



**“It always helps to be able to ring someone”:
Women’s Narratives of Sahaayta’s Support**

from

*Strength and Dignity:
Women’s Stories of their Hopes and Aspirations after
their Family Members’ Residence at Gandhi Nivas*

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Overview

Fifteen women who engaged with Sahaayta when their husbands or sons stayed at Gandhi Nivas, told researchers their stories of how Sahaayta supported them with their hopes and dreams for safer, more secure lives. This study reports the patterns of similarities and differences we heard in the women's stories, and re-presents each of their narratives, with respect for the women's specific situations and circumstances. In Part One of this report, we trace the differences and similarities amongst the interviewed women in relation to their experiences of engaging with Sahaayta. Patterns in the women's storying emerge, affirming the differences in social conditions that Sahaayta address in the communities they serve. In Part Two of this report, each of the 15 women's stories is produced as a summary narrative, covering the circumstances that brought them into contact with Sahaayta and the changes in their lives as they move towards safety¹.

¹ We undertook three phases of analysis in this study. The first involved developing full narratives of the women's stories from their interview transcripts. The second involved thematic analysis reported elsewhere, and the third derived the patterns that form Part One of this report. Full narratives were provided in confidence to Sahaayta for their information.

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Introduction

Gandhi Nivas is a collaboration between community and New Zealand Police to address domestic violence in the Counties Manukau district of Tāmaki Makaurau. The collaboration provides residence for men who are bound by Police Safety Orders to remain away from their homes and families for a period of time, usually between 1 and 5 days (Morgan et al., 2020²). Sahaayta Counselling and Social Support (Sahaayta) provide culturally informed praxis for men residing at the home. Someone is available 24/7 to welcome men into the home. Sahaayta staff make contact with family members as soon as possible after the men are brought to the home. They provide support and advocacy for women in their own homes, while the men are at Gandhi Nivas, and afterwards. Couples counselling, family, and child therapy as well as referrals to other specialist health and mental health services are also available through Sahaayta. From our study of the establishment of Gandhi Nivas and our study of resident men's experiences, we are aware that Sahaayta's staff have a deep appreciation of the diversity of their clients' communities, circumstances, and situations (Coombes et al., 2017; Mattson et al., 2020)^{3 4}. They are members of diverse ethnic and religious communities and multilingual. While they have different understandings of domestic violence, they share knowledge of the social determinants of distress and ill health that contextualise violence in the home.

This current study is the first of two reports concerning the experiences of 15 women who engaged with Sahaayta when their husbands or sons resided at Gandhi Nivas. In the current report we present 15 women's stories of their experiences engaging with Sahaayta. The stories were gathered by researchers Leigh and Sita in personal interviews with women recruited from amongst Sahaayta's clients during the first three years of Gandhi Nivas' operation. At the time, there was one house offering residence to men with two new residences in development. The second report presents a thematic analysis of the women's

² Morgan, M., Jennens, E., Coombes, L., Connor, G., & Denne, S. (2020). Gandhi Nivas 2014-2019: A statistical description of client demographics and involvement in Police recorded Family Violence occurrences. Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand, Massey University.

³ Coombes, L., Morgan, M., Mattson, T., & Connor, G. (2017). Establishing Gandhi Nivas: A process narrative of stakeholders' experiences. Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand, Massey University.

⁴ Mattson, T., Morgan, M., Coombes, L., Kean, M., & Connor, G. (2020). Resident's stories of violence and intervention. Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand, Massey University.

interviews focused on how Sahaayta supported them to become safer at home (Coombes et al., 2024)⁵.

The women's interviews were transcribed and shared with the research team. We conducted our analysis of the women's transcripts in three phases. The current report concerns the first and second phases of our research, in which we undertook narrative analysis to re-present the women's stories, using the text of their interviews as part of a process of thematic analysis. Each of the women contributed to our study so that we could better understand how Sahaayta had supported their hopes and aspirations for their family. The generosity of the women's stories provides us with rich and nuanced accounts from their perspective. In Part One of the current report, we trace the differences and similarities amongst the women participants in relation to their experiences of engaging with Sahaayta. We identify patterns in the women's storying that bear witness to the differences in social conditions that Sahaayta address when they move into the community to support and advocate for women at risk of violence from men in their families. This section provides a patterned summary of the 15 women's stories. In Part Two of this report, each of the 15 women's stories is re-told from the earliest experiences she shared with Leigh and Sita, to those which brought her into contact with Sahaayta, her engagement with them, and the ways in which changes to her life have followed.

⁵ Coombes, L., Connor, G., Morgan, M., Rogerson, A., & Venkateswar, S. (2024). Strength and dignity: Women's stories of their hopes and aspirations after their family members' residence at Gandhi Nivas. Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand, Massey University.

Part One: Patterns of differences

In Part One of this report, we present 15 women's different stories of the events and relationships that brought them to engage with Sahaayta and travel towards fulfilling their hopes and aspirations. To represent the women's accounts of Sahaayta's interventions required the research team to become immersed in the women's stories.

Through our immersion, the women's stories inform us of the diverse circumstances that connect them with specific social relationships, kinship and community norms. They tell us of the particular situations in which they become clients when police intervene in their victimisation at the hands of their partners or sons. The men in their families are bound by Police Safety Orders (PSO), or bail conditions, and volunteer to reside at Gandhi Nivas. The women stay in their homes and are offered support. The women's stories testify to the help, guidance, advice, and encouragement they experience in the care of Sahaayta staff.

In this section we trace patterns within the diversity of experiences that Sahaayta staff encounter among their clients, and the support they offer for the women to uphold their dignity and achieve their aspirations. Through bringing together the patterns in the women's circumstances, within their family relationships and in their responses to Sahaayta's early intervention support, we aim to map the scope of Sahaayta's care as it travels through the complexity of clients' lives, echoing the movements of the women as we hear the responsibilities they carried and the changes they made.

We bring together the patterns by identifying the ways in which the women locate themselves in the context of their life circumstances: family relationships and events that are significant for them as well as the situation that led to them engaging with Sahaayta. We gathered the particular events that the women told us about the men's engagement with Gandhi Nivas, as well as their own and their children's contact with Sahaayta staff. We traced how each of the women spoke of changes following Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta early intervention, and how the women were moving towards fulfilling their hopes and dreams.

We have heard:

She's in a legal/defacto, arranged/love marriage. He is her partner.
She is his mother and the only discipline in his life.
Sahaayta are guides in times of trouble.

She migrated here.
Her homeland is a poor country.
She is born here.
She's been everywhere.
She has residency.
Her parents migrated here, and she has strong links to her ethnic community.
Her parents migrated to the country from which she emigrated.
When she migrates, troubles travel with her.

She was adopted by an uncle and aunty.
She's the daughter of a solo mum.
He's the son of a solo mum.
Her father was older and spent all his spirit and time with her.
Her mum was her father's second wife. He was in the military and spent time with Europeans.
Her dad was disappointed he only had daughters.
She migrates to a hopeful new country feeling hopeless and angry.

She lacks education because in her homeland, and within her family, educating girls isn't valued.
She has a dream to celebrate for her girls, because in her eyes boys and girls are the same.
Her family weren't rich enough to think about education.
Her mum always encouraged her to study, to become independent.
She was bullied at school, so she dropped out.
She is educated and independent.
Her qualifications back up her residency application.
She has a double major in accounting and management and brings her qualifications with her.
She travels here on a student visa, then stays on a visa to get a job.

She has been able to refuse suitors, before accepting an arranged marriage.
She never accepted the idea of an arranged marriage. She literally ran from the house.
She has many offers of marriage. Her family knows her husband's family, so they chose him.
She had an arranged marriage when she was younger.
Her first marriage was forced. She refused to live with him. He refused to divorce her.

She and her husband share the dream of migrating here and apply many times.
Her husband convinces her to migrate here. She was happy then.
Her husband brought her here. They had been married for a year and had a baby.

She and her husband have been married a long time.
Both she and her husband had been married before. She is his third wife.
She didn't accept her first religious marriage. She didn't need a divorce.
She wanted to stand on her own feet and finish her study and help other girls.
Her husband becomes like a brother and supports her to migrate here.
She comes here with her husband when her youngest child is 4.
As she travels to her new home, hope travels with her unimpeded.

She came here to marry her husband.

Her husband came here to marry her.
Her husband told her she would need to marry to get residency. She accepted that.

She has needed to leave her children behind when she came here.
She and her family are refugees, displaced people seeking refuge.
Her sister cries on her birthday because she is unwanted.
Her dad fights with her mum. It affects her childhood.
She flees to a hopeful new country carrying trauma and depression.

Her ethnic community have been here a long time, and her family joined them before she was born.
All of her siblings and most of her family are here.
Her friend's family gave her somewhere to live when she arrived.

Her dad doesn't understand why she wants to marry her husband, but her mum doesn't mind.
Theirs is an inter-caste marriage.
Her parents wanted her to marry someone rich.
She had a court marriage here then a religious marriage at home.
She wanted a love marriage. Her first marriage was forced on her.
She met her husband at university.
She and her husband share the struggles of being students on visas.
Things were easier when she and her husband became residents.
She met her husband at work.
She met her husband through his sister, who was a school friend.
Her parents and friends didn't know she had a boyfriend.
Her parents support her marriage but some of her relatives disapprove.
Many of her people intermarry here.
Her husband disapproves of her daughter having a very young boyfriend.

Landing in a strange place, she finds her qualifications don't count.
She works as a caregiver. The pay is better here.
It's hard for a woman, here in New Zealand.
She finds work as an assistant to a manager.
She needs to trust a man she does not know.
She and her family need to trust her husband's family.
She knows he's a smart talker cause that's how he won her.
She needs to trust the word of other family members.
She tolerates a lot. She questions her misfortune.
She loves her husband.
She doesn't give up on her marriage, she just pulls through. Like putting paint on rust.

He is respectful of her parents and tries to impress them.
She has been happy for a long time.
When she came here, she didn't know what violence was. She had never even seen it.
There have never been arguments about money. It isn't an issue.
He pays for everything they need.
He doesn't waste money or go to prostitutes.
He trusts her with money.
He hasn't been working all week, so she is supporting him.
He pressured her to go to work because he wasn't working.
She's been studying.
She's been working.

He has given her a good life, with the chance to be here in New Zealand.
He is an adult, with a supportive family.
Everything was good when he had a job.
They are blessed not to worry about their housing because they own their own home.
He is smart and talented but never applies it.

He's a migrant and she isn't, though they're from the same ethnic community.
There have been troubles between the families for a long time, kept secret from her.
There are troubles she knows about, financial troubles with loans and her dad's prison sentence.
There were troubles in her family over an inheritance and she fell out with her mother.
She has troubles of her own; her mother is terminally ill.
His previous wife divorced him and took the children.
Her sister ran away to marry.
Her parents don't visit because her dad is sick.
He comes from a one-child family.
Her mother worries that she'll get pregnant.

She gets pregnant and isn't working.
She's pregnant now and she's working.
She gets pregnant and gives up studying. Her mum makes sure she returned to study.
She has her first baby, then another.
She has one, two, three, seven children.
She only works part time because of the children.
Motherhood is an adventure and makes her stronger.
She had a traumatic birth and no-one to help her in the first weeks.
He doesn't help with childcare and even the lawns aren't mowed.
They have to be careful how they discipline their children. They disagree over it.
She looks after her grandchildren too.
She supports her son to finish school and start trade training, but he didn't want to go there.
Her children are beautiful, so she thinks when God takes something away, he gives too.
Her mother-in-law comes to live with them, to help care for him.

Drinking begins patterns of controlling violence, sexual abuse, assaults against her and her children.
Drinking begins when he arrives in New Zealand, without her.
Drinking begins when his mother dies on her way here.
He always goes drinking, and his parents think it's funny.
He was drinking a lot.
He drank beer at home, his family didn't know he was also having hard drinks.
He drinks at night, and everything changes, and he yells.
The children blame her because she didn't leave when he was shamefully drunk the first time.
He's been in fights and been knocked out when he's been drinking.
He was drunk and fighting. He tried to hit her, but her son and daughter were there.
He was drinking heavily again. She didn't know how to talk to him and didn't want to be around him.
He was away working during the day and never drank on the job.
He doesn't drink.

He beat her even when she was pregnant.
Her relationship changed after she had her first baby.
They argue over so many things. Their upbringings are different.
He confesses to sleeping with her sister, but she will not let him make her the judge.

He thinks of himself as the provider, and she does everything else.
He's bullied at work and hits his supervisor.
He thought he would get a future here, but he was treated like a slave.
He lost his job through unfair treatment.
The men in her family find it hard to get work.
Her husband found it hard to get work.
Neither she nor her husband were working. It was very hard.
He's a good worker.
He's a workaholic.
Her husband has a trade.
Her husband works at a factory.

Her husband has another girlfriend.
He's jealous and suspicious.
He calls her a slut if she talks to other men.
She and her husband disagree about their parents.
Her husband blames her because they didn't spend more time with his parents before they died.
His family doesn't talk much, and he doesn't understand her and her family.
Boys need their fathers. It's different for girls because they have their mothers.
She wants girls to be valued and educated. He tries to stop her work.
He has a son, and his family think the baby will one day have a servant as a wife.
She and her husband have no family here or in their ethnic homeland.

He's angry all the time and hitting out.
He has anger issues.
His past is not her fault, and he can't take those things out on her.

He prohibits friendships.
She's never had many friends.
She has no friends of her own and no-one from her own ethnic community either.
She is well supported by her friends.
She has good friends and support, but she is too proud to ask for help.
There's a lot of judgement among friends.
When she talks to other people, it's like people compare themselves in different seasons.
Her friend says she has done so much for others, she should accept help offered.
His friends drag him down. Misery loves company.
He has very few friends.
He's shut everyone out of his life, more or less.
His second wife left him because he still lived in the same building with his first wife and children.
She doesn't speak to her mother-in-law anymore. There were too many fights.
She becomes isolated.
She bears her burdens alone.
She doesn't like sharing personal stuff, but she has to tell her story for the court.
She manages her emotions, so no-one knows. She thinks it's partly culture, partly her.
She doesn't feel alone, except when there's conflict.
She doesn't feel like herself when she's with him.

Her church community supports her.
She has a strong faith community, but they don't know about his drinking.
She's not very religious but his uncle is a staunch Christian and tried to convert him.
She always believed her faith would mean she had an easier path, but she is traveling rough roads.

Christians don't 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. She takes her son's phone when he's disrespectful.
She believes you do a good deed; it is like throwing a key into the sea; so never have expectations.

She doesn't know about control tactics, and she thinks his abuse is all part of normal behaviour.
She didn't know a marriage could be like this.
She and her friends wonder if he is unwell.
Her son remembers everything her husband did to her, and he was scared too.
Her children are quite innocent, but they know when something is happening with their dad.
She thinks he beat his second wife too.
With all the family to take care of, she has no time to learn English.
She did know how to look after herself and she had three children to look after.
She has been going through a court process over parenting and protection orders. It's exhausting.
She doesn't practice her faith as well as she should.

He does not work or provide.
He resigned his job when he thought they might separate, which she did not think would happen.
He did a bit of work but didn't like it because he had to walk there.
Her husband has a pattern of quitting jobs before a year is up.
There is no home or car for them.
He doesn't do anything much and makes a big deal of the little he does.
He worked at first, but he left because of his drinking.
He stopped studying and wouldn't look for work.
He was asked to leave school and went to his Auntie's in Australia.

He lies, he breaks promises.
He was always jealous and obsessive, but he wasn't violent before they married.
He's still jealous and insecure.
Usually, they get on, only a few arguments; a baby slap.
They have different cultural expectations; it isn't his fault.
He was abused as a child.
He is dependent on his family.
Her family is respectful, but his family undermines her parenting.
He says she's not a good mother.
He undermines her parenting.
He blames her for spoiling their daughter.
She thinks the troubles at home affect the children and bring on depression.

He's had brushes with the law, but no criminal record.
He is depressed. In their family, they are all depressed, but they are not all violent.
It is hard to call the police in her homeland. She doesn't want him to have a criminal record.
He hurts himself.
He doesn't hit much. He holds. There is so much bruising everywhere.
Her husband is not a good father to her sons.
His father is domineering and patriarchal.
He chose not to have a relationship with his father and blames him for letting him down.
He does not have good male role models.
Her eldest son is disrespectful and violent towards his father.

They're separated but still live together and there are some incidents at home.
She was in pain. She asked her parents to help.

She asked him to stop singing so loudly, things got out of hand.
It has happened many times before, but her son and daughter were there.

A neighbour intervenes when he assaults her.
A neighbour complains to the police.
A flatmate calls the police.
She calls the police.
She's called the police previously, a long time ago.
She's called the police four times.
She called the police when he beat her, one night.
She called the police one day.
He calls the police. He is the one who is angry.
Her son calls the police.
The police came.
He goes to Gandhi Nivas.
When the police threaten her with a PSO, she leaves home voluntarily.

When the police are involved, Sahaayta contacts her.
At first, she says she doesn't want help; she will help herself.
She is alone, afraid, and ashamed. They help.
It's hard for her at home alone, while he's at Gandhi Nivas.
He stayed at Gandhi Nivas overnight.
She is thankful that he stays at Gandhi Nivas for a few days.
He stayed at Gandhi Nivas a week.
He stayed at Gandhi Nivas for more they 5 days. They had room for him.
He learned a good lesson.
She is glad there was an intervention without him being arrested.
It helped that he stayed with other people and had counselling.
He stayed at Gandhi Nivas last week.
He's stayed at Gandhi Nivas before.
He goes back to Gandhi Nivas whenever things go sour.
Another time he couldn't go back to Gandhi Nivas because he was so drunk. He came home drunk.
He didn't stay at Gandhi Nivas very long; he just took off.
It's better for him at Gandhi Nivas. They listen to him.
He really likes the people and it's a caring environment.
It's good when you don't have extended family. It's hard to ask good friends for accommodation.
It's good to have time away from each other, for perspective.

After her husband comes home from Gandhi Nivas, he beats her and accuses her of shaming him.
He doesn't come home from Gandhi Nivas.
He goes drinking with other men instead of coming home from Gandhi Nivas.
He goes from Gandhi Nivas to a boarding house where some of the men are criminals.

She needs help a second time, when she is injured.
Sahaayta contact her a second time and assure her of confidentiality.
She has spoken with Sahaayta before when the police were involved.
With Sahaayta it isn't just the residence, there is follow-up.
Sahaayta help her decide to tell the police the truth.
Sahaayta are her strength.
They are like a mother who supports her, who cares for her.
Sahaayta are concerned for her as well as her husband.

Sahaayta will not disclose anything to her husband.
Sahaayta is a place where she feels safe, where her husband feels safe.
She talks with them whenever she needs help.
She stays in touch from time to time.
She tries to keep in contact; to strike while the iron is hot.
Sometimes she calls Sahaayta; sometimes Sahaayta calls her.
She comes into the office and sees her counsellor.
She brings her daughter to see Sahaayta.
They come to her home and meet with all the family.
Sahaayta are unbiased, non-judgmental.
As first she was reluctant to talk, but when she did, she offloaded a lot.

She'd like to try couples' counselling, but he won't agree.
They have a few counselling sessions together.
They bring her husband back on track with the importance of family.
They refer him to other places for help, but he doesn't respond when they contact him.
The services are a real blessing for her and her husband.
He tries to stop drinking, but he doesn't succeed.
He cries because he wants to stop drinking and he can't.
He still goes drinking with his friends.
He wants her to change and accept his drinking.
There are no beds in rehabilitation for him to quit drinking.

He's ruined her life.
It's shameful to be victimised.
His parents know he's abandoned her, childless.
His parents don't know about his drinking.
His parents and her parents know what he's been doing. She updates them to keep herself safe.
She wants women to be safe in India as well as here.
She doesn't deserve his drunken abuse.
She thinks he drinks when she goes to work. He's not very honest.
Her daughter still lives at home, but her son moved away from his father's drinking.
He stops drinking.

His parents tell them both to focus on the future and work hard.
Her parents encourage them both to be wise.
She doesn't tell her mother everything because she blames her 50/50 to be fair.
He doesn't like her parents to know anything, but she talks to her mum.
He says Sahaayta are home breakers. She knows they are supporting her.
In her community it's shameful to intrude on other people's family privacy.
His parents don't care about her. They only care if the public knows.
She and her husband don't talk about it to the neighbours, but it isn't hidden in their own community.
He needs to know he can't say whatever he wants with no consequences.

She doesn't want to separate but she is a strong woman who can raise a son alone if she has to.
Child protection insists she moves out with the children, or she will lose custody.
Although it seems impossible to separate, she goes to stay with her sister.
Sahaayta help, they guide.
She can tell them anything.
They listen, they understand.

They come to her home.

It's good to have Sahaayta as the third person, who is able to go back and forth.

They come to appointments, so she feels supported, with the lawyer or the doctor.

Sahaayta are very good and help her in every possible way.

She thinks it's always good to talk to someone who is down-to-earth, like Sahaatya.

She feels safe talking to Sahaayta because it's confidential.

She can see a counsellor and so can her children.

Her counsellor helps her understand coercive control, protection orders, places to get support.

Sahaayta know what others have been through before her, and they try to put that into reality.

They counsel them as a couple. They helped.

She and her husband learn something new and know what roles are now.

It's hard for her husband to see the harm that meant the police came. She had to protect her family.

Her husband isn't doing the counselling at Sahaayta; he should be.

They counsel them as a couple. It doesn't help. They argue in the car after sessions.

The counsellors were very busy and referred her to a family counsellor.

She saw a counsellor for a while and then started seeing a consultant in her workplace.

There's no counselling now, just Sahaayta talking with both parties.

They keep her informed of his safety at Gandhi Nivas.

Sahaayta spoke with her and her husband. She wouldn't tell her what he said; but he did.

She is hoping from the counselling process they can work as a team with their parenting.

They stay in touch.

She hears from Sahaayta every 10 days or fortnight. She doesn't ask if they've spoken to her husband.

She calls to talk with Sahaayta sometimes on the phone.

They help keep her peace of mind.

They help her a lot.

They are her go-to when she cannot call her mother or her sister.

She thanks God that she talked to Sahaatya. Her burden became lighter to bear.

She knows Sahaayta understand because they deal with such circumstances every day.

Sahaayta is a blessing in disguise.

She comes to the programmes so she has a voice.

She's never had a protection order before.

She knows how to use a protection order now.

They give her confidence.

Sometimes she is proud of herself.

She rings the police because she wants to be safe.

She is doing the right thing when she rings the police. Otherwise, he will keep beating her.

Sahaayta give her children confidence to call the police when she is assaulted.

They give a breathing space and time without fear, and for the person who stays there too.

Sahaayta are not judgmental. They explain so that she understands.

When there is an incident, she sends a text and Sahaayta comes.

She gets a lot of help because of calling the police, even though it's taken a long time to come this far.

Sahaayta are very passionate about what they do, even if sometimes there are slips with follow-up.

She feels a connection with Sahaayta.

Every other day, she tries to include Sahaayta.

They give practical advice and emotional support. She appreciates both.

They ask if it's possible for her to find another house, but she has made her home. It isn't possible.
They hear her troubles and burdens.
They cared, they really cared.
Sahaayta listened to her at the time she was shattered.

She never wanted things to be this way.
She wants love and respect in return for all she gives.
She doesn't want to see them back at square one, fighting and accusing each other.
She tells her husband not to let it get to the stage where the plant of love could die.
She is divorcing, even if it isn't very acceptable to her ethnic community.
She wants to separate. She and her husband are sour with each other.
She thought she was heartless and ruthless when she didn't want him to come home.

Her parents support her.
She couldn't visit her family back home because his violence held up her residency application.
She brought her mother and sister and brother to visit and show them how beautiful it is here.
Her parents support them both.
She has the support of her church, too. They asked her to forgive him, and she has.
They are staying together, and they aren't so angry now.
Their marriage is an agreement, and she needs to pay the price now because she took his favours.
She is a Christian woman and cannot kick him out when he's in trouble with his health.

She doesn't need to ask his permission to come and go anymore.
They don't have a relationship anymore, even though they live in the same house.
She was going to give up on him, but her heart expects more.
She knows he loves her, for sure. He doesn't know how to keep her happy.
She believes marriage is like two wheels: one cannot pull the weight of the other.

Her children are older now.
Her children work and study.
Her son is studying architecture.
He doesn't need a girlfriend while he's trying to sort out issues.
She and her husband are planning for their son's marriage. He wants them to choose his wife.
She and her husband have agreed they will call their counsellors to resolve disagreements.
They are trying to withdraw their court applications, but the judge needs reassurance she is safe.
She has told him not to ask for beer money and that she will come and go as she pleases. He follows that.
Things have changed.

Her daughter thinks her father's anger is gone but she thinks it's there a little bit, still.
It's improving, slowly but surely, it's just not quick enough.
Things are better, even if not 100%. She bites her tongue and gets on with it.
The more they engage with Sahaayta, the more he changes.
They teach them how to consciously change their habits, how to say 'I love you' every day.
Sahaayta were very good. She had serenity about her when she spoke to my husband. He listened.
He is already better now. She has her old husband back.

He is still abusive, but he doesn't beat her anymore.
He doesn't beat her anymore because he knows the police will come. He yells.
When he starts drinking, she and her daughter go to the car, where she studies by torchlight.
He is really sick and will die from drinking.

Next time she won't ring the police, it will be mother's justice.
He lives separately now and is not so angry anymore.
He ended up coming home because he didn't pay his rent.
He blames her for everything that's gone wrong.
He loves his baby and misses her when he can't come home.
He's awkward with babies. He never held his baby brothers or sisters.
He loves his daughter. She tells him not to raise his voice to her and he becomes quiet.
She is strict with her children; she is scared for them.
She cares for her baby and wants her relationship to work.

She's not afraid.
She stands her ground.
She has learned how to take charge, with understanding, so they can address issues.
She has learned she can ask for help. She told Plunket nurses, and they were supportive too.
If she or her husband get angry or one person is very quiet, then they sit and talk.
She is re-marrying. Her children are happy.
She is happy at home with her children.
She is proud of her daughter's school achievements; how she managed when her father was arrested.
She is living by her spiritual principles now, and her religious leaders affirm she has done no wrong.
Her friend needed help and is living with her now. She encourages her to stay safe.
They have a lot of work to do before they marry.
They have learned something new; life is easier.

She has a car, now and is ready to work.
She has never worked before or driven a car. Now she is learning to drive.
He doesn't want her to go to work.
He's on a benefit and she's so disappointed.
He doesn't have a job and feels insecure. She is wary.
She works and he doesn't. She manages just about everything in their home.
She works as a housekeeper now, but they still have no money.
She's working, he's working, and the children are coming to New Zealand.
He's working with good guys, who are down to earth and have families.
He's picking her up from work every day now. She doesn't know what it means.
He works nearby where she works, so he gets a free ride.

She's very happy to have her old husband back. It is nice.
She wants him to stop drinking.
She wants there to be no violence. She wants there to be no drinking.
He drinks, but not so much and he doesn't make trouble.
He's not drinking so heavily now. He's calmer with his one smoke.
She wants him to get on with his own life, his own decisions. She won't judge him.
They are very mature people, in a good country. They need to make this work.
Her daughter won't have to go through what she's been through.

From the ruins, she is reclaiming her independence.
Sahaayta help with finding a place to live, medical support.
They help her enroll in study.
Her study has started. He looks after the baby.
They're helping her find a job now her study is finished.
She'll go back to work after the baby is born.

When she makes plans, they encourage her.
She can drive now.
She can recognise abuse now.
She has a voice now.
She knows she's not alone now; there will always be someone for her at Sahaayta.
She wants to learn more for the sake of those she can help.
She is happy to be a solo mum, now he is out of the scene.
They can make a new relationship with the older one, put together. This is how family works.
Their daughter deserves parents who are willing to marry for eternity. If he's not willing, he's not the right man.
She is living a wonderful life with her children.
Love for her son will never go away.

Sahaayta are her guides.
It always helps to be able to ring someone.
She hopes funding for Gandhi Nivas continues.
They are giving her the opportunity to become an empowered woman and mother.
They encourage her to be independent; to do things for herself.
Sahaayta has changed her life.
She would never have been on this path that Sahaayta showed her, without their guidance.
She knows that there will still be struggles and challenges.
She is excited.
She is strong enough now.

Part Two: Fifteen women's summary stories of early intervention for family violence

Navjot

Navjot is a mother-of-two and was born and raised in India. As a child, she did not receive an education, limiting her reading and writing skills. She has lived in New Zealand for almost 20 years now. She became isolated as her partner did not ever permit her to work, leave the house or speak to her friends. She had endured a long history of violence from her partner, including sexual violence and violence against their children. There was a history of police call-outs, usually when the community complained about his antisocial behaviour when intoxicated. He did not engage with addiction services. She is no longer married to the man who was violent towards her.

The PSO enabled her the space for Sahaayta to help her in practical ways – safety and protection of herself and her children, providing support to engage with lawyers or government agencies, and in more social ways, by empowering her to create a friend circle for ongoing support in her community – *“I had a feeling that I was supported, that someone was there behind me... she helped me, she guided me”*.

She speaks of the support Sahaayta have provided for the safety and wellbeing of her family through an ongoing process (several years) of empowerment enabling her to move forward, so she and her children can have a happier and safer life and look forward to a violence free future. She has now remarried, to a supportive man who her children like.

Navjot shares: *“And for the past three years everything is finished with him. And now I've moved ahead in my life with God's blessings. People who are helping those who are actually suffering has value, which is what these people have done for me. Supporting someone, that's a big deal.”*

Chatura

Chatura is in her 30s and from Sri Lanka. She lived an independent life as a nurse before entering into an arranged marriage that brought her to Aotearoa New Zealand about 10 years ago. She described a pattern of violence that included emotional, financial and physical abuse that she found difficult to understand. Neither she nor her husband engaged with services the first time a PSO was issued and she did not complain about ongoing abuse because she was worried he would be arrested. Then there was an incident where she realised that she had nothing left, what she called *“point zero.”* Sahaayta were there when there was no-one else. Their response was immediate, and they listened and responded to her immediate need for safety, access to medical support for her injury, navigating government agencies, housing stability and eventually her re-engagement with her studies to secure her employment. Her husband left.

As well as the practical help, Chatura explains how the trusting relationship that has developed between herself and Sahaayta has empowered her to rebuild her future. She rents a room in a big house with others, and is now working as a care assistant in the health sector while re-training to become an Aotearoa New Zealand qualified nurse.

Chatura says: *"I needed someone to talk about my feelings. I did need someone I can trust; to express my feelings to; to know what is right or not."* She spoke of how the connection with Sahaayta enabled her to reclaim her dignity and independence as she builds her future: *"They were really a strength for me. I don't want to be a victim. I want to be a survivor and help others. So, I'm happy now I'm here. I can't change the past; however, I can create my future."*

Shirim

Shirim has two young children, who live in India with their grandparents, due to visa restrictions. She is in her late 20s, and came to Aotearoa New Zealand nearly 8 years ago when her second child was three months old. She met her husband as a teenager and began a relationship, despite some tension between their families. She has studied data communications, but has had trouble finding a job in that sector, so she currently works in a factory while she upskills in IT. She was financially responsible for the family as her partner did not have a work visa. After a neighbour reported a "minor" incident, a PSO was issued for five days which was a shock to them.

Trust was an important issue because they were worried about the precarity of their visa when coming to police attention. Sahaayta built a relationship with them that enabled them to make sense of the problems they were experiencing, and they learned to develop together the skills they needed to work together for solutions.

Through Sahaayta's counselling and guidance, Shirim notes the changes in their relationship through learning to negotiate and consider each other's needs – *"It's really changed. We are not now angry with each other. We understand what he wants, what I want."*

They have now both got work and have learned how to spend more meaningful time together and share common goals. They remain in contact with Sahaayta and ask for support if they need it. Working together with Sahaayta has enabled Shirim to start planning for a future life here, rebuilding the family environment with her husband and her children: *"Maybe I will do a new course, or I'll bring my children out here. We will take a separate unit for us and we're going to call my mother-in-law also so she can be here for them."*

Esin

Esin is a former refugee who, with her family, escaped war and lived precariously between various borders, until finally arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her family, including her siblings and her children, live across multiple countries. She describes a social context where she was unable to talk about the long-term repeated violence perpetrated by her husband with anyone outside her home. She also described a family pattern of depression and medication. There was an opportunity to seek help for the violence when one of her children called an ambulance after an episode of heavy drinking by her husband and they suggested that she seek support for getting a safety plan for herself and her children. She endured ongoing physical and sexual violence so as to avoid the shame of talking about it and being excluded from her community. A PSO enabled her to build a connection with Sahaayta and as trust was built over time, she and her children were able to tell their stories. Hers a long journey of transformation. Through understanding the family's struggles with depression, and violence, with Sahaayta's support, she has ended her marital relationship with her husband, but

he remains in the family home – the family remains in-tact, but with the husband/wife relationship closed off. The violence has ceased and Esin is happy: *“I’m happy at home with the kids now.”* Through this arrangement, she and her family’s dignity within the community are also maintained.

Esin tells of the confidence that she has gained through her family’s ongoing relationship with Sahaayta knowing their stories are confidential. While they have achieved safety, at home and in their community, the family still experiences financial instability and ongoing issues with depression. However, with strength, she is determined to support the family so they can go on to build a better life through education: *“My son asked me this morning, “Mum there’s no more money on the train card. We have today, we have tomorrow as well”. So, I said to him, “You study, I’ll manage everything else.””*

Usha

Usha is Indian and has two children. She came to Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1990s to join her husband in an arranged marriage. The couple worked on farms. Her husband had a long history of violence against both her and their children, and then he abandoned the family, which also meant that she became disconnected with her community. Sahaayta became involved with the family when her older son threatened to kill her and was issued with a PSO. Being able to tell her story was the beginning of a transformation. Most importantly, Sahaayta have been there to listen, support and walk alongside them as a family, helping them to understand how the violence has affected them. Through this process the family has been able to address their anger and hurt. Sahaayta understood the conditions of precarity and helped both her and her son with practical steps to train and find work.

With Sahaayta’s support, the family are moving forward and gaining confidence to shape their future: *“What has happened, has happened, with my older one, but he’s okay now, he’s studying. And I just want him to finish his course and get a job. There is no point in dwelling in the past. I just want that everything should just go well moving forward.”*

Zhi

Zhi is a New Zealander, born to Chinese immigrant parents. She is in her late 30s and has three young children. She has completed tertiary education and has held various professional positions. She met her husband while studying, connecting through their shared religion, initially attributing some of his behaviour to his Chinese upbringing. After the birth of her first child, she worked part-time, but stopped working following the birth of her subsequent children. Her husband struggled to maintain employment, and when he did find a more permanent job, it was shift and on-call work that left her to manage everything at home by herself. She began to recognise patterns of abuse in their relationship, attempts to isolate her from friends and family and had serious concerns about his mental health, including self-harming behaviours. It was when she tried to separate from him that his behaviour escalated. Police became involved and he was issued with a PSO. Sahaayta helped her to navigate complex issues with safety and protection and helped her to deal with Oranga Tamariki when they expressed concern about the children’s safety.

For Zhi, it is that Sahaayta knows the complexities of her situation; they know she has three children and works with her to secure safety for her family: *“It’s not just the emotional support, it’s a practical thing. I really appreciate that.”*

Sahaayta has enabled her to feel secure in her safety and she is now enjoying the challenges of being a financially secure solo mother: *“I’m actually really happy. I’m glad that he is out of the scene and I’m glad I made the choice to move on and there is a point in time I didn’t want to do this for the sake of the children. I finally realised, because of the tension, I am willing to make those choices and I haven’t always been. I’m living a wonderful life with my kids. I’m still staying at the same place but at the same time I am thinking about the future of what I want. I am enjoying being a solo mum and I’m self-learning.”*

Tiaho

Tiaho is a New Zealand Samoan woman in her late 20s and lives with her partner and a young baby. She describes her relationship with her partner as her first serious relationship. They have financial stability despite her not currently working. She reports that her partner is emotionally and physically abusive, and sometimes, but not always, alcohol is a feature. Her partner’s coercive control has led her to *“give up my family, my church, my whole life to be with him.”* Her partner was issued with a PSO when she called the police because she *“had just given up”*, and she was connected with Sahaayta. Sahaayta’s help has enabled her to have the space to find a voice in the relationship, through ongoing counselling. Sahaayta continue to work with the couple to address the issues in the relationship, but while she is committed to the possibility for change, she is not convinced at this time that her partner shares her commitment. The ongoing support from Sahaayta gives her hope that negotiation and respect are possible.

Sahaayta have empowered her to take charge of how her future can be free from violence. Sahaayta’s help has enabled her to reframe her understandings of violence, and that for the relationship to continue, her partner must change the way he treats her and accept his responsibilities as a father: *“I hope one day my daughter can respect that and look back at this, and she will know what we went through, she won’t have to go through it, because she has seen and heard. We can make her understand that that’s not where we want her to end.”*

Elei

Elei is a young, pregnant New Zealand Samoan woman. She describes a supportive whānau with strong relationships and she and her partner are living with her parents. Both she and her partner are working, although she is aware that will change when her baby is born. She describes her relationship with her partner through a story of adolescent naivety that was complicated because her boyfriend was living in Samoa. There is a complex context of various faith and immigration issues that saw them married: *“But he said we had to get married, so we got married. I think we weren’t ready though.”* She describes ongoing patterns of abuse that began to appear when her partner arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand, that culminated in a PSO.

Elei remains in the relationship at this time, supported by Sahaayta and her family, and is resisting her husband’s wish to live independently away from the family, where financial deprivation and

isolation are a certainty. Although counselling is not impacting on his behaviours at this stage and he continues to blame her as the catalyst for his violence and his coercive monitoring of her movements, she is learning to understand the precarity of her situation and that the violence is not her fault. For her, the counselling highlights how they both need to listen and negotiate and his current inability to consider change highlights for her the magnitude of the problem that they would need to surmount, to stay together and raise a child. Sahaayta continues to support her to make decisions based on her safety and a secure future for her baby.

Aroha

Aroha is a Māori woman. Her adult son came into Gandhi Nivas on a PSO after she called the police because of his aggression toward her. Her son struggled during his adolescence to engage in study and work and began to resist his mother's values and discipline. She described episodes of antisocial behaviours, including violence and intoxication. She appreciated Gandhi Nivas being a place for her son to go that helps him to sort out his next move and a space that has helped him to think about his violence. As a mother, this provided her with a breathing space, a time to relax without fear, for both for her son and herself. She recalls that both she and her son were supported by caring staff: *"He liked them, it was a caring environment. He loved it there; he really liked the people."* Through these connections, he has attended ongoing counselling. Since leaving Gandhi Nivas, he has been doing some paid work and he is back living at home having been given the space and opportunity to work towards his future independence. As a mother though, she would like to see separate services for youth where they can work with men as mentors: *"I want him to be independent; that's all I want for him. To be able to take care of himself; that's really all I want."*

Anika

Anika is an Indian woman in her early 30s who came to Aotearoa New Zealand independently about 14 years ago to study IT, then business management. She met her husband in the workplace, although he did not have residency at that time. She described the recent birth of their baby putting undue pressure on an already struggling relationship, where a pattern of abuse was entrenched. A PSO led to a temporary separation, despite her attempts to keep the family intact. However, engagement with Sahaayta, including couples counselling, meant her husband was able to take responsibility for the family and they continue to work on their relationship.

She and Sahaayta have built an ongoing relationship through conversations, regular phone calls, and ongoing counselling, both individually and the couple together. The process of building trusting relationships with Sahaayta has given Anika insight into how she envisages her marriage evolving and continuing without violence. Through coming into contact with Sahaayta, she is gaining the confidence to regain her independence should her marriage end. She is studying again and sharing the care of the new baby with her husband: *"I told him, 'I am a very, very strong woman, you know. I can live my life without you, I can give a good upbringing to my son and he will be the best boy.' I know that and I have confidence."*

Avana

Avana is from Fiji. She has three children: two are adults and the third is a teenager. Her family moved to Aotearoa New Zealand some years ago and have lived in both the South and the North islands. All her children work or study, and she works as a health care assistant. Her husband works in a trade. She described a long history of violence and alcohol abuse that began in Fiji which left her with a distrust for the police. It was her son who called the police on the occasion that brought him to Gandhi Nivas on a PSO. The PSO was a catalyst for her husband taking responsibility for his violence.

Counselling with Sahaayta has enabled Avana to speak about her experiences and learn about how intimate partner violence is understood in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through having a voice and being empowered to make her own decisions, including her right to safety, the violence towards her has stopped and she is able to maintain social relationships without his permission and has become confident in her freedom of movement: *"They changed my life. We learn something new."*

Ilihia

Ilihia is a Samoan woman and has two children; one on the autism spectrum. The family came to Aotearoa New Zealand a decade ago. She has secure full time employment; however, her husband does not manage to hold onto work and therefore financial security has not been attained. She described an ongoing pattern of violence, and she had called the police on four occasions prior to the PSO that brought the family into services. While her husband did not stay at Gandhi Niva for the length of his PSO and did not engage in services at the time, she and Sahaayta continued to build a relationship of trust where she was able lift the burden of secrecy and begin to understand the effects of violence on her family.

Coming into contact with Sahaayta staff also empowered her to talk through her issues within her wider family. These connections helped her to negotiate safety, and to begin to work on her relationship with her husband. Both she and her husband now continue to work with Sahaayta, giving them the strength and the skills to provide a safe family home. They continue to call for help if they feel they are struggling. Ilihia values Sahaayta's ongoing support: *"I don't think I would be sitting happily in front of you - I would be in tears."*

Greetha

Greetha is an Indian woman of Iranian descent. Both she and her husband have been together for more than 32 years; 20 of those years have been spent in Aotearoa New Zealand. She has one teenage daughter. While she has contract work now, her husband's sudden unemployment has meant a lack of financial security. But her work keeps food on the table for her family. She described a long history of emotional and physical violence, including alcohol abuse that before intervention she has dealt with by removing herself and her daughter, sometimes sleeping the night in the car. A PSO meant that she was given a break from the violence, and a chance for the family to reflect, through separation and counselling, on their safe future together. She tells of the relief of knowing that he is being cared for by people who are able to guide him and focus on his family. He has self-referred back to Gandhi Nivas when things have escalated and they have needed additional support.

Greetha felt safe talking to Sahaayta; their conversations were confidential, and they understood her circumstances, inclusive of her bringing in the only wage and supporting her daughter through the eruptions of violence. When her daughter asks, *“Mummy, are we going to be okay? Will we be a happy family?”*, she can now say 90% of the time, *“I will make it work and we will set it straight. I promise you.”*

Fulli

Fulli is a Fijian Indian woman who had been married for 20 years and had an adult son before re-marrying her current husband with whom she has a daughter. Following her marriage, which was arranged, they came to Aotearoa New Zealand. She describes her husband as an alcoholic with serious health conditions who had used violence against two previous partners. When the violence began in Aotearoa New Zealand, her husband would go through alcohol counselling and the church would encourage her to stay and support him. Because her husband is unable to stop drinking, his ongoing health condition is worsening, and he is unemployed. While he was issued with a PSO, she was able to engage with Sahaayta and receive help for the multiple daily precarities of living in these conditions.

Sahaayta’s support has helped Fulli gain the confidence to make decisions about her relationship, including supporting her ill husband who is no longer violent. Through Sahaayta’s support, she has been able to gain work and begin to build an independent life: *“And coming here I’ve gotten my life back, I’ve learnt how to live life here in NZ from Sahaayta. I got out of a prison and I learned to live here. [Name of staff] helped me a lot, the path that she showed me, I don’t think I would have reached here without her help.”*

Jumari

Jumari is an Indian woman who ran away from an arranged marriage in India and migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1980s. She started living with an Indian man she knew in an informal marriage. He told her she could not leave because of immigration law, so she became trapped. She has three adult children with him. Over time she began to secure her future through employment opportunities. However, the violence continued, and he was finally taken to Gandhi Nivas on a PSO. He stayed in Gandhi Nivas for a week.

Jumari explains that staying with other people, and the counselling, has helped. For her, the counselling is important. She wants to keep the marriage and family intact. Sahaayta continue to work with her husband. She has the utmost respect for the Sahaayta staff member she has built a relationship with, and who also respects and values her. She praises the knowledge that Sahaayta holds and the work that they do and acknowledges the impact of the support, *“the ‘you guys’ people, the good people around me,”* that keep her focused on her aspiration to take what she has learned back to India to free women from violence: *“I’m getting there.”*