



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT
Empowering South Asian women and families to lead safe and healthy lives

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President's Message

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are pleased to offer the annual report for 2017. We thank the South Asian community for supporting Saheli's mission to make the lives of women safe and healthy. With your help we assisted one hundred and fifty-two women and over three hundred children and elderly parents in crisis due to domestic violence, provided financial aid, assisted with employment training, offered free literacy classes, one on one counseling in seven South Asian languages, and gave help for legal, mental and physical health issues. Many volunteers, South Asian physicians, mental health professionals and educators supported our efforts. We thank you all.

In December 2017, we held our very popular gala fundraiser Nirbhaya. Over 250 guests attended the event held at the Hilton Hotel in Woburn. This gala event has become a major source for funding numerous free services Saheli provides to the South Asian community.

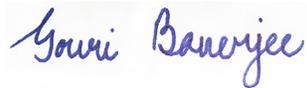
2017 was a year of significant change. Saheli was recognized for advocacy work for survivors of domestic violence with a three-year contract with the Mass Department of Public Health. I stepped down as President of Saheli in my second term to assume the role of Acting Executive Director and Supriya Saurabh was elected President in October 2017. Being Saheli's first state contract, it had a transformative impact on governance and management. We transitioned to a strong management team to oversee the contract and brought new staff and leaders to the board. Saheli appointed four part time domestic violence staff advocates to expand work in Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Plymouth and Worcester counties. Two co-executive directors were appointed in October to facilitate the transition to staff led administrative and financial functions, and the 10-member board and 10-member advisory committee were reenergized with new responsibilities.

In 2017, Saheli received ten foundation grants to expand its capacity to provide coordinated free services in roughly thirty cities and towns. Reliable funding allowed us to pursue several key initiatives to support our mission—create a much-needed program in legal services, expand financial help to women and families in crisis, and offer counseling in South Asian languages. Saheli's support groups, parenting workshops and computer literacy classes

were well attended and staff training remained a high priority. By the end of 2017, Saheli's services were sought from a larger, and more diverse community, and more girls and women signed up to be volunteers.

We sincerely thank our loyal donors, hardworking staff and committed volunteer board and advisory committee for their support and generosity as we continue to pursue the goal to end violence against women and look forward to your continued engagement with Saheli.

Thank you.



Gouri Banerjee, Ph. D., President of the Board, April 2015-May, 2017

Supriya Saurabh, President of the Board, October, 2017 - present.

The Year in Retrospect

The year 2017 created havoc and chaos in immigrant communities, especially Muslim ones. Immigrant families were subjected to hate and bigotry, many were split up and hard-working H-1 visa holders lost their jobs in large numbers. Many women experienced greater violence and abuse in the home and turned to Saheli for legal help to ensure their immigration status.

Saheli focused its attention upon expanding and deepening its personal one on one support and mentoring for women and legal services for them. Women, men and children attended free clinics in family and immigration law and received guidance, representation and mentoring to access legal systems. Saheli's eight part-time staff members worked tirelessly to empower low income and limited English proficient (LEP) families to write and present strong applications for legalizing their status, bring abusers to justice and establish their legal status in the US. Generous funds from you, our donors at the Nirbhaya Gala, enabled Saheli to advocate for South Asian clients, accompany women to court, fill out forms, write affidavits and appeals, and provide referrals to low cost attorneys. See the chart of Saheli's legal services.

What Does Saheli Do?

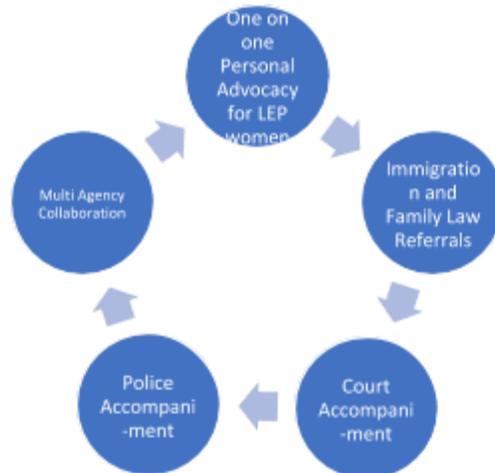


People often ask what does Saheli do? Saheli focuses attention upon underserved South Asian women who face barriers to legal systems, public benefits, and achieving safe and healthy lives due to linguistic, cultural, transportation and resource barriers. With its linguistic and cultural knowledge, we are uniquely positioned to assist the increasing number of low income, limited English proficient South Asian families in Massachusetts. Low levels of literacy, lack of employable skills and lack of family support systems place enormous burdens upon families, often leading to an escalation in alcohol consumption, domestic violence, and financial and emotional abuse.

A Year of Impact at a Glance



Saheli's Legal Advocacy Services



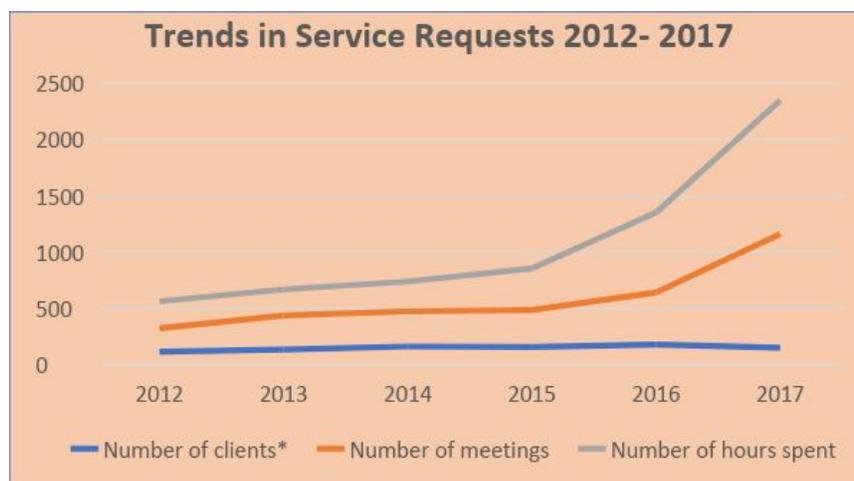
Saheli offers many free services—

- A 24/7 toll-free bilingual helpline to provide support to families in crisis
- In-person and phone consultations (legal information, counseling, basic needs resources)
- Transportation to police, court and other social work agencies
- Assistance and accompaniment to Legal Aid Offices for pro bono services and shelter
- Referral to low cost attorneys or staff attorneys at other DV agencies
- Accompaniment to police and court for LEP survivors to obtain protection orders, fill forms, meet with victim's witness advocates, district attorneys, and act as interpreters
- Prepare documents for trial, deposition and court orders

- Organize monthly Attorney Clinics to educate immigrants called “Know Your Rights,” that cover housing, employment, family, immigration and bankruptcy law
- Translate and communicate with public benefits offices and Dept. of Children’s services
- Provide families in crisis with cash, food, housing assistance, shelter placement, clothing, transportation, child care needs
- Empower women with free computer and financial literacy classes, tuition and job assistance.

In 2017 the demand for Saheli’s services doubled and tripled, as compared to previous years as shown on the chart below. Saheli appointed additional staff, a legal intern, and volunteers to respond to the need. We show the growth in hours spent and meetings held during this remarkable year.

Also experiencing significant demand were the need for support groups for women, parenting workshops for young mothers, and economic empowerment and computer literacy classes. The Watertown project empowered young girls from low income families to aspire to and apply for college with the assistance of young South Asian women serving as role model.



APARNA’S STORY

Aparna exemplifies the complexity of client case management wherein domestic violence, legal status in the US, and the need for social work services intersect in complex ways requiring many months (years) of support. Aparna came to Saheli in 2017 and illustrates the uncertain and precarious lives of many Saheli clients.

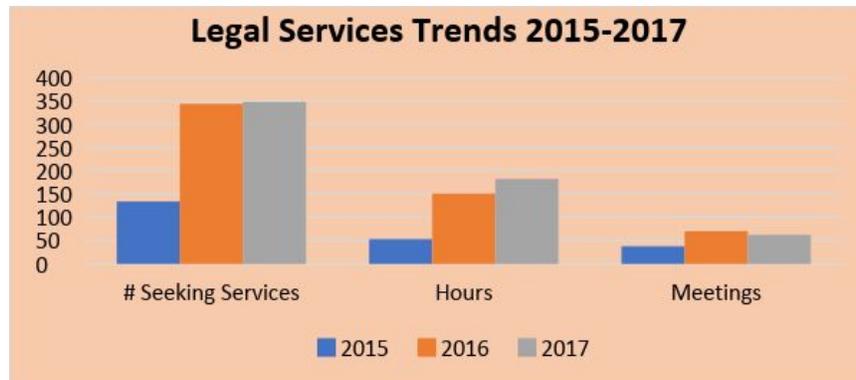
She came to the US on a temporary visitor’s visa with her husband and overstayed. Without employable skills, young children, limited finances, and a lack of transportation, she faced many barriers to achieving the American Dream. She could not avail of educational and employment opportunities and worked at minimum wages as a baby sitter. As the family’s economic situation worsened over time, Aparna became subject to an abusive partner, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse escalated in the home.

In 2017, Aparna was referred to Saheli by her local police department and came to us with multiple complex needs, some of which we could not have provided without the help of our community. Saheli sought help from Attorney Trupti Patel and Associates for immigration assistance, and from the Middlesex DA's office for the physical and mental abuse she had suffered. Saheli advocates worked many hours to locate safe housing for her that was safe from her abuser, they went to probate court to apply for divorce, and sought assistance from low cost attorneys to obtain child support and custody. Aparna's critical need was for basic needs for which Saheli turned to Nirbhaya funds from a generous community. In addition groups of South Asian women in some towns took up private collections of food grains, bus tickets, gift cards, Uber vouchers, and cash.

Throughout 2017 Aparna was supported by a community of women, her surrogate family. As Saheli domestic violence advocates, and board members grappled with Aparna's issues for over two years, it was difficult to explain fully why we did it, to understand fully the isolation, trauma, and the deprivation that this mother and her young children endured. As we commence the second year of Aparna's relationship with Saheli, we thank our staff advocates, attorneys and the generous South Asian community, that makes this work possible. Our hopes remain high that this family will see an end to their difficult journey soon.

Saheli's Legal Program

The political climate in 2017, especially the "Muslim ban," created fear and anxiety across immigrant groups. Saheli experienced unprecedented demand for civil and immigrant assistance, and demand grew for very complex legal services, see the chart on the next page. Saheli staff worked tirelessly for many additional hours doing research and advocating for women and part time staff worked well beyond their paid hours to serve clients in a kind and compassionate way. We offered legal clinics in Cambridge, Burlington and Quincy and applied to the Massachusetts Access to Justice Program to secure the services of a skilled retired attorney in civil matters for Saheli clients.



Changes in Governance and Management

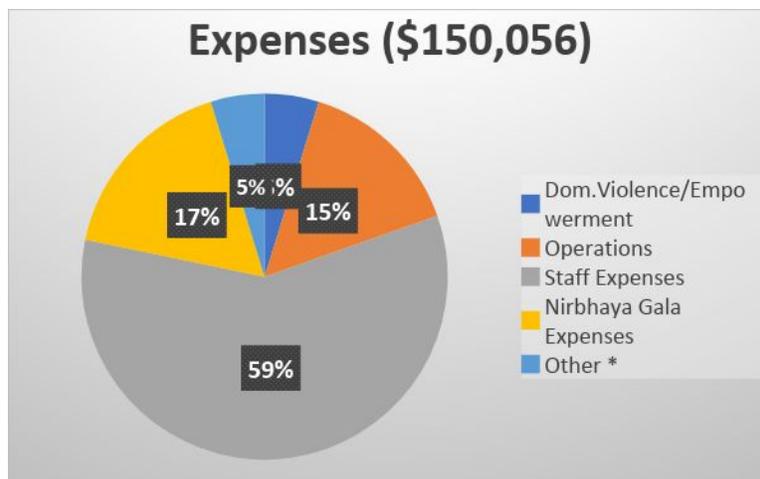
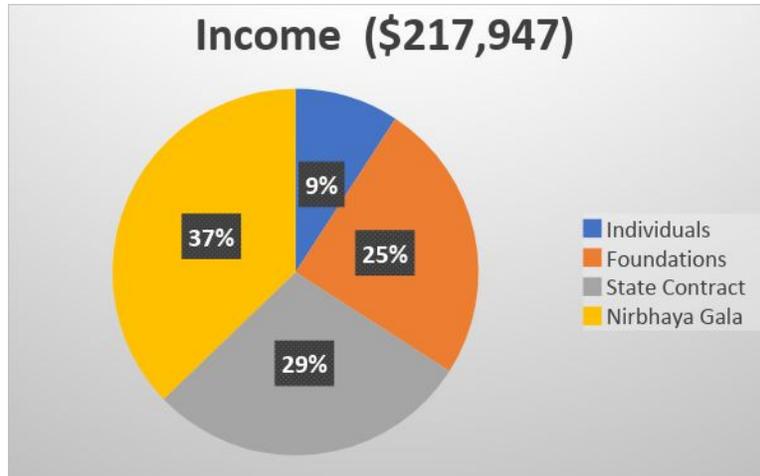
As Saheli grows, so does the need for well-trained domestic violence advocates, a team of working Board members, and a strong fund-raising team. To meet the needs of the growing social work agency we commenced a three-year transition towards a staff-led agency to be completed by the end of 2020. Board members trained incoming staff and as they continued to engage with the key functions of Saheli.

We appointed two part time Co-Executive Directors: the first with responsibility for managing finances—book keeping, accounting, taxes, payroll, managing the state contract, grant writing, and advising the board on Saheli’s financial status. The second had responsibility for the domestic violence program which included: helpline management, allocating clients to staff, overseeing case management reports, holding staff meetings, and developing inter-agency relationships.

Five active board members remained engaged with key agency functions throughout the transition to— monitor and improve the domestic violence programs, screen and distribute economic empowerment funds, lead fundraising initiatives and galas, and develop strategic plans for Saheli.

Financial Report

The year 2017 saw greater financial stability at Saheli with the funds from the Nirbhaya Gala which allowed new initiatives. The state contract supported four part-time staff members, rent, and a few operating expenses that provide direct services to victims of violence.



Beginning Cash	\$112,912
Ending Cash	\$183,093

Income

Individuals	20,059
Foundations	54,216
State Contract	62,612
Nirbhaya Gala	81,060
Total	\$217,947

Expenses

Domestic Violence/Empowerment Program	7,177
Operations	22,241
Staff Expenses	87,998

Nirbhaya Gala Expenses	25,508
Other *	7,132
Total	\$150,056

*Other included insurance for staff, internet and database services, and purchase of new printers.

Saheli relies upon the unstinting support of donors, volunteers and part-time staff members to provide many services to the South Asian community. Men, women and girls devote valuable time, knowledge and resources and help with governance, strategic planning, administrative work, events management, fundraising and program implementation. We thank you all, all our valuable 2017 volunteers and staff, some of whom are shown below.

2015-2017 Governing Board

Barinder Ahluwalia
Gouri Banerjee, Ph.D., President of the Board
Tanvi Devimane
Mala Krishnamurthy
Deepika Madan, Vice President of the Board
Kumkum Pareek Malik, Psy.D.
Lata Parwani
Manish Patel, Treasurer
Pradip Tandon, Secretary
Usha Vakil

Advisory Committee

Ramesh Advani
Anu Chitrapu
David S. Ludwig MD, Ph.D.
Sweta Mepani
Trupti Patel, Esq
Ranjani Saigal
Manju Sheth, MD
Rajendra Trivedi, MD
Jaya Voruganti
Neelam Wali

Staff

Rita Shah, *Family Services Coordinator*
Salita Mehta, *Senior Domestic Violence Advocate*
Vandana Sharma, *South Shore Coordinator*
Katy Hurley, *Programs Coordinator*

New Staff in 2017

Nadia Madden, *Co-Executive Director*
Savitha Rajiv, *Co-Executive Director*
Lata Rao, *Senior Domestic Violence Advocate*
Renu Tewarie, *Domestic Violence Advocate*
Usha Verma, *Domestic Violence Advocate*

We thank you for your support for our work



Saheli Helpline

866-472-4354

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