



Sakhi: We Exist to End Violence Against Women

“Sakhi has been the rudder of mine and my family’s ship, and I have learned that I can overcome anything.” – Nasima

Sakhi for South Asian Women emerged to break the silence around violence against women in our community and to offer options and advocacy within a culturally-appropriate framework. In 20 years, Sakhi has opened a unique space for survivors to receive vital support through tailored services available nowhere else while transforming community understanding of and response to domestic violence.

Sakhi exists to end violence against women. We unite survivors, communities, and institutions to eradicate domestic violence as we work together to create strong and healthy communities. Sakhi uses an integrated approach that combines support and empowerment through service delivery, community engagement, media advocacy, and policy initiatives.

What is the need for Sakhi?

In the one quantitative study of domestic violence in the South Asian American community, researchers discovered that **more than 40% of 160 South Asian women** in the Greater Boston area had experienced intimate partner violence and that only 50% of this group were aware of services available to help. South Asian survivors of domestic violence face a number of barriers to safety and self-sufficiency including lack of awareness of their rights, language and immigration-related barriers, isolation, and gaps in family, religious, and community support.

According to analysis of a 2008 report released by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) – whose data collection Sakhi participated in – **Sakhi is a leader in linguistically and culturally-appropriate domestic violence services provision locally and nationally. On the census day, Sakhi was one of a quarter of agencies that performed translation or interpretation services & enabled financial skills and budgeting; one of a third of agencies that conducted mental health advocacy; and, one of the less than half of agencies that provided housing and public benefits advocacy. Sakhi is proud to be at the vanguard setting best practices in our field through our cutting-edge programs which offer a broad range of services and access to vital support.**

What unique programs and services does Sakhi offer?

Offering pioneering programs that inspire community confidence, **Sakhi has seen a dramatic tripling in community demand for our support in the past 7 years:** in 2001, Sakhi responded to 201 new requests for assistance; in 2008, we fielded a **record 731 new pleas.** Of the new requests, **nearly 13% were from men** calling for services or on behalf of women they love including sisters, nieces, and aunts (compared to 8% in 2006). This growing community-wide trust in Sakhi demonstrates the success of our innovative community-based approach.

In the **direct services** arena, Sakhi offers:

- **Crisis response** for more than 700 new requests a year, including safety planning and an initial intake process with trained, multilingual staff who speak four major South Asian languages;
- **Case management** that encompasses translation services; accompaniments to courts, public benefits offices, and health care visits; and referrals for health, housing, legal assistance, and job training & placement; and,

- **Unique programs** developed and tailored in-house to address survivors' needs including monthly support groups; computer classes; financial literacy workshops; and grants for educational advancement.

In the area of **community engagement and media advocacy**, Sakhi undertakes:

- **Presentations and expert testimony**, leading the discussion on domestic violence in three dozen different venues locally and nationally in 2008;
- **Creation of innovative media products**, including short films, a public service announcement, an award-winning website, and a digital monthly newsletter;
- **Community campaigns to end violence** including a neighborhood-based community action project in Richmond Hills, Queens, and a Faith-Based Initiative focused on documentation of survivors' thoughts on faith and cultivation of partnerships with faith communities and leaders; and,
- **A multi-faceted volunteer program** that invites and encourages broad-based community participation in creating safe homes and strong communities: in 2008, 70 interns and volunteers collectively donated an astounding 1 year and 7 months of time to advance Sakhi's programs to end violence.

In the sphere of **policy advocacy**, we conduct:

- **A groundbreaking legal access campaign** to enhance court interpretation: via innovative research, presentations, and coalition-building, Sakhi has mobilized concrete changes in New York State courts including enhanced interpreter testing and training procedures as well as a landmark court rule providing access to an interpreter in civil and criminal cases; and,
- **Mental health advocacy** involving research and presentations on the link between mental health and domestic violence as well as expert testimony on the relationship between suicide and domestic violence.

Why is it vital to support Sakhi now?

At Sakhi, we are attuned to the prevailing economic conditions – as are survivors and the community we serve. **In the last half of 2008, we experienced a 15.6% rise in new pleas for help compared to the same period in 2007**, reflecting an increased need for services in tough times. Paradoxically, the increased demand is coupled with diminishing resources – which, in turn, is causing other agencies to retrench or close, thus shutting off avenues of support for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Sakhi provides a concrete return on investment: Of the 137 survivors we assisted with economic empowerment last year, these are some of the tangible results: 15 survivors (with an average income of \$11,896.83) received \$15,490 in tax refunds and \$7,119 in earned income tax credit; 16 of 32 survivors who applied for jobs secured employment; 12 survivors received public benefits, social security, or unemployment support; 11 survivors completed an educational program, degree, or class; 7 survivors received certification of foreign degrees; 5 survivors secured non-emergency housing; 5 survivors opened their own bank accounts; and, 2 survivors joined medical residency programs.

Sakhi has an unparalleled reach in our community: Nearly 20% of our new requests for support in 2008 came from other states than New York and more than 5% were from outside the U.S. Our website averaged more than 17,000 user sessions a month and has the highest traffic rank among the field of South Asian women's organizations.

At this pivotal time, an investment in our unique integrated methodology and pioneering programs will enable Sakhi to respond to a growing call volume and forge ahead in enhancing survivor safety and community strength. **Join us in ensuring we continue to make a deep impact:** invest in our work focused on successful, culturally-appropriate service delivery and vision to enable long-term solutions to ending violence.