meet organized by the state government. Much response and recognition was received from the people as well as the media. The play reached to around 3,000 diverse people.

***"This was an experience of a and hesitations got buried. I got and speak in public, share my and also got visibility in the Sujata.***



***lifetime as all my shyness the confidence to come out own views, raise my voice media", expressed a joyous***

**Capacity Building of Team Members:**

- **Course on Youth Facilitator (5<sup>th</sup> November – 5<sup>th</sup> December, 07’)** – Ms. Asha attended this month long course organized by Jan Vikas, Ahmedabad. The issues and aspects that were covered under this training included globalization and its effects on today’s youth, the different creative and alternative strategies that can be used while working with the young people and the skills that can be used for e.g. vehicle repairing, etc. it also focused on the type perspective, values and qualities a facilitator or leader should possess and develop. Apart from it also talked about creative ways like songs, games, powerful presentations that could be helpful.



**Shared Asha, “I learned how to take responsibilities as my confidence increased a lot after the course and most importantly I came to know how one can deal with conflict in a non – violent way as I also run the collective where we deal with many cases of conflict”.**

- **Training on Right to Natural Resources (11<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 07’)** – Ms. Madhu attended this 12 days training workshop organized by a Pune based institute Masum. The training mainly focused on the various natural resources that we are surrounded by and how the people, mostly those living in the forests and surviving on these resources have different rights to have an access and make use of them.

**Other Programmes:**

- **Gandhi Fair:** This was held in Bajipura village near Surat from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February, 08’. Here, a stall was put up by Olakh with the display theme of ‘gender and body literacy’ for which various posters were put up. Along with, a few samples of home remedies for some health related problems of women and girls. Two life skills games were also put up.



- **United Way Fair:** A 3 days fair of all the NGOs, voluntary organizations and groups was organized by United Way of Baroda (a funding body) from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> February, 08’. Here, too a stall of Olakh was put up with the similar themes of ‘gender and body literacy’ with the home remedies and life skills games. Also, the play prepared on the Patan gang rape was performed for the people gathered in the fair.

**Alternative education – body literacy...**

**Visitors**

In this phase, we had friends from Afghanistan Medica Mondiale, who visited us from 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> March, 08’. This was also a significant week for us as they were the first visitors in our new office from across the borders. This indeed strengthened the South Asian solidarity. After, sharing and discussing about each others works, experiences they were also taken to other women’s organization (in Ahmedabad) to know about the different programmes and strategies used by women’s organizations for the empowerment of the people.



**As expressed by one of them, “Women in the court (collective) are very strong and have no biases of culture or religion. They come together and listen to other women sitting under a tree, without any formal facility because they want to support other women and this is their passion”.**

Also, they were keen to know about the field areas of Olakh and the doorstep counseling through the collective initiative for justice. For this, they were taken to different areas and also to the collective to witness the processes of the same.

**Perspective and Capacity Building Trainings with Women Survivors**

After the capacity building training on collective in the last phase, selection of women for barefoot lawyers and counselors was done where 25 women came forward to join the collective and take it forward. In depth meetings and discussions were carried out with these women regarding who would be the future leaders, the time that they could dedicate and so on.

To share with, there are associated with us on and off perspective building trainings longer and persistent only 25 women, the regular these 25 also, only 9 women become barefoot lawyers initiative for justice at door many women who are in the aspects of the work problems of household and women were then briefed counselors and lawyers and month of November, 07'. In the beginning there was much enthusiasm amongst the group but as the work increased day by day, the notion of taking responsibilities and giving needed time, there arose much hesitation. Also, the stipend that was decided was not comfortable with them, they were not able to settle well with the values of the organization, strike a balance between their personal and professional lives and even few of them lacked basic education. Thus, finally only 2 of them stayed back.



around a 100 women who are and for them the capacity and are being conducted but for a association as 'change agents' ones were selected. From showed the readiness to and counselor to run collective step and to hold the hands of crisis. Continue looking to all needed. The others shared children's responsibilities. The 9 about the concept of barefoot asked them to join from the

Further, after the drama was prepared and performed during the campaign, four from the theatre group were sent for an intensive training to Ahmedabad under the able guidance of Ms. Aditi, a theatre person (also on Olakh's board), to learn more about the same. The team not only learned about techniques of better script writing but also the importance of dialogue delivery, right and prompt expressions that are necessary and they shared the same with other team members.

**8<sup>th</sup> March – International Women's Day**

This as we have earlier shared, was a significant day for all of us as we moved in to our new office space. This time, the celebration was carried out with the women from different diverse communities where all of them were given a warm welcome in the new premises; they were briefed about the processes, efforts and team work that have gone in the new space's creation.



Different people, old and present team members,

funders, our architect, friends, family members, the labor at work were recognized and appreciated for the work done. Also, the entire notion of having our own space was shared with the group. Further, as the cycle camp had commenced on the 7<sup>th</sup> March, the learners as well as the teachers were facilitated with the certificates. Later, the group danced, sang and lastly, with the help of our two artist friends, mural work was carried out with the women on the outer wall of the office. Thus, this became one of the memorable day for all of us.

**International fortnightly Campaign to Stop Violence against Women and Girls’ – 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December**

Every year this fortnight is held with different themes and issues related to women and girls. The main focus lies on creating awareness, sharing ideas and perspectives with people at large on different issues. Similarly, this year the focus was put on the entire life journey of a woman – from birth to childhood, to adolescence, adulthood and then old age.



This year, unlike all the past years, the initiative, planning and implementation for the entire campaign was carried out by the field coordinators (women who have been deeply involved and active in all the area and communities programmes), who have been with Olakh for more than 5 years but functioned largely under the leadership of the more qualified and senior team. Also, the issues taken up were portrayed through ‘a drama’ named ‘Hamari Awaz, Hum Auraton ki Awaz’ (Our Voice, the Voice of Women) for which the script, dialogues and practice, all were carried out under their guidance.

Though, timely inputs and suggestions were taken by other team members. The drama team had 15 diverse women, most of them who have traveled the journey of being victims – to survivors – to today’s change agents.

The play moved along the aspects of the struggles, violence and discrimination a woman faces in her entire life and how she finds ways out from all these cycles of suppressions. It also talked about the different alternative justice systems that are prevalent in our society, one of which is the Collective Initiative for Justice at doorstep run by women themselves. Thus, the drama also became a medium to inform and share about the doorstep counseling with the masses.

The campaign also included on walls of the areas where the campaign was carried out in a consisting of the poorest of minority population with an individuals. And on the last day, Human Rights Day, a small community where the collective where the drama was performed then recognized and certificates.



singing of songs, slogan writing drama was put up. The entire total of 15 diverse communities poor, the marginalized and outreach of 2,000 (approx.) 10<sup>th</sup> December, International gathering was organized in the functions from (Kalyan Nagar) for the people and the team was appreciated by giving those



**Says Asha and Manju, “Firstly, most of the women in our team were very hesitant to perform in the drama as this was their very first time and they were shy. Also, they had never been out of their houses, to speak in front of the public. But after much discussions and dialogues, they agreed to join as they felt the support and strength of each other”.**

At the end, to mark the day, candles were lit to show solidarity towards each other.



**Let there be light...always!**

**Feminist Documentation and Resource Centre**

The stock taking was finalized, resources were re – organized and now after the shifting, they have been set up again. The classification according to the forms and the major categories was carried out and the further bifurcation will be over by June, 08’.

For an extensive and in depth knowledge of classification of resources, their management and organization we have planned to collaborate with HURIDOCs (Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems) International based in Switzerland. We plan to organize this workshop for different resource centres (around 22) of India. It is basically aimed to create a common, user friendly information-data-resource management package. And this would then lead to future networking and advocacy between the resource centres. This will surely be landmark project for Olakh.



- **Collection of Resources:** In this phase a total of **258 new resources** were added to the collection of the resource centre (253 books and 5 posters).



- **Circulation and Dissemination of the Resources:** During this period we saw a total dissemination of **77 resources** of different forms **reaching out to around 150 individuals.** (Annexure 3)

- **Publications and Packages:**

- The process documentation with critical review in Gujarati has been finalized and has gone for printing.
- The policy for gender friendly workplace is finalized and we will be getting a draft printed along with the needed annexure.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> compilation on news paper cutting is over with issue based categorization and now it is ready for the final publication.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of body literacy with holistic health manual is in the process of finalizing as we have now given it to a health expert for final editing. We plan to have a 3-days workshop in August 08' with different experts and consultants from the health sector to come out with the final publication of training module with reference material.

### **Feminist Counseling and Intervention Center with Healing and Support**

The counseling data base, both quantitative and qualitative has been compiled and now needs to be finalized. Also, the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of Helpline journey with quantitative and qualitative data is completed. These compilations focus mainly on the success, the challenges, and the over all violence that the women and girls face in their entire life span.

With regards to the **toll free telephonic women's helpline**, there were a total of **243 calls** where, 73 follow up and 30 new calls. (Annexure 4 for details). For the counseling, there were a total of **62 women's issues** that were dealt with, comprising of 41 new and 21 follow up issues with a diversity of **31 Hindus, 9 Muslims and 22 Dalit**. The collective also undertook a total of **22 visits** that range from home visits, to visits to the police stations and courts.



The **issues and problems** that were mainly dealt with were domestic violence – physical, mental and emotional, extra marital affair, dowry, maintenance, and child custody and property rights. A few others were fights with the neighbors, eve teasing, and forgery in marriage; inter caste marriage, separation and violence from the so called 'upper class' and police.



In the collective, as new and young women have joined, new energy has been instilled in the group. They have started taking up responsibilities and developing new alternatives that were accepted by the people. The group also faced much struggle with regards to the place where they function from.

***One of the community person, Hasmukh bhai, "We have immense faith in this justice process so we come and meet the group and also send any other people who are in need as we know that here all will be heard".***

Over all, the team especially the leaders have gained immense confidence along with taking responsibilities cultivating their skills as leaders. This has not only widened their perspectives but also enhanced their motivation to learn more, share more and further their development by day to day visioning, planning and

implementation. To share with, after the Domestic Violence Bill became an Act in the constitution of the country, we have experienced that many women whom we have come across through the collective, feel more courageous to raise their voice and come up front to the perpetrators. Even at times, men knowing the legalities in the Act, become conscious before meting out any violence or torture on the women. Even the collective women make use of the same as and when the need arises, which has also increased their confidence in the processes of justice.

- Celebration:** Like before, we celebrated the festivals of Eid and Diwali together on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 07' with around 100 women from too the importance of the by our guest Mr. Chinwala, a Gandhian.



our communities. This time festivals was emphasized renowned activist and

- Milan:** This means had not met with all the women, time, a gathering was organized 08'. This idea was to increase the women's connectivity with themselves. The concept of bi-cycle learning camp was also shared with the women and the same day few of them agreed and started to learn the same.

meeting/gathering. As we new and old since a long on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, and strengthen Olakh and each other and within

- Bi – Cycle camp:** After the Milan, the bi-cycle was initiated taught the other 13. The camp February to 7<sup>th</sup> March, 08' and before, all the women who were cycle along with their supporting certificates.



decision was taken in the with 20 women, of whom 7 went on from the 27<sup>th</sup> on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, as shared able to learn to ride a bi-friends were facilitated with

### Conclusion

As we all know that every journey, every process and programme brings along its share of joys, sadness, the ups and downs. Thus, in Olakh too, we faced these situations and cycles during this phase. On one hand there was tremendous happiness and a feeling of our belonging in the form of our new organizational space, the honor of being awarded the Human Rights award and on the other was the departure of the old team members, who have seen and been with Olakh through these years. At this juncture of recapping, rebuilding ourselves, at times, those hands were the ones that were missed though the present team and others who joined in proved to be the best that Olakh would have in that hour.

Further, at the programme level, the women of the collective did face certain problems and hurdles due to lack of knowledge in the legal areas and so they decided to enhance and update their required skills and knowledge. Also, the need for a trained counselor for dealing issues of mental and emotional health was felt. And the same goes for other areas like the accounts and administration, the training pool and the resource centre where the team is short in numbers and skills.

But, as it is rightly said that **“Every low lit road leads to bright open land”**, we hope and are sure to reach this bright open land in the next few months to come.

**Annexure 3: Circulation and Dissemination of Resources:**

Months	No. of Users	Forms of resources	No. of resources
October, 2007'	5	Posters	14
		Films/Documentaries	9
		Books	3
November, 2007'	3	Books	3
		Film/Documentaries	1
December, 2007'	2	Film/Documentaries	1
		Books	2
		Posters	7
January, 2008'	5	Books	8
February, 2008'	8	Books	8
		Posters	21
March, 2008'	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>77</b>

**Annexure 4: The status of Helpline Calls:**

Number of Calls per category						
Months	Follow-up calls	New calls	Blank calls	Wrong Nos.	Administrative calls	Total calls
October 07'	10	05	25	03	03	31
November 07'	16	02	05	04	02	29
December 07'	07	10	15	05	02	39
January 08'	15	04	08	08	01	36
February 08'	20	05	15	14	-	54
March 08'	05	04	23	12	10	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>243</b>