

Simorgh

Women Resource and Publication Centre, Lahore

ANNUAL REPORT

2009

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Year In Review

Simorgh was a year during which a number of small but important projects were undertaken. These included Simorgh's community-based walled city project, 'Planting Seeds for Change' and Teachers Education Workshops. 'The Peaceful Alternative – Sufis, Mazars and People's Religion and the Feminine Voice' was an action research project, was in continuation of a separate though connected research on the modern day dars undertaken earlier. Our other action research project 2009-10 deals with the issue of forced marriages and women's inheritance rights.

Our work in the field of education continues. The Kaleidoscope Primers are being used by over 25 schools in the Punjab, and work on Kaleidoscope 6 is in process. The first edition will be out in 2010.

Though much reduced in numbers due to low cash flow, the Simorgh team did not limit itself to project work but was also engaged in networking activities with other organizations and were among the founding members of Mumkin – a campaign against violence against women. Other activities included active participation in seminars/discussions by partner organizations.

The Peaceful Alternative-Sufis, Mazars, People's religion and the Feminine Voice-HBF (Phase I and II)

Funding: Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Pakistan (HBF)

Objectives :

To explore (i) the syncretism of the Suffic strand in religion and especially its roots in religio-cultural rituals that are common to the different religious communities of this area and (ii) the centrality of both the female voice and poetry, music and dance Suffic discourse as articulated at the shrine and mazar.

We hope to expand the research ambit of this project in 2010 and at the same time draw together research findings deepened by cross country experience of the mazar and shrine in South Asia through a three day conference, an evening of music and a publication based on research findings and related conference papers from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The proposal for this activity has been submitted to HBF

Nature of Project:

- Divided into two Phases; namely Phase I and Phase II
- Phase I duration: 1st October 2009-31st May 2010 .During this period two financial reports will be produced. The 1st final report (of the time period between 1st October 2009 to 31st December 2009) will be submitted to HBF by 5th January 2010. Since the time period has passed this report has been submitted. [*Please see Phase 1-First Final Report below.*] The 2nd final report (of the time period between 1st January 2010 to 31st May 2010) will be submitted to HBF by 5th June 2010 (latest). This report is due to be submitted in the near future.
- Phase II duration: 7 months from the end of Phase I.
- This project comprises of a research component (Phase I) and further expansion of research sites, including a regional conference and publication (Phase II)

Location:

- The walled city of Lahore with national, regional outreach

Phase I -1st Final Report

- Only first final report, due by 5th Jan 2010, for the period between 1st October 2009 to 31st December 2009 of this Project has been submitted to HBF so far.
- This report highlights findings of a small study exploring the dynamics of Sufi mazars and the feminine voice as part of popular/people's religion which was undertaken in October 2009. Aim of this project has been to examine and give a voice the alternative avenues in the socio-cultural field and to look at the peaceful alternatives to fundamentalism of Wahabi Islam.
- The Project Staff for this Phase of the project comprised of Neelam Hussain, Shazia Shaheen, Nazia Hassan, Sabiha Lateef, Shazia Azam and Fatima Shaheen.
- The study location for this Phase of the Project was the walled city and environs.
- Earlier contacts that have been collected by Simorgh through it's Walled City Community Project on gender-based violence, provided access to people who could be used to provide information for this project. These people helped Simorgh in collecting information about the numerical presence, geographical location of local shrines/pirs. They also became the stepping stone for other key informants which were mainly women. Non-muslim religious communities e.g. Hindu and Sikh Communities were targeted because the scope of the project extended to such minorities as well.
- Initially younger age groups of women were targeted (Age bracket 15-25 years). Later this was extended to include life histories of older women as narrations of women in the older age bracket give a more complete picture of the belief patterns/related rituals as they developed through different time periods. During the research process, some women were short listed for focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.
- The Research Methodology comprised of field visits to various locations, shrines and places of worship in and around the walled city, interviews, focus group discussions, observation and documentation. It included usage of field diaries as well using which the research team would maintain a record of their individual personal observations of the things/people they interacted within all, eleven interviews were conducted of which only one was of a male. Also three life histories were taken of three females. Fourteen visits to Shrines/Imambarghs etc, four meetings and four focus group discussions all were included in completing the 'research' phase of this Phase of the Project.
- Overall Simorgh met all deadlines for completing the first part of the First Phase of this Project. Meetings/interviews with the Christian community are due to be completed though. The delay has been because of an unforeseen problem of gaining access to such minorities.
- Although a fusion of differing systems of religious beliefs/practices has been observed in the cultures of the shrines/popular religion, these findings are not final as Simorgh reached these findings operating within time/financial limitations. On the whole, the findings suggest that 'Milad' is more popular as compared to 'Dars' (especially) in the Walled City. Families in the Ahle Hadith School prefer 'Milads' as opposed to 'Dars'. More explicit information may come to light on the finishing of this project in March 2010.
- Phase 1 of this Project shall be finalized from January to March 2010.

1. Planting Seeds for Change (Dubai)

Name of Donor:

- Mr.Anwer Qayum Sher (Managing Director of Equine Management Services Llc)

Objectives:

- Awareness raising of rights
- Information and knowledge on issues and problems commonly faced
- Facilitating access to legal,medical and educational services
- Enabling women to form groups if possible to deal with community and personal problems especially those relating to domestic violence
- Skill development (including family life)for young girls especially ,so that this simplifies their task of generating income along with enhancing the quality of their lives
- To help change mainstream perceptions regarding gender relations, culture and human rights.

Nature of Project:

- In 2009, the duration of this Project was for 6 months i.e. January to June 2009.
- The list of activities carried out in the course of this Project is as follows; one English Class which had 16-20 participants, four meetings with Councilors-each meeting was attended by the Councilor alone, four meetings with a total of sixteen women participants, two meetings with MSO N.S. Hospital which had two participants, twenty field visits, ten home visits with ten participants and two career guidance sessions with six participants in all.

Location:

- Lahore Walled City

2. Ours by Right (Sigrid)Name of Donor:

- The Sigrid Rausing Trust

Objectives:

- The *Overall* Objective of this Project is to raise awareness on women's rights as equal citizen's and counter GBV especially forced marriage and denial of inheritance/land-ownership through the improvement of women's condition and status by enabling them/their concerned family member's (i.e. target groups)access to :

- i. Decision-making especially with regards to marriage
 - ii. Inheritance and Property Ownership Rights
- The *Specific Objectives* of this Project are as follows:
 - i. Advocacy on the above areas with family/community members, legislators, law implementation agencies including judges, lawyers, bureaucrats and local bodies members in ways that will facilitate women's (a) access to property ownership and inheritance rights, (b) their right to decision making with regard to marriage, (c) promote attitudinal change leading to a negative view of forced marriages including customary practices that negate women's rights regarding the above issues. Also to influence policy decisions and legislation on the basis of researched information/data directly through workshops/meetings and indirectly through NGO networks and interaction with judges, lawyers, parliamentarians etc.
 - ii. Advocacy for informed and sympathetic public opinion vis a vis above issues leading to an environment conducive to women's access to decision-making in marriage and property inheritance and ownership etc. This would include demands to criminalize actions that deny women the above rights.
 - iii. Extend outreach of the above objectives through publications

Nature of Project:

- Action research project on the two separate but interrelated issues of forced marriages and women's inheritance and property rights in Pakistan.
- Duration of Project is from 06.11.2009 to 06.11.2010-one year from grant award letter
- *Objectives* of the Project will be achieved through following:
 - i. Field Research at selected sites in Lahore (urban Punjab) for the purposes of Data Collection. Research strategy would include interviews, Focus Group Discussions, informal discussions/conversations with family groups, life histories, interactive theatre, legal literacy sessions etc.
 - ii. Desk Research on existing laws in selected countries of the Muslim World plus landmark judicial decisions. This will provide a context for the research.
 - iii. Periodic dialogues based on research findings with stake holders viz community and local bodies members, representatives from the Ministry of Women and Development National Commission on the Status of Women, bureaucrats, judges, lawyers, parliamentarians, the police, partner NGOs, others

- iv. Two seminars on forced marriage and women's right to equal inheritance respectively.

Location:

- Lahore's Walled City and Industrial Areas
- Dastak Women's Shelter

4. **Simorgh's Teachers Education Project (NHRF-Norway)**

Name of Donor:

- The Norwegian Human Rights Fund(NHRF)

Nature of Project:

- Ten months Project started for which funds were received on 22nd September 2008 but which was completed in September 2009. The project was extended on a 'no cost' basis for these extra two months overtime.
- This Project was one for teacher's education on Human Rights and Participatory Teaching Methodology through workshops with school teachers. In all 6 workshops were conducted to educate the teachers all of which came from different backgrounds/income sectors.
- These workshops were third in the series undertaken by Simorgh since 1997. Simorgh has been working on the topic of human rights education for school students/teachers for over 13 years now-this Project was a part of the series of this education Project as a whole.

Objectives:

- *Short term:*
To provide HR education /introduce participatory teaching methodology to teachers so as to influence their views of perceiving/experiencing the world thus enabling them to:
 - (i) familiarize different age groups of students to the concept of HR's
 - (ii) to develop their capacity for critical thinking through the participatory learning process
 - (iii) to incrementally develop a cadre of teachers who are aware of HR concepts and are capable of undertaking similar exercises with colleagues.
- *Long term:*
To incorporate a human rights culture through human rights education in the society.

Location:

- Lahore based schools like Lahore Grammar School, LGS Junior School(boy's branch) Johar Town,LGS Gulberg III,LGS Ghlaib Market,LGS F.C. College Scheme,St.Anthony's High School,Convent of Jesus and Mary,Aitchison College, ILM Schools,Sanjan Nagar,CARE Schools,C.O.G.B Public School,CDG Primary School,Government Model Middle School
- St.Mary's Academy in Rawalpindi
- Simorgh's Centre at Yakki Gate, Walled City, Lahore.

Final Report:

- As mentioned in the 'Nature of Project', the workshops conducted in this Project were third in series of Simorgh's overall wider human rights education project.
- The Preparatory Period for this Project was *October-December 2008* which comprised of two activities mainly;i.e. (1)discussions regarding module, overall plan and schedule of workshops were conducted with Collective Members and Simorgh staff particularly those who were experienced in these workshops as they had participated in Simorgh's previous two workshops on the same Project and (2)in setting up of workshop parameters and designing the training/education module and in-house capacity building through human rights concepts.
- Dr.Rafia Ali was the expert chosen to design the teaching module for the workshop .This included giving a 'demonstration' workshop for in-house capacity building purposes.As per the Agreement signed between her and Simorgh the workshop module was based on material selected from Kaleidoscope primers 1-5.Additional materials from texts of UDHR,CEDAW,CRC etc were also used.Dr.Ali conducted two workshops (Workshop 1 and 2)for the Project.Both workshops included teachers from different educational backgrounds-Workshop 1 teachers were those who taught in English Medium Schools,Workshop 2 teachers were those who taught in Urdu Medium Schools.These workshops were conducted in April 2009 following Dr.Ali's parents' illness because of which she could not cater to her professional commitments with Simorgh on time.
- The schools which participated in these workshops were (1)Lahore Grammar School,Lahore,(2)St.Anthony's High School,(3)Convent of Jesus and Mary,(4)Aitchison College. All English medium school based in Lahore.
- Simorgh targeted staff and students in St.Mary's Academy based in Rawalpindi as well. This was the first time that Simorgh conducted a workshop in Rawalpindi. This venture with St.Mary's Academy was successful-today the academy uses the Kaleidoscope primers of Simorgh!
- Teaching workshops were also conducted at Simorgh's Centre at Yakki Gate Lahore.The audience for these workshops were women from the walled city who were involved in the profession of teaching either through home-tuitions/running home-based schools.The workshops were designed to educate the teachers with the art of proper teaching.They ensured that knowledge of human rights concepts/awareness was imparted/re-inforced to the children in their process of learning.
- The 6 Workshops were conducted from April to October 2009.
- Before each workshop,there was a preparatory phase which included carrying out of activities which ensured that Simorgh was ready to conduct the workshop in question e.g.'s included corresponding with and contacting schools,announcing the workshop, selecting its' venue etc.

- 1st Workshop: comprised of 3 days in which different LGS branches participated namely LGS 55-Main Gulberg,LGS Junior School(boy's branch) Johar Town,LGS Gulberg III,LGS Ghlaib Market,LGS F.C. College Scheme. The workshop was led by Dr.Ali who used both English/Urdu to communicate with her audience.In all there were a total of 24 participants at this Workshop held at LGS 55 Main Gulberg Branch.This workshop spread over three days focused on HR and Rights of the Child, strategies for teaching(role of teachers are 'teachers' plus 'learners'),qualities of a Good Teacher, Concept of HR(more specifically 'Right to Life'),Rights enshrined in the UDHR,Narrative Skills for teachers,the art of designing a Project and encouragement to collect books for Swat children. Overall this workshop was successful. Participants were open to learning. Dr.Ali handled them well.
- 2nd Workshop: comprised of 3 days in which different schools like ILM Schools,Sanjan Nagar,CARE Schools,C.O.G.B Public School,CDG Primary School,Government Model Middle School were targeted. The ambit of this workshop was wider than the previous one as teachers from Bhatti Gate and Lahore Walled City formed part of Simorgh's audience in this workshop. The workshop was led by Dr.Ali who used both English/Urdu to communicate with her audience. In all there were a total of 35 participants at this Workshop of which 2 were male. The workshop was held at LGS 55 Main Gulberg Branch. Although less academically qualified than the teachers in Workshop 1, the teachers in this workshop showed greater enthusiasm in what they were taught. The pattern on this workshop was similar to that of Workshop 1.The only difference was that that there was male participation in this Workshop as well.Although very few, male teachers did attend this woman led and women dominated Workshop. This Workshop was well-liked by all its participants' with the only criticism being that provision of transport facilities by Simorgh could have been a great help in ensuring greater attendance at the said Workshop!
- 3rd Workshop: comprised of 2 days audience of which constituted teachers from home-based schools in Lahore's Walled City. The workshop was led by the Simorgh team, who used only Urdu to communicate with the teachers. There were a total of 14 participants at this Workshop held at Simorgh Centre,Yakki Gate, Walled City,Lahore.Aim of holding a workshop in this particular area of the city was to improve skills development of the young uneducated/not properly educated female teacher in the Walled City.Although all participants admitted that they found the workshop useful and informative, some criticisms on the workshop were also raised.Some complained that the workshop was too repetitive.Others found exercises therein difficult, long and boring. Suggestions were made to Simorgh for conducting future similar workshops. In the course of conducting this workshop, Simorgh realized it's failure in undertaking the Workshop without giving due consideration to the context and situation of the walled city teachers.The subsequent workshops for the Walled City Teachers were designed in light of this problem .
- 4th Workshop: comprised of 2 days audience of which were teachers of St Mary's Academy,Rawalpindi.The workshop was led by the Simorgh team, who used both English/Urdu to communicate with the teachers. There were a total of 29 participants at this Workshop held at. St Mary's Academy, Lalazar, Rawalpindi.The pattern of this 2 day workshop was no different from those preceding it.Having learned from their pitfalls in Workshop 3, longer introductions/explanations about human rights concepts and participatory learning were given to the audience teachers. Although there was reluctance/resistance to learn shown by the audience at the start of the Workshop,

Simorgh was successful in breaking through this discomfort of the teachers. Owing to Simorgh's efforts, the participants opened up as the Workshop progressed. All agreed that they found the workshop useful. Majority were of the opinion that it had no weaknesses; however there were some who found the workshop too long, lacking focus/ time efficiency etc.

- 5th Workshop: comprised of 2 days in which teachers from home-based schools in Lahore's Walled City were targeted. The workshop was led by the Simorgh team, who used only Urdu to communicate with the teachers. There were a total of 22 participants at this Workshop held at Simorgh Centre, Yakki Gate, Walled City, Lahore. This workshop was designed keeping in mind Simorgh's short-comings in Workshop 3. Sessions/Exercises on narrative skills, reading and getting to know the Text, making lesson plans were all part and parcel of this Workshop. Overall the Workshop turned out to be productive.
- 6th Workshop: comprised of 2 days in which teachers from home-based schools in Lahore's Walled City were targeted. The workshop was led by the Simorgh team, who used only Urdu to communicate with the teachers. There were a total of 23 participants at this Workshop held at Simorgh Centre, Yakki Gate, Walled City, Lahore. The focus of this workshop was on teaching methodologies and confidence building.
- Photographs of these various workshops are included in the 'Final Report'.

PUBLICATION

5. Human Rights Textbooks-Planting the Seeds of Change I (Kios)

Name of Donor:

- KIOS-The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights

Nature of Project:

- This Project involves production of two Human Rights Texts, the Kaleidoscope Readers 6 & 7.(English edition). They are part of Simorgh's ongoing work on Human Rights education for schools(Planting the Seeds of Change I). Teacher's Guides and Resource Books on these texts were worked upon simultaneously by Simorgh-although not a part of this Project, deserves mention as it constitutes Simorgh's contribution to this Project.
- The beneficiaries of this project were (1)school children from age groups ranging from 5-14 and (2)teachers(especially participants of teacher's workshops on human rights and participatory learning)
- Duration of this Project was from 3.9.2009 to 3.4.2010 (8 months duration)
- Preparing these Primers will entail conducting following activities namely; having preparatory discussions with the research team and collective members so as to select the overall theme, identifying appropriate resource person/s for material etc, researching material appropriate for the texts/activities and related exercises, writing

up the text/activities/exercises, doing art work, layout and design, printing and distribution of the Primers and conducting an introductory workshop with teachers/administrators of schools using these texts.

- Primer 6 focuses on various rights granted by UDHR. [Please see *Interim Narrative Report for details.*]
- Primer 7 focuses on topics like environment, violence, right to say no, right to freedom of speech, music and laughter and cultural diversity.

Objectives:

- To allow critical thinking, tolerance for difference and points of view other than ones' own among young children so as to work towards a tolerant and democratic society
- To inculcate gender equality, peace, tolerance and democratic behavior that includes both family, workplace and state institutions
- Using historical female figures to highlight role/status of women in today's society
- Creates awareness of children's rights/responsibilities as members of society
- To develop an approach whereby differences in the society are seen in a positive light- hence countering notions of singular identities based on nationality, religion or any other single category.
- To limit habit of critically analyzing received and/or officially sanctioned ideas.

Location:

- Simorgh Office-target schools will be same as before

Interim Narrative Report-December 2009

- The Project Staff of this Project comprises of Mrs. Neelam Hussain, Nazia Hassan, Fatima Shaheen, Anjana Raza.
- Kaleidoscope Reader 6: the grant received from KIOS was used to complete art work, final layout and editing of this Reader. This is because conceptualization, research and production of textual material had been completed prior to attaining this grant. Anjana Raza was hired by Simorgh on a contract basis so as to undertake all the art work for this Primer. This reader covers several rights (knowledge of which has been imparted to children) through various modes i.e. folktales, stories, speeches etc. The rights covered are right to life, right to choice, right to land and livelihood, right to work/domestic labour, right to choose and the right to music laughter, happiness. The palimpsest of history and cultural plurality along with the ability to learn to think and observe critically through art have also been the focus of this Primer. This reader is ready to go for printing soon.
- Kaleidoscope Reader 7: initial preparatory work including identification of themes and materials, desk research etc has begun for this Primer.

- Overall this Project is going as per plan/schedule. No problems have been faced by Simorgh in achieving its desired aims/output as yet.

