

Prayas
Social work in Criminal Justice

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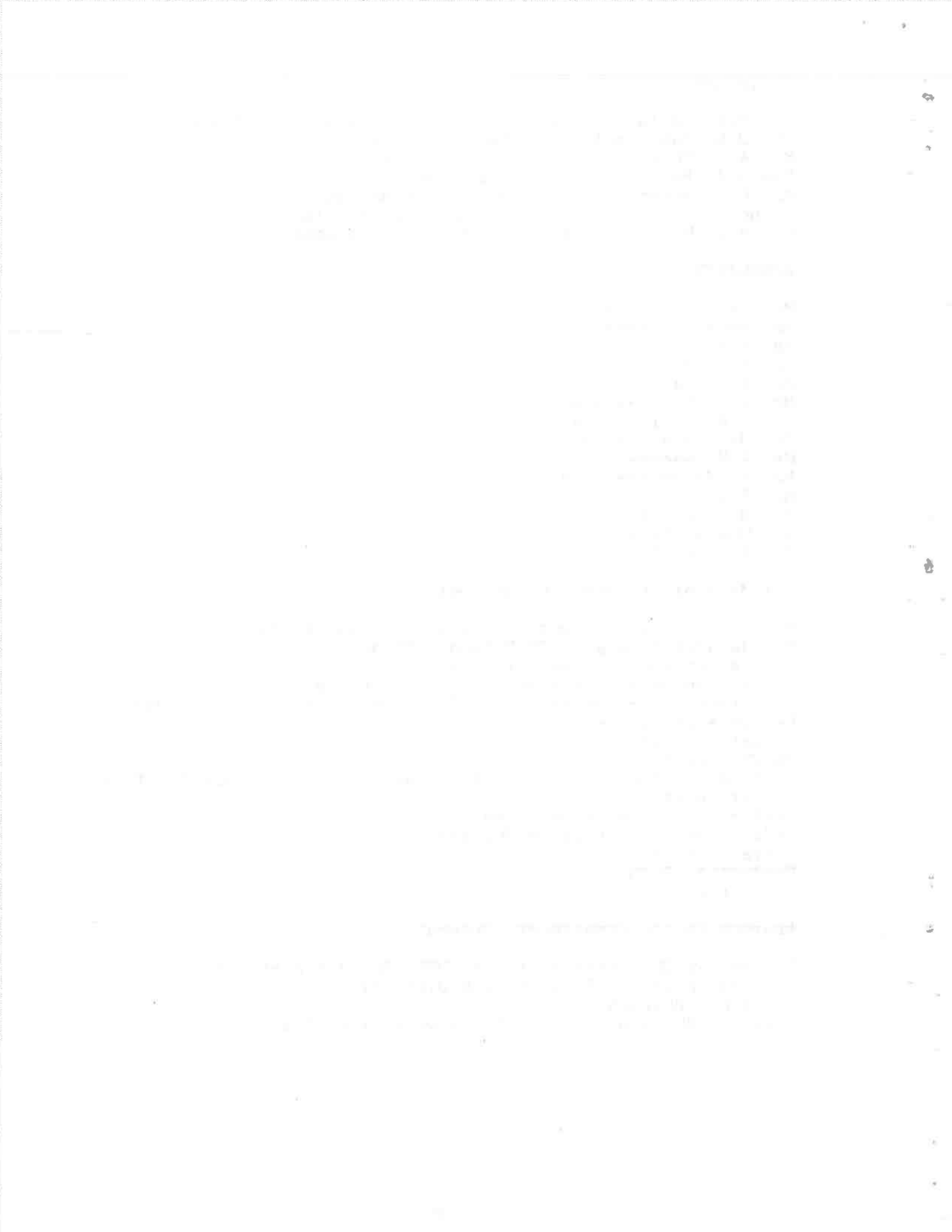
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PRISON UNIT:

Work at the Mumbai Central Prison is seven years old. We began with one social worker in the Young Male Section. Over the years, that staff has expanded to eight workers attached to the Unit. The job profile is more specialised now. While in the past, the same social worker would talk to the prisoners, attend to their legal problems, conduct recreation activities, pay home visits and motivate them to think about a crime free life, these functions have now been divided into specialised roles for workers. In the Women's Section, the scope of work has been expanded to services for children of prisoners, both for those inside (children below five years of age can, as per the wishes of the mother, accompany her to prison) as well as those left outside.

One reason for staff expansion has been an increasing work load. Populations in both the Sections have more than doubled in the last seven years (from a maximum of 150 to easily crossing the 300 mark in the Young Male Section and from a maximum of 60 to more than 150 at times in the Women's Section). It is no longer possible for a single worker to handle this work load.

The issue here is - is it better to have many social workers doing the same job or have workers handling one job at a time and specialising in that role? Obviously there are advantages and disadvantages in both. Job specialisation leads to the client's life getting split into parts by the workers, thus requiring frequent case conferences and constant co-ordination between workers. Yet, it improves the efficiency of work, allows for a better focus into different aspects of a client's life and gives him/her access to more than one relationship or resource.

On the other hand, when the same worker does everything for a client, he has a holistic view of the case and is able to arrive at an assessment faster. But it may prove dangerous to rely on the judgement of only one person, and may sometimes, become a question of the worker's word versus the client's. This system may also lead to clients comparing and changing workers, depending on who is more useful, approachable or amenable at a given point of time. While prima facie there may be nothing wrong with this, it can add to confusion, create an unhealthy rivalry between workers and break their morale.

While the debate regarding which of the two systems is better, rages, we continue with the former system at Prayas, whereby each worker is appointed for a specific task, and is held accountable to it. Simultaneously, the entire prison team is collectively responsible for the work inside prison.

If one looks at the services being provided in prison, legal aid stands out. Majority of prisoners' problems stem from the lack of legal support. Social workers are of help here by reading out and explaining the contents of their charge sheets, writing applications on their behalf, clarifying doubts with their lawyers, explaining procedures to their family members, and

appointing lawyers from our legal aid panel, if necessary.

We are also asked by prisoners to intervene with regard to their health problems and their inability to avail of facilities in prison. Here, we need to act as a liaison with the prison authorities, and our ability to play this role effectively decides whether a client will respond to our challenge of giving up a criminal lifestyle.

Once a person has taken to crime, his chances of remaining in it often depend on his ability to justify his actions, apart from the issue of alternatives available. These justifications are frequently based on his perception of how just or fair the so called civil society is. Having already been labelled as a deviant, he has no positive reputation to protect and may therefore, violate social norms more openly. He can now sit on the other side of the fence, scrutinise any double standards or hypocrisy that may exist in civil society, and will be quick to point his finger at them.

It is in this context that the social worker's role assumes significance. In more ways than one, he represents civil society. It therefore, becomes a test for the worker to prove that justice and fair play do exist in society. In trying to prove this, he may reach a point of asking himself whether these actually exist in real life and begin to feel that there are indeed two sets of laws - one for the powerful and the other for the underprivileged. This can lead to a strong identification with the client.

The worker now stands the risk of questioning his own values and whether he is fighting for the wrong side in the battle. He may thus start justifying his client's actions, rather than questioning them. He may help him find legal loopholes to subvert the law, rather than help him fight for his rights. He may take up cudgels on his behalf rather than with him. He may feel frustrated to the point of misbehaving with officials rather than discuss with them. He may display a growing impatience with procedural blocks in the system, rather than suggest improvements. It will be difficult for such a worker to remain within the system and keep justifying it. He should probably work from outside and try to bring changes in it.

The gist of this discussion is that people who have crossed the boundaries of civil society and taken to crime are no ordinary men and women. It will be naive on the part of the social worker to treat them as mere victims of circumstances. They may have been victims of circumstances, but they did not remain mute witnesses to it. They did something to themselves and to society as a reaction against it. Instead of trying to bring about a change in these circumstances in a pro-social manner, they may have opted for the easy way out, by taking to crime. Nevertheless, theirs was an act of will.

Thus, the social worker must realise that he is working with

'doers'- people who reacted, who fought back, who took revenge, who got angry, who refused to succumb to circumstances, and yet succumbed to crime. Any talk of reformation has to be done in this context. Also, any advocacy of the system will make sense only if one can make that system work. Otherwise, one runs the danger of being seen as 'nice people', not really effective, but to be used to the maximum extent possible.

In order to be effective, through his efforts, the social worker should be able to move the system towards the client, however small that movement may be. Every time you move the system (even by an inch) in a positive direction of help, the client's belief system that we live in an unjust society, will get challenged and eroded. On the other hand, the more you come across as complaining and unable to move this unfair system, the more you reinforce his values. Liaising with the system to help the client gain access to facilities in prison and legal aid, should be seen in this context, and not from the perspective of human rights alone.

If one views the scenario through the eyes of an inmate in prison, it looks something like this:

X is an undertrial prisoner arrested for an offence Y, and does not have a clear idea how long he is going to remain in prison. The period of his stay inside will depend on factors such as:

- how serious is the offence (bailable/non-bailable, metropolitan/sessions triable case)
- has he been granted bail
- does he have the support of his family/friends/gang members to go out on bail
- does he have legal counsel
- how long will his trial take
- what are his chances of an acquittal/discharge
- how long will his sentence be and what are his chances of being released on probation, if he is convicted.

Certain other factors that will affect his situation are:

- is he a first timer or a habitual
- does he have the support of his family or friends
- does he belong to a criminal gang
- is he all alone in Mumbai
- is he illiterate or educated
- is his lawyer privately hired or appointed through the legal aid panel
- is he able to communicate with the magistrate/judge and prison authorities about his problems
- is he being sexually abused/sodomised
- does he have a godfather in prison
- in what mental and physical state is he
- how worried is he about his family.

This is the situation in which the social workers of Prayas are

intervening. It should also be remembered that they alone are not intervening. Others in the picture who are in a position to influence X are:

- his co-accused, if any
- other prisoners belonging to his state, nationality or religion
- other prisoners with the same/similar offence background as his
- habitual offenders/gang members who come into his contact
- his recently acquired friends
- convict warder
- Jail staff
- police officers who come into his contact while being escorted to court or hospital
- officials and undertrials he meets in the court lock-up
- his lawyer, court staff and his magistrate/judge
- his family members/friends.

How effective the social worker's intervention will be, is therefore going to depend on:

- a) how well supported does X feel ?
- b) does X feel that he is in control of his life ?
- c) whose help is X presently receiving ?
- d) what is the impact of the prison environment on X ?

Whether or not X can be influenced by the social worker, will depend on:

- a) is the social worker able to mitigate his present problems ?
- b) does he have a mind of his own ?
- c) does he come across as a fair and just person ?
- d) is he sensitive to X's needs ?
- e) does his presence have a soothing impact on X ?
- f) is X able to discuss his worries and dilemmas with him, and find solutions to them which make him feel better ?
- g) does he allow X to disagree with him without rejecting him as a person ?

Young Male Section

Provision of services like arranging for legal aid, contacting the family through home visits, liaising with the prison authorities for accessing facilities in prison and helping prisoners to raise their case related grievances to the authorities concerned, forms a basic component of the social worker's job. He also tries to influence the thinking pattern of the inmates through discussions, lectures and activities in prison.

The activities conducted in the male section include drawing, painting, writing, singing and dance. The effort here is to encourage creativity, build self confidence and increase the self esteem of the clients through a positive atmosphere. It can also lead to discovery of talent and latent skill in a person. Some of

the poetry written and paintings made in prison are a testimony to this fact.

Group discussions and lectures are held in prison with the dual purpose of attitudinal change and information giving. Some of the discussions in the past have focussed around parent child relationship, sibling rivalry, pre-marital sex, gender issues, violence, friendship, communalism and influence of media. Lectures have been organised around topics like alcohol and drug addiction, skin diseases, HIV-AIDS infection, how to make a ration card or caste certificate, how to open a bank account or apply for a loan, how to avail of govt. schemes like PMRY, etc.

It is hoped that through the discussions, clients are able to gain useful insights into their past, learn from each other's experiences and rethink about their views on life. Lectures have been organised to help the client group exercise their rights as citizens and join the mainstream.

Case Examples:

Case-I: Nanjappa

Nanjappa was arrested for trying to encash a forged cheque leaf at a bank in Mumbai. When the social worker met him in the prison, he was almost in a state of shock. According to Nanjappa, he came from a small town in Karnataka and had run away from home due to failure in his Xth Std. examination. He had boarded a Mumbai bound train with Rs. 200/- stolen from his father's pocket in a state of panic.

He reached Mumbai CST hungry and tired, not knowing where to go. He spent the entire day in and around the station premises, roaming aimlessly and begging for food. Around evening hours, a well dressed man approached him and asked him whether he was looking for some work. He asked Nanjappa his educational qualifications and whether he knew anyone in Mumbai. Nanjappa was only too happy to get employed with the man as a peon in his office with accommodation, food and a salary of Rs. 600/- p.m. The man took him to his office cum residence and fed him well.

For the next one month, Nanjappa roamed Mumbai city with the man visiting offices and banks and not understanding much of the nature of his work. He was told by the man that he was some sort of an agent and that he would understand his work with time.

One day, the man asked Nanjappa to go a nearby bank and encash a cheque, which he dutifully did and returned. Soon he realised that this constituted a major part of his work, apart from accompanying the man and keeping the office clean. Sometimes, the man would come with him to the bank but would never enter inside under some pretext or the other.

On one such occasion, Nanjappa went to the bank to encash a

cheque. While he was waiting for the money, he was called into the manager's chamber and asked to wait. Soon the police arrived and started questioning him about the cheque. He now got very scared and replied that his employer, who was standing outside, would answer all their questions. Coming out of the bank, he realised that there was no one waiting for him and that he had been framed.

The police believed his version and asked him to take them to his employer's office. On reaching the place, the man could not be found and after a long wait, the police took him to the police station and later put him in the lock up. They produced him before a magistrate the next day, and after a week in the lock up, he was transferred to jail custody. Though he was not ill treated, all pleas of his innocence in the matter fell on deaf ears. He told the social worker that till today, he does not know whether the real culprit was apprehended.

Nanjappa was introduced to the social worker by a habitual offender who was friendly with the worker, with a request to get him out of prison as soon as possible. Nanjappa was repentant of his running away from home and wept bitterly. He remembered his mother a lot and thought she would be worried sick for him. He hated the prison environment and wanted to go back home at the earliest. He said he had learnt his lesson and begged the worker to get him out. He did not want to wait for his trial to commence and was willing to straightaway plead guilty in his case.

The worker too felt that it would be best for Nanjappa to get out of prison and go back home at the earliest. Accordingly, he wrote an application for Nanjappa to the magistrate stating his case, pleading guilty, and in view of his age and circumstances of his case, requested for release on probation in lieu of a sentence. The magistrate accepted his plea and soon Nanjappa was out. He came to the Prayas office the next day and we gave him the money to return home. Some days later, we received a letter from him and his father thanking us for all we had done for him.

The factors that helped the rehabilitation of this case are:

- Nanjappa was a first offender and a victim of circumstance in the true sense.
- The prison experience was too scary for him.
- The shock was enough for him not to ever want to come back.
- The police did not ill treat him and were even sympathetic towards him. He therefore, did not have any strong negative feelings against the system.
- The habitual offender who met him felt sorry for him and did not want him to get into a life of crime.
(It should be noted here that this story might have ended differently had the habitual decided that Nanjappa would be a good recruit into his gang. He would then have tried to take the boy under his wings and assured him of all support, reminding him of the injustice done to him by the police and inciting him to take revenge. He would also have played on Nanjappa's fears of rejection by his family, because of running away from home or on coming to know of his prison visit.)
- His magistrate was sympathetic towards him.
- His offence was cheating and not serious enough to invite harsh punishment.
- He met the social worker when he was still intimidated by the system and was desperate to get out.
- He did not have any major family problems.
- His family accepted him back.

Case II: Salim

Salim was a regular visitor to the prison, his offence background being pick pocketing, chain snatching, house breaking and theft, assault and breaking peace. He would make himself comfortable in the prison with ease. He knew the staff, the convict warder and the other 'regulars' well and they knew him too. He knew how the system worked and also how one could get around it.

Initially, the relationship between the worker and Salim was one of mutual tolerance between equals. He never asked for any services from the worker. He had no family to be visited as he had run away from home when he was barely ten. He had no need for legal aid as he knew how to deal with the system. And he had no complaints about the facilities in prison as he found them to be okay.

It seemed as if Salim had committed himself to a life of crime and would often do a cost-benefit analysis of it rather boastfully, in front of the first offenders. In such situations, the worker would calmly point out to him that this train of thought, of living only in the present would lead him to a dead end one day. While admitting that ultimately it was a matter of individual choice, the worker would state that this thinking was wrong and fraught with unhappy consequences in the long run. He would also add that he was saying this as he cared for him as a person.

One day, as the worker was requesting him to help out with some routine task, Salim looked rather preoccupied with some thoughts. Enquiring him about it led to a process of sharing whereby the worker felt that Salim was unhappy about the way his life was going but could not think of coming out of it as he felt it was too late now.

From then on, the relationship between Salim and the worker took a new turn. It was a tug of war between pessimism and realism, cynicism and hope, fatalism and life. The worker had to draw from his inner strength to struggle with Salim on a day to day level, do things for him, advocate for him without succumbing to his emotional blackmails, get assurances from the police to give him a chance and make him believe in the art of the possible.

It also involved telling him firmly that if after all this, he backed out and took a short cut once again, he would not blame the world any more. The worker had to be careful not to give any guarantees on behalf of anyone except himself, in his enthusiasm to prove his point or win the battle against Salim. He only promised his moral support and gave a commitment to struggle together in trying to overcome the hurdles that come along the way.

After four years of struggle, Salim has moved out of the area which fostered his life of crime and married a girl whom he rescued from prostitution. He is presently trying to re-establish his links with his family in his native place. On the flip side, he still does not have a steady source of income, depends on his wife to work as a maid and keep the fires burning, is trying to regain his lost status (which he enjoyed in the criminal world) by becoming like a godfather to his family and to some unsupported people whom he comes across or who live in his area.

Salim can become a good social worker since he feels for his fellow human beings, has seen the world and knows how to fight for the rights of someone. But he will have to give up his need for status as a primary goal of his life. That is what perhaps, drew him to a life of crime in the first place, and can take him back there once again. He has to realise that status comes with hard work and slowly building oneself up in an area. There are no short cuts to life.

Women's Section

While most of the services being provided in the Women's Section are the same as that of the Young Male Section, there are two additional components, as per the specific requirements of women in prison - services for children of prisoners and literacy classes for prisoners. A majority of women in prison are married and worried for their children - whether inside with them or living outside. Therefore, a need was felt to start services for this group. Secondly, most of the women are illiterate and find themselves disadvantaged vis-a-vis the legal system. Functional literacy was started for them to empower them and help them deal with the outside world with greater confidence.

Women inside prison have been using our services to great effect from the beginning. However, the use of our after care services had a distinct male bias till the last two years or so. We knew that the reasons for this lay in the social structure and our inability to respond to the same.

As a first step towards a gender aware intervention strategy, we followed up some cases of women and young males with whom the social worker had built strong links in prison and was confident that they would come to Prayas after release and yet, they did not turn up after their release. We found that the males did not come to us because they had found alternate positive support systems and therefore, did not need our help. But in the case of women, they could not be traced at all! After their release, they had either not come back to the address given to us in prison, or had come and gone because of feeling unwelcome/not being able to adjust. Their families did not know their present address or were simply not interested.

A few inferences can be drawn from the above findings:

- The stigma of prison sticks harder to women.
- Men being seen as bread winners and continuing the family tree, are more easily accepted back into the family fold.
- Aware of the likely response of the family and the community, women may feel that it is too late to turn back now.
- The guilt of having brought to the family name is much stronger in women and this sense of guilt gives rise to a fatalistic view of life.
- It will take much more than a strong worker-client relationship for a woman to think of starting life afresh.

We decided to make an all out effort to make an impact on the psyche of the women. The literacy teacher was made full time so that she also devote time on recreation and teaching some skills towards employment generation. The entire effort was to make the women believe in themselves, increase their self esteem and create an environment of hope. The Balwadi teacher's role was expanded to include home visits to be in contact with the families, particularly children of the women and help out wherever necessary.

A social worker was appointed to specially look into the needs of children of women prisoners and create support systems for them through networking. The prison social worker made a conscious attempt to solve problems faced by the women because of delays in processing and overload of the criminal justice system. She also gave a constant message to the women that Prayas would solidly stand behind them if they decided to start a new life.

Slowly, some women started voicing the fact that they would like to give up crime as a way of life for the sake of their children, or because they were fed up of running from the police, or because of improvement in family relations (helped by the worker's intervention), or simply because the worker had instilled a new hope in them. These were then backed by promises to come to Prayas after release.

Once such a woman was released, the women inside would keep asking the worker whether she came to Prayas or not. There would be heated arguments between the protagonists and the cynics about why she had not turned up. Every time a woman would promise to come and then not come, the habituals in the section would have an expression of 'I told you so'. Their moral victory was very important to them as well as to all those who came under their influence.

But the tide started turning once women started coming. Our efforts had paid off. The trickle of women coming to Prayas after their release slowly became a steady stream. Today, 30 to 40% of clients coming to Prayas are women. With their numbers increasing, it is becoming more plausible to talk to women in prison about rehabilitation.

Case Examples:

Case I : Asha

First contact was made with Asha at Bombay Central Prison Women's Section in July, 1994. She had been arrested under section 379/IPC for a railway offence. She was aged in her mid twenties and had been a snack and fruit vendor in trains. She approached the worker with the hope of obtaining a solution to her plight. According to her, she had been arrested for the first time and falsely accused and treated badly by the concern police. She said that she was the only earning member of a very poor family who depended on her. She did not want to inform them of her arrest and since she could not furnish bail, wanted an application to the court pleading her innocence and asking for her release on personal bond or otherwise. This was the starting of the relationship with the client.

Thereafter, she maintained regular contact every time the worker visited and spoke about her poor family condition. She would also ask for information about court procedures, the organization and ask for feedback and opinions regarding her plight. There

seemed to be a need to explore and test out the worker before opening up completely. She would sit for literacy classes and spend the rest of her time with the children in the prison, in whose company she seemed perfectly comfortable and happy.

As time passed by she found means of earning by working for the foreigners and other persons with resources inside the prison. Her relationship with the worker continued with more requests for applications. She began speaking more about herself and thus more was learnt about her real situation. She had broken off ties with her family as, according to her, they had not supported her after all that she had done for them. This relationship has started to deteriorate after the demise of her father.

Presently, she had lost all contact with her mother and other siblings and harboured feelings of bitterness and also a need to settle scores. She had been living away from home for several years but had not had many positive experiences which seemed to have embittered her further. Her expectations from life and people that had not been fulfilled and this had left her disappointed. But she was not entirely disheartened. She seemed to be ready to continue a struggle and enter into many relationships even in the prison. Her behaviour however was aggressive when her demands were not met with and there were instances of her being accused of theft and other violent outbursts.

At a personal level, her relationship with the worker seemed to progress. However, with regard to her case, little progress was being made and the resultant frustration was slowly finding its expression in the relationship. She had been denied release on personal bond by the court and her trial had also not commenced. Her request that the worker approach the court for personal bond could not be complied with since she was not permitting us to visit her family and therefore, we were unable to arrive at a true picture to present before the magistrate. Her demand that we find her a lawyer who would arrange for a professional surety for her on payment could not be complied with by us as it was against our code of ethics.

This frustration was clearly expressed one day when she told the worker that since she was not being offered the assistance that she desired she wished to terminate the relationship with the worker. The worker tried to explain her reasons but the client was not willing to accept anything. The relationship was thereafter cut off although it was made clear that the worker was still available.

The client had decided that she would help herself as she always had. In the weeks that followed the client seemed to be making some efforts to rekindle the relationship. She did not make many demands but requested the worker to meet her court appointed lawyer and ask for an opinion about her case. This was done by the legal aid worker who was assured by her advocate that he

would be attending regularly. The relationship with the worker continued and plans began to be made for her post release life.

Following her release, the client came to the office and the available options for shelter were offered. She did not want to be in a closed institution and said that she would make her own arrangements for shelter. Bal Asha Trust had offered her a job with salary of five hundred and shelter. However, she would not have the freedom to move around. It was then decided that she would make her own arrangements for shelter but attend the Prayas workshop and work on the plans that she had outlined. This commenced and she started residing with another released prison inmate. Simultaneously, a visit was made to her family with her gradual consent. The family wanted no contact with her as she had a record of getting into trouble and feared that she was into prostitution. The relationship was stormy and seemed like it would be difficult to restore to normalcy. However this option was not entirely closed.

During the first three months, she worked with determination and kept at it although she seemed to be struggling financially and emotionally. She was encouraged to explore the options of continuing education and obtaining training, but was unable to do this because of her problems with shelter, lack of documents such as ration card, school certificate etc. There was a gradual decline in her determination and she started looking for opportunities which would make her more financially secure. Her relationships through which she was obtaining some emotional support and shelter also began to deteriorate as she felt that she was being exploited. She broke off this contact and moved on. Much of her efforts were directed towards regaining previously lost property, but without much success and this increased her sense of bitterness and reduced her willingness to struggle.

Throughout this phase, she was in regular contact with Prayas. Although she did not give details about her address or workplace, she kept informing Prayas what she was doing. At one point she showed the rare quality of providing support to a patient with a serious illness when no other support was available. However her own needs and ways of relating seemed to result in a disruption of this relationship too. It was observed that this way of interaction in relationships was a pattern with her.

Around this time, she was arrested for the second time. This time in prison seemed largely marked by a strong sense of anger and resentment directed towards Prayas for what she perceived as lack of emotional support, inability to assist her in obtaining shelter, gainful employment and assistance with fighting her battles.

She made demands that Prayas approach her magistrate and release her on personal bond. This demand could not be met as her whereabouts were not known in adequate detail prior to her arrest. Even though she claimed to have made contact with a supportive Mahila Mandal who she compared favourably to Prayas,

she refused to contact them at that time. She continued to communicate a negative emotions vis- a- vis Prayas. The second total break in contact occurred when the student social worker visited the same court as hers on the same day that she attended it with regard to another client's case. The other client was then released on personal bond causing much anger on Asha's part. No amount of explanation helped as the Asha was extremely upset. Prayas workers stopped trying to reason with her at this point.

She was convicted hereafter and released after her sentence. On her release, she visited Prayas although indicated that she could manage on her own. She had made arrangements to stay with a person released and involved with drug trafficking. Her need was to live in a place where she could go out and work during the day but there was no such women's shelter available for unmarried persons.

The process to encourage her to take training and find a job restarted but she was not satisfied with jobs available and did not seem to be interested enough in exploring training opportunities on her own. Within the environment that she lived, she soon got involved with the drug traffickers and started working for them. She was paid well for this and started buying jewellery, clothes and other personal items which she showed off to other clients and workers on her visits to Prayas. Her source of income was no secret to both workers and clients alike and she seemed very happy with her new purchasing power and material possessions.

Following a discussion in Prayas in regard to Prayas's stand on this issue, it was decided that she would be confronted about her occupation and Prayas' view on the matter. This confrontation came unexpectedly for her and she got once again very emotionally upset. She put forth various justifications and then decided to end her relationship with Prayas. She was particularly upset as she took it as a personal rejection of her by Prayas. We tried to communicate to her that we were only objecting to her occupation and the resultant lifestyle but in her emotional state, she could not understand us.

She once again left Prayas office not intending to return. However, there appeared to be some unfulfilled need and she made contact with Prayas via telephone. After some days, she was rearrested on suspicion under section 379 IPC (theft). This time her relationship with workers was cordial and she seemed to be more emotionally stable. She said that she had stopped her involvement with drug trafficking. She appeared willing to explore other pro-social options with the worker. She also started having health problems and asked for our help in obtaining the required treatment. Efforts were made in this direction alongside motivating her to examine her life experiences prior to her arrest. Her case was discharged within a few months and she was released.

She returned to the area that she was living with an ex-inmate. She discovered that she had contracted a disease whereby she needed the support of Prayas workers with regard to hospitalisation and treatment. With our help, she started her treatment and also began exploring various options for her future. She joined the workshop as an immediate measure and also took up a part time job in morning and evening.

As her health improved, she became more emotionally stable and there appeared to be a change in her attitude and ways of relating to people. Although her basic traits were still dominant, her demands and expectations were now more tempered with personal introspection and efforts. The process that followed in the next few months was not entirely smooth as workers were not sure of where she was getting money to spend sufficiently as well as save likewise.

More than using the training element of the workshop, she seemed to be responding positively to the relationships she had begun to establish. She had taken on the role of elder sister to the boys and seemed to be enjoying her role as a protector, advisor and to some extent controller. She had strong attitudes about a code of behaviour in the workshop such as work ethics, misuse of Prayas money. She confronted the trainees with a sense of righteousness and authority. She also showed a compassionate side to her whereby she shared her food and belongings with others. She strongly expressed what she agreed and disagreed with. She seemed to have adopted Prayas and its members as her foster family.

Asha is still in the process of determining the path she will choose in terms of occupation. She has identified a few areas that she is interested in although her main consideration is financial stability. She has decided to depend less on Prayas and make her own arrangements to fulfill her needs. She is saving towards getting her own place of living. She is taking some training in nursing as she is interested in making a future living out of it. At this point she seems willing and able to move one step at a time although her struggle still continues.

Case II: Client Alka

Alka, aged about 18 years, was arrested under section 381 IPC. She approached the worker for moral support as she found the prison situation very intimidating. It was her first time in prison in a situation where she felt alone without support, inadequate information and a very bleak future. She spoke about how she had got into this mess.

She had been working as a domestic worker and had become involved in a relationship with a man. She became pregnant but did not receive support from her partner. Being in a situation where she felt she could not turn to her family and also since she had no other resources, she choose the option of stealing jewellery in order to have an abortion. She was arrested soon after and this

incident alienated her from her family. For Alka herself, it was a very unpleasant event for which she was not only ashamed but also very afraid. In trying to solve one problem she found herself in a new one. She now wanted to get out of prison as soon as possible and pick up the threads of her life once again. She decided to live in a residential institution and find some work towards rebuilding her life.

At this point the worker besides offering her legal information also tried exploring the option of working with the family. Alka was closed to the idea because she felt that there was no possibility of her family relenting from their position. After considerable discussion about the possible outcomes, a decision was reached that a home visit could be paid even to see the response. The home visit was paid and it was found that the family was still very disturbed and angry about what had happened. They had decided to break off all contact with Alka. However, after speaking to the family and letting them know about the agency, the worker left the Prayas address with them.

It was encouraging when a few days later, the mother and father came to Prayas office. It was felt that they were trying to accept the reality. Breaking contact with their daughter was their way of coping with the situation. Their initial response during the meeting with the worker was that there no turning back. It was however apparent that their feelings for her were not dead. They decided that they would like to release her on bail. On release, however, she would have to live in an institution as they couldn't take her back home. This was mainly because they felt that her living at home would affect the marriage prospects of their other daughters.

Alka was relieved that her family would still continue their contact but was apprehensive about the turn that future would take. It was earlier decided that probation could also be an option, but the family wanted assistance in reduction of bail amount so that she could be released on bail. A visit was made to the court by the legal aid worker and prison worker and the magistrate was spoken to about the case. He reduced the bail in court to rupees 1500/- and he released her on the basis of production of the ration card. Her family was present in court when she was released. They had also decided that since she had been away from home for so long they could take her home for a short while where she would stay before going to the institution.

Alka was released and the reunion between her and her parents took place. They were both willing and ready to take on whatever the situation brought. Words were exchanged, some reprimanding, some forgiving, some apologetic and some affectionate. Both parties seemed at that point to require the workers presence as they discussed the next course of action. They reached an agreement that after a few days spent at home the next plan of action would be worked out.

Alka had expressed a desire in obtaining training and she and her parents were to visit Prayas office a few days hence. She came with her family and expressed an interest in learning how to stitch. Her family had then decided that she would continue leaving with them as they had come to terms with the situation and how it was to be dealt with. They had decided that as long as she didn't get into another situation which would cause the family distress they were willing to sought things out.

The aftercare worker was to try and locate training opportunities for Alka near her area of residence as she found the Prayas workshop was too far for her to travel. A follow up visit was made that indicated that Alka had made arrangements for her own training and was in the process of getting resettled in to her family. After a few phone calls from Alka, the worker felt that her situation was getting better and contact between them tapered off.

The social workers attached to this unit are the
forward discuss with the mothers about good parenting skills
raise with medical authorities for pre and post natal care of
the mothers as well as health check ups and immunisation of the
children and help with obtaining birth certificates of newly
born children.

Thirdly - prison, the social workers pay regular home visits and
visits to government agencies and NGOs for the following reasons:

- to find out about the state of the children of women prisoners
- to help the children keep in touch with their parents
- to give moral and emotional support to the children
- to provide emergency assistance to the family in case
of dire need
- to secure educational sponsorship for the children existing in
the community, in case of need
- to inform the children about the legal status of their
mothers' cases
- to inform the children about medical facilities and help them
visit their mothers, if necessary
- to arrange for foster care or institutionalisation of the
children, if necessary
- to arrange for training or employment (if possible) of children
wherever necessary.

FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT:

This unit mainly caters to the needs of women prisoners vis-a-vis their families, particularly, their children. As explained earlier, services for children of prisoners were started for two reasons:

1. We realised that children of prisoners were completely neglected by the welfare sector, both government as well as the NGOs. There were no existing services for this group except balwadis being run for children inside in some prisons in the country. A few states have some skeletal services for children of convicted prisoners in terms of subsistence grants or educational scholarships but they do not reach out to all deserving cases. Also, children of undertrial prisoners get completely left of this process.

2. We felt that women (who have children) may respond better to us once they knew that the basic needs of their children were being looked into. Their outlook towards life could change once they were relieved of their main worry. They might want to live a 'full life' once there was some hope in their children's lives. They might want to change for the sake of their children. Therefore, the unit for children of prisoners was started with the twin objectives of (a) establishing the need for such services and creating awareness about this group and (b) reaching out to women prisoners through their children.

In prison, the social workers attached to this unit run the balwadi, discuss with the mothers about good parenting skills, liaise with medical authorities for pre and post natal care of the mothers as well as health check ups and immunisation of the children, and help with obtaining birth certificates of newly born children.

Outside prison, the social workers pay regular home visits and visits to government agencies and NGOs for the following reasons:

- to find out about the state of the children of women prisoners
- to help the children keep in touch with their mothers
- to give moral and emotional support to the children
- to provide emergency assistance to the family in case of dire need
- to access educational sponsorships for the children existing in the community, in case of need
- to inform the children about the legal status of their mothers' cases
- to inform the children about mulakat facilities and help them meet their mothers, if necessary
- to arrange for foster care or institutionalisation of the children, if necessary
- to arrange for training or employment (if possible) of children, wherever necessary.

This unit has been catering to the needs of women prisoners and their children quite successfully since its inception. The balwadi, which was started much earlier, is now looked upon almost as a regular service by the women and the prison staff.

In fact, this year we have mooted a proposal with the Prison Department to either take over the balwadi or give a grant-in-aid to Prayas or any other NGO to run it on a long term basis. We have also suggested to them to explore with the Department of Women and Child Welfare to start an anganwadi under the ICDS project. We feel this way because balwadi as a part of any women's section is a mandatory provision in the Maharashtra Prison Manual. Also, having established the service, we would like the government to run it on a permanent basis so that we could divert our limited resources to some other areas of prison reform.

As far as work with children outside is concerned, there remains a need to continue working on the issue. NGOs working with children in Mumbai are now aware of the needs of this group and some of them are willing to extend their services to these children. But many of their rules and criteria are framed in such a manner that this group has difficulty in availing their services.

For example, one of the basic conditions for admission into residential institutions is the death/permanent absence of at least one parent. In the case of these children, while both parents may be alive, they may be in prison, or the mother may be in prison and the father may be an alcoholic or an anti-social element and therefore unable to take care of the children. Therefore, though technically these children have both parents alive, at least temporarily, they are living like orphans. Yet agencies are reluctant to change their rules and admit such children into their institutions.

There is a stigma attached to such children and the community needs to be made aware that children of prisoners are victims of circumstances and suffer disabilities for no fault of theirs. They need the support and help of society at large. The social worker attached to this unit networks with the families, sponsorship agencies working for children, residential institutions and government departments/agencies and members of the community or social groups towards fulfilling this objective.

An action research study on children of prisoners was taken up in Tihar Prison two years ago to understand and find possible solutions to the various aspects related to this issue. The study is in its final stages and report will be out in the coming year. We feel that with the help of this report, we will be able to better highlight the situation of children of prisoners in the country and draw the attention of the government, the voluntary sector, international agencies and the community at large to this vexed problem.

The central issue that we want to take up with the authorities concerned is - whose responsibility is it to look into the needs of children of prisoners. This is perhaps the only instance whereby the child gets separated from the parent due to state action. And yet, the state does nothing to ensure that this child is not left without care. The departments who have a moral responsibility in this regard, we feel, are the police, prisons, judiciary and women and child welfare/social welfare. Our future plan of action is network with these departments to fix responsibility for the same.

A recent development at Prayas has been the requests that have been coming from prisoners from outside Mumbai (forwarded by the prison authorities) for assistance to their families. These requests have been coming from female as well as male prisoners regarding the condition of their children, parents, younger siblings and spouses. If these families are based in Mumbai, we have acceded to these requests by extending our services to them and sharing with them any information available to us. In the case of families based outside Mumbai, we have shared our information with them about services available in their area of residence or written to the District Probation Officer to help out.

Another issue regarding the work of this unit is our observation (inferred from home visits paid by our workers) that sometimes, there are old parents, young siblings or a dependant wife of a male young undertrial who are as much in need of help as the children of women prisoners. If this unit is known as the Family Support Unit, then should it not render services for these people as well? Once we start intervening in this area in a systematic manner, the work load is likely to increase manifold requiring additional staff input. It is in such situations that a step like take over of the balwadi by the Prison Department will go a long way in helping Prayas to reach out to new areas of work.

Case Examples

Case I: Meena

The case was referred to Prayas by Snehasadan. Meena's husband had been arrested and charged of murder. She was a mother of three children aged from 6 to 11 yrs. On her husband's arrest she had to make arrangements to fend for herself and her children. She found a job as a cook in a hostel which provided accomodation for her but not for her children. She had therefore kept her children at her village with her in-laws. However, since they were unable to care for the children any more, she had to make other arrangements. She approached Prayas regarding this issue.

Meena felt institutionalization of her children was the only option. Efforts commenced to locate a place for the children and information was given to her. For the boys, accomodation was made available in a residential home for street children. For the girl

however, it was more difficult since the only institution that was willing to admit her required medical reports and other documents prior to admission. On obtaining these documents, it was found that the child's age was more than the limit set by the institution and therefore, she was refused admission.

In the case of the boys, it was due to the flexibility of the institution concerned that admission was granted. It is clear that institutions that are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable children function with flexibility and are able to reach out to them. The efforts to make arrangements for the girl continued. At one point a woman was willing to provide accomodation and allow the child to attend school while the girl also helped with some house work. However, the girl was not willing to stay there and continued to remain with her mother.

In the meantime, the boys were in the process of adjusting to their new environment. The younger boy expressed willingness to stay but the older boy was resisstant. This resulted in both children running away from institution and reaching their mother. Prayas was contacted in this regard and the worker made a visit to find boys safely with their mother. On having a joint discussion with the mother and the boys, the children agreed to return to the institution. The mother made frequent visits to the children but shortly after, the older boy ran away once again. The staff of the institution contacted Prayas to inform of this incident. Inspite of the administrative problems caused to the institution, their main concern was the eventual welfare of the child. Yet another visit to the mother resulted in the same outcome of the boy returning.

It was felt that the mother's frequent visits was causing difficulty in the child's adjustment to his new environment. Gradually, the boys settled into their routine. The worker followed up the case and found that the woman had moved out of present job and had made arrangements for her daughter at some one's residence.

Case II: Reena

Reena was arrested and accused in a case of theft. The student social worker met her in the police lock-up. Reena was a single parent and the only guardian of her eight year old child. According to Reena, there were no relatives or neighbours to look after her child and the child was living on the streets alone. The student made a visit and several more following that. However, since there was no fixed place of residence the child was difficult to locate on every visit.

There was an older boy who seemed to look after Reena's son but on obtaining more details, it was found it was a very casual contact. This caused Reena much concern and she constantly made requests that the boy be institutionalized. Yet, she was not willing to accept the idea of state care because of her negative picture of the conditions prevailing in the remand home.

A voluntary organisation providing shelter for street children accepted Reena's son without much formalities, keeping the child's present situation in mind. There was a delay in implementing this option since the child could not be found on subsequent visits by the worker. When the meeting between the worker, Reena and her son finally took place at the court, the child appeared ill. Reena spoke to him about what was being decided for his future and he was agreeable. He was taken to the institution soon where he started getting medical care. Regular visits were made by the Prayas worker and the student social worker. The child's health improved and he seemed more stable in his new environment. His mother was also more at rest, now that her child was no longer living on the streets.

Reena's son was admitted into school and began to adjust although his need for his mother was heightened during his illness and his initial days at the institution. Reena now wanted to meet her son and co-ordination began between the worker and the institution. However, before this was actually worked out Reena was released. She did not visit the child immediately as she seemed to have been drawn back into the struggle of dealing with life outside. After a month she approached Prayas requesting to be taken to meet her child although she had the address. She was taken and this resulted in the long awaited reunion between mother and child.

Due to a crisis situation in her life at that point where she had to be provided shelter and also for reasons somewhat unknown to Prayas, a period followed when Reena kept no contact with her son and this caused concern on the part of Prayas. It was felt that she was in a difficult situation and attempts were made by workers to obtain more information about Reena and her whereabouts and her state of mind. There would be occasional calls to Prayas asking about her son and expressing her inability to visit him. She perceived a threat to her own security and that of her son due to her criminal past. She said she was being forced by underworld links in her community to continue in crime.

Gradually, she was able to tide over this period in her life and she moved into a more settled way of life. She also resumed regular contact with her son. On a follow up visit, workers found that on that very day, her son had run away from the institution and had reached her. This escape had been undertaken by a few boys and he had joined him. Reena and her son seemed happy to be together although she was concerned about his future and his education.

The child was readmitted into the institution on initiative taken by his mother without any intervention by Prayas. We feel that it would be better if Reena moves out of the streets into a home of her own where she could live with her child safely and assume complete responsibility for him. Reena feels that her locality is not conducive for the child's future. Yet, this is the place she has grown up, this is the community which she considers as her own and this is where she feels some sense of belonging.

LEGAL AID UNIT:

The legal services given by Prayas forms the backbone of the work in prison. In a recent Mumbai High Court judgement, in which Prayas was a party respondent, the honorable justices Shri V.P.Tipnis and Shri M.L.Duddhat observed that if legal aid reached undertrial prisoners as laid down in the statute, most of the problems faced by them would be solved. Nothing could be more true than this.

If an undertrial prisoner has access to legal aid, his (denotes male as well as female) following problems could be solved:

- On being produced before the magistrate/judge within 24 hours of arrest, he could put forward his point of view and could get discharged or released on bail.
- If third degree methods are being used by the police to extract information from him, this could be brought to the notice of the magistrate/judge for appropriate action.
- If he is being kept in police custody for a long period without enough evidence being produced against him, he could be transferred to judicial custody i.e. prison.
- If his personal property is not transferred to the prison along with him, it could be remedied by bringing it to the notice of the magistrate/judge.
- If he is not getting proper medical attention in the lock-up or in the prison, the same could be ensured through the court.
- If he is a minor, he could be immediately transferred to the juvenile court.
- If he has children who are in need of care, appropriate orders could be passed to either bring them into the prison (if the children are below 5 years and if the undertrial in question is a woman) or send them to institutional care.
- If he has not met his children for a long time, he could request for a mulakat to be arranged.
- If the bail amount is beyond the reach of the prisoner, a request for reduction of the amount or release on personal bond could be made and granted.
- In case of a non-bailable offence, special circumstances at home or lack of evidence in the case could be cited as reasons for grant of bail.
- The same reasons as above could be cited for expedition of the trial in case bail cannot be granted/bail amount cannot be reduced/personal bond cannot be given.
- If he pleads guilty or is found guilty in his case and if his offence does not warrant life or death sentence, a request for release on probation under the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 could be made and considered by the magistrate/judge.
- Procedural delays like not taking accused to the court or hospital due to lack of police escort, non-production of charge sheet within 90 days or not producing the accused before the magistrate/judge within 24 hours of arrest could lead to discharge of the case or release on bail immediately.

The social worker attached to this unit arranges for legal services for the undertrial prisoners keeping the above mentioned issues in mind, so that their problems could be solved. He tries to do this through the following methods:

- a) educating the prisoners about their rights and the correct procedure to access these rights.
- b) writing applications to the magistrate/judge regarding the problem concerned and requesting for appropriate action.
- c) bringing problems to notice of the prison authorities for action.
- d) personally approaching the magistrate/judge with a specific problem requiring immediate or special attention.
- e) personally approaching or writing to higher authorities for grievance redressal.
- f) appointing a lawyer on behalf of Prayas to represent an accused for bail, trial, expedition of matters, legal injustice or any other matter requiring immediate or special attention.

This year our network with lawyers in the various courts of Mumbai got more strengthened. This has become possible due to an increasing appreciation among our lawyers about the role being played by Prayas in the criminal justice system, regular contact and follow up being kept by our social worker with them and upgrading the honourarium from time to time. We now have at least two lawyers in all metropolitan courts of Mumbai and four in the sessions court who regularly take up cases referred to them.

Another development has been the increasing number of requests we have been receiving from prisoners all over Maharashtra - Thane, Kalyan, Yerawada, Nasik Road, Kolhapur, Amrawati and Ratnagiri prisons asking for legal aid. Since we cannot cater to this demand, we have been replying to these letters giving them relevant information, referring them to appropriate authorities, directly writing to the district legal aid boards and probation offices and in certain cases, to the High Court, I.G.(Prisons), National Human Rights Commission, etc.

Having established the legal aid services of Prayas firmly, our focus is now on reactivating the government legal aid board and making it an effective body. Towards this objective, we have been having meetings with senior officials of the Department Law and Judiciary, Maharashtra State Legal Aid and Advice Board and Greater Mumbai Legal and Advice Committee. The problems regarding implementation of legal aid services are rooted in - the poor honourarium paid to the lawyers, red tape in the payment mechanism, staff shortage in the legal aid boards and lack of public spiritedness in most lawyers.

One of our suggestions to improve this situation is to decentralise the functioning of the legal aid board. As a first step in this direction, the Greater Mumbai Legal Aid Committee could depute a suitable official at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's

Office and make disbursement of honouraria to lawyers through him. We have had meetings with the CMM and Member-Secretaries of the Maharashtra State Legal Aid and Advice Board and Greater Mumbai Legal Aid and Advice Committee to get such a cell started.

We have also proposed that our social worker placed at Esplanade Court could get attached to this cell and help out in the following tasks:

- networking with lawyers
- activating legal aid panels in all the courts through meetings and liaising with the bar associations
- holding legal aid and awareness camps in the court premises
- legal counselling of litigants approaching the courts
- release of pamphlets which encapsulate legal procedures in simple language.

Case Example:

Mohammed Hanif Sheikh wrote to us from Nasik Road Central Prison stating that he was lodged in prison for the last seven years under the NDPS Act for drug peddling charges. He further stated that he had not been produced in court since his case was committed to a court of sessions for trial three months after his arrest ! He said that he had made several applications through the prison authorities to the Sessions Court, Mumbai High Court and even the Supreme Court for starting his trial but to no avail.

The same day that we received his letter, we forwarded it for action with a covering letter from our side to the Chief Justice Mumbai High Court and sent copies of the same to the I.G.(Prisons), Chairman, National Human Rights Commission, Member Secretary, Maharashtra State Legal Aid and Advice Board, Superintendent, Nasik Road Central Prison and Mohammed Hanif Sheikh.

Within one month of our sending the letters, we received replies from the Registrar, Mumbai Court, the I.G.(Prisons), Superintendent, Nasik Road Central Prison and Mohammed Hanif. The High Court informed us that necessary action was being taken. The I.G.(Prisons) sent us a copy of the letter written by him to the Superintendent of Nasik Road Central Prison asking him what action he had taken with regard to this matter. The Superintendent of Nasik Road Central Prison wrote to us stating that he had referred the matter to the legal aid board and sent a request to the Sessions Court to take up Mohammed Hanif's trial.

Mohammed Hanif wrote to us saying that the prison authorities were taking interest in his case and he had also received a copy of the fax message sent by the NHRC to the Chief Secretary of Maharashtra asking him to take immediate action in the matter. Hanif sent us a photo copy of the fax sent by the NHRC to the Chief Secretary for our reference.

After four months, we received another letter from the Registrar

of the High Court stating that Mohammed Hanif's trial was taken up expeditiously and disposed off by the Sessions Court.

Newspaper reports about this case said that the reason for this inordinate delay in producing Mohammed Hanif before the Court was that his case papers were not sent to the Sessions Court by the Metropolitan Court due to oversight, at the time of committing his case for trial. Therefore, his record was not there at the Sessions Court and hence his case did not come up on the board for trial. As far as the criminal justice system concerned, Mohammed Hanif was a forgotten man !

This situation would not have arisen if the state legal aid scheme was functioning properly or the prison authorities had been a little more alert as to why a prisoner was languishing in prison for so long without trial and brought it to the notice of the judiciary. It also indicates that prison visiting committees are not performing their role properly and there is a need for social welfare officers/social groups/NGOs to play a more active role in the prison system.

ESPLANADE COURT:

The objective of social work intervention in court is to reach out to accused persons, complainants and their families who come or are brought to the court for justice. Most of these people are not aware of legal procedures and are dependent on lawyers to act on their behalf. In such a situation, they are prone to exploitation by unscrupulous elements and touts who frequent the court campuses. This is specially true of the poor and the uneducated for obvious reasons.

It is in this context that the role of the social worker becomes relevant. His job includes helping the people approaching the court with legal awareness and counselling, writing applications on their behalf, networking with lawyers for legal aid, referring deserving cases to the magistrates for probation and presenting psycho-social facts of a case at the request of the magistrates.

Work at the Esplanade Court during last year was continued mainly through student social workers of the Department of Criminology and Correctional Administration of TISS as the post of the full time social worker of Prayas fell vacant and could not be filled due to our inability to find a suitable candidate. However, we have now been able to remedy the situation and hope to pick up the threads from where we had left off a year ago.

The student social workers concentrated most of their efforts in the court lock up working with accused persons and their families. They found it difficult to identify and make contact with complainants needing help as most complainants tended to trust their lawyers more. Perhaps, their student status and inexperience added to this mistrust to be of any concrete help. The accused persons, on the other hand, were only too happy to receive assistance from any quarter, particularly from those who had contact with the outside world.

One of the students placed at the court tried to establish a relationship with the street prostitutes who were arrested for soliciting clients in public places. They were fined small amounts for this offence and sentenced to a few days of imprisonment in lieu of the fine. The student would inform the friends/relatives of these women to come to the court and pay their fines, or write applications on their behalf to the magistrate to reduce the fine amount.

While the women gladly accepted this help from the student, they resisted all attempts made by her to get personal. It seemed as if these women had defined their life pattern in a particular manner and did not want to consider any change in it. Any questions about their past or how they got into prostitution or whether they wanted to get out of it were met with strong rebuffs of 'mind your own business'! However, some women did open up to her slowly.

A few of the insights gained through her conversations with the women are:

- Most of these women came from poverty stricken and/or drought prone rural districts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, U.P. and Bihar.
- Most women had family problems back home. The men of these families (father, elder brother/s, husband or his male relatives) were either absent or irresponsible and the burden of running the family fell on them.
- Being mostly unskilled and uneducated and due to lack of suitable avenues of employment in their districts, the women migrated to cities for better opportunities.
- Unlike many of the women caged in brothels owned by 'Gharwalis' in Kamathipura area of Mumbai, these women were not physically forced into prostitution. They came/ got pushed/ bumped into the profession on their own and live in collectives of two or more women sharing a 'Kholi' (a shanty) on rent.
- Bombay was known in their areas as the city of gold. They had also seen other women from their districts who had migrated to Bombay coming back with gifts for their relatives and regularly sending money home.
- Many of these women were frustrated with their lives and wanted more out of it. They were not willing to sit back and compromise with life like the other women. One woman told the student that she knew a lady from her village who admitted that she was earning her income through prostitution in Bombay and was willing to take her along if she wished. Tired of the drudgery that life had become, she decided to enter this profession and was not deceived into it happens in many cases.
- There is usually a person, man or woman or often a team of both who give such women the option of outmigrating to Bombay and give them shelter on reaching the city. The women then slowly get indoctrinated into a culture whereby it becomes possible to rationalise and accept the profession.
- Some women come to Bombay alone or get stranded in the city due to some reason and in their search for employment, get drawn, or pushed into the profession due to lack of alternatives.
- That prostitution often becomes an easy way out of a difficult situation cannot be ruled out. But that it becomes an option only after it is seen or shown as one is also true.
- In the case of communities traditionally engaged in the singing and dancing profession, the cultural invasion of films and television and the resultant impoverishment pushes some of their women into this profession.
- The continuance of these women in prostitution is due mainly to a fatal acceptance of their reality, lack of a viable alternative to feed their families and absence of support structures in case they leave the profession.
- Any intervention strategy must therefore, be aimed at breaking down their rationalisations, providing economic alternatives, fighting the stigma element and creating support structures for them in society. Self help and community based intervention might work better here than working on a case to case basis.

POLICE STATION UNIT:

The social worker placed at Chembur Police Station deals with cases of marital conflicts, neighbourhood disputes, sexual abuse, child abuse, desertion, harassment and emotional or psychological disturbance (including substance abuse). Her role is look at the psycho-social and rehabilitative angle without interfering with the legal process.

The social worker's presence is now seen as a necessary service by the staff at the police station. She has been given a separate sitting space and cases are regularly referred to her by the station house staff. Though her role is primarily seen by them as that of dispute settlement, she is now being allowed to handle cases of young and first offenders in the lock-up from the point of view of rehabilitation. Her presence is subtly making a difference to reduce corruption and human rights violations. She also helps out with personal problems of the staff if requested, like alcoholism, marital conflict, family problems, health problems, etc.

This year, the social worker held a series of meetings with local youth groups and NGOs such as Pragatik Vidyarthi Sangh, Special Cell for Women and Children, Stree Mukti Sangathana and Dignity Dialogue with a view to inform them about our services, enlist their suggestions and create a lobby to impress upon the government about the need to appoint social workers at all police stations along the lines of Prayas.

These meetings clearly brought out the need for such a service for the welfare of the community. It was felt by these groups that the presence of a social worker at the police station would help citizens to access the justice system better and lead to an improvement of police - community relations. We also received letters from places such as Jalgaon, Pune, Nasik, Kolhapur, etc. asking for information about our services at the police station level and requesting for guidance to start similar work there. We have replied to these letters with the relevant documents and information and assured them of all cooperation if they start work there.

A para-legal training programme was organised for Prayas staff in collaboration with Mashwara, an NGO providing legal aid to women in the family court by the social workers placed at the police station. The purpose of this training programme was to increase the knowledge and information base of our staff working with women so that they would be better able to counsel the clients approaching them for matters such as harassment in the marital home, divorce, property rights, maintenance and custody of their children.

Our worker was invited to speak about her work and discuss the role of a social worker in the police station at one of the communal harmony workshops organised by the local DCP for police

station staff of Zone-V. Her role was appreciated by the police and it was felt by them that a full time social worker could play a major role in maintaining communal harmony in the area by improving police-community relations.

A sale of Prayas products and rakhis made by released prisoners and the women at Protective Home was organised at the police lines in Chembur. The objective of organising this sale was to try to change the attitude of the police towards ex-prisoners and prostitutes and convince them about our role in crime prevention and rehabilitation.

A beautician training course was organised for girls living in the police lines at their request by our social worker. This fits in with our objective of not only helping citizens approaching or being brought to the police station, but also the staff through knowledge and resources.

Last year, we placed student social workers of the Department of Criminology and Correctional Administration of TISS at Ghatkopar Police Station with a view to widen our scope of work and experience. One of the reasons for the choice of Ghatkopar was that it houses the main police lock-up for male and female accused persons in Zone V (in which Chembur Police Station is located).

Case Examples:

1. The social worker received a letter from a student of Karve Institute of Social Sciences, Pune, regarding award of compensation to the family of an accused who had died in police custody at R.C.F. Police Station. Apparently, the accused had been accidentally killed by a constable while he was cleaning his rifle. The student also informed us that the National Human Rights Commission had directed the state government to pay a compensation of Rs.50,000/- to the family of the accused but the same was not received by them even after several months of follow up with the police department.

Our social worker paid a home visit to the family of the accused near R.C.F. Colony to gather more information about the case and wrote a letter to the father of the deceased who was now living in Ahmednagar district. She also spoke to the neighbours of the family and to the staff of R.C.F. Police Station regarding the details of the incident.

On receiving our letter, the father, Shri Abaji Lahase came to Mumbai and met our worker at Chembur Police Station. The worker also discussed the matter with the editor of Maharashtra Times on knowing from Shri Lahase that an article had been published by the said newspaper about the case at the time of the incident. It was clear from all these meetings that the student had given the facts correctly and that the awarded compensation was indeed pending for several months now due to bureaucratic delays.

The case was followed up with R.C.F. Police Station and then with the C.I.D. Branch Unit-V at Ghatkopar and the Additional Commissioner of Police(Crime), Mumbai. These meetings indicated that the police was committed to make the payment and that Shri Lahase would receive the money in 'due course'.

Shri Lahase was unhappy with the slow pace of progress in the case and requested our help to expedite matters. We asked him to give his request in writing to us and forwarded his letter to the National Human Rights Commission along with a covering letter from our side.

Within one month, we received a reply from the NHRC informing us that the Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, was asked to personally appear before the Commission in Delhi to inform the Commission about the steps taken by the government in the said matter. The Chief Secretary on appearing before the Commission, informed them that the case had been disposed off satisfactorily, as per the orders of the NHRC.

A few days later, we received a letter from Shri Lahase confirming receipt of the compensation and thanking us for the same.

2. Marital Conflict Case:

- Anita & Harichand

- * Anita came to police station to register 498 A.
- * Police referred the case to the social worker
- * The girl's problem was that her parents in-laws not behaving properly with her and this led to quarrels among the family members.
- * The girl's family had the support of the local unit of a political party.
- * The social worker talked individually with the husband and the wife.
- * In the beginning the girl said that the husband and his family members were demanding dowry.
- * The girl once attempted for suicide.
- * After talking individually the social worker realised that the problem was not dowry, but the problems in sexual relationship between the husband and the wife.
- * The boy was facing some health problem, due to which he could not remain sexually active and he admitted to this in the joint-meeting. But he was not ready to take treatment for this from the doctor.
- * The girl was not willing to live with him in these circumstances. Her family demanded Rs.50,000/- as a compensation for the marriage expenses. But the boy's economic condition was very poor.
- * After finding out all the alternatives, the social worker held a joint meeting of both the families, members of the political party, and the police.
- * When it came to be known that the girl was not ready to stay

with her husband, it was decided in the meeting that they would separate from each other.

- * The girl would get all her streedhan back.
- * The husband and the wife would initiate proceedings for divorce through mutual consent.
- * As per these decisions, the social worker helped the girl to get her streedhan. With the help of police social worker and the girl's relatives went to the husband's house and brought all her belongings.
- * The political party agreed to help the girl with legal aid for her divorce proceedings.

WORK AT BHARUCH, GUJARAT

The project at Bharuch will complete two years in Sept. '97. During these two years the project has grown considerably. During the first year the work was focused on identifying client groups and establishing a base at the police station as well as at other wings of the criminal justice system like the district court, prison and reception centre for women.

During the last year, the work was continued on the basis of the previous year's experience. Work at the police station was focussed on cases of marital conflict, women in distress, juvenile delinquents, mentally disturbed persons and women offenders.

Client Group At Police Station:

The client group identified is very typical to the district. From the worker's point of view, the client group could be categorised into two groups at the police station - "Outsiders" and "Locals".

Worker could see that those who belong to Bharuch city or are from nearby villages, or those who have their professional base in Bharuch city prefer to use their own contacts. In spite of the worker's attempts to make them aware of their rights and how to use the procedures, they do not appreciate worker's help. They prefer to use their contacts with police to build on their relationship with them. This is because in a small place, people consider their proximity with police as a sign of status and ignore criminalising elements in it.

To explain this further,

some boys from the local college were arrested for a minor case of campus violence. When the police brought them for questioning, the boys produced some weapons even though they had not actually used it. In return, the police did not take them into custody and let them off. Little did these boys realise that in future, whenever preventive arrests or arrests on suspicion are made, they are likely to be picked up (though they may not be put in the lock-up).

Having understood this phenomenon, it was easier for the worker to focus the problems of Outsiders. They are the ones who do not have much support, influence or finance and the intervention needs to be targeted on them. The worker continued to establish contact with women who are arrested for selling liquor (Gujarat is a prohibition state), pick pocketing and those arrested under preventive detention (Sec 110 Cr.P.C.). Most of the work done with them is in the area of legal aid.

Work in Prison:

Another area in which work is developed is in prison. Worker had started visiting prison last year. After some visits, superintendent had started referring cases of women and young offenders for legal aid. Rehabilitation work was also started

with one client, arrested for theft who belonged to a nearby village.

In July '97, worker met I.G. Prisons, and received formal permission to enter prison and work with the prison population. The work till now has been focused on legal aid as mostly those who reach prison are either Outsiders or are involved in serious cases like murder/dacoity, rape, kidnapping etc. (This is based on the limited experience from visiting Women's Section and cases which Superintendent has referred). Thus, follow up is a problem as they are all either tribals from interiors of Bharuch or people from outside who have come to the city in search of the job.

Work in Reception Centre:

The worker visits Reception Centre very often to refer and follow up cases of the police station and to help the Superintendent with some of the cases in the institution. There is tremendous scope and potential of work in the Reception Centre at Bharuch. A letter asking for permission to work in Reception Centre has been written and a reply is awaited.

The worker was invited as a member of the committee appointed by Social Defence Department to inspect the condition of the Observation Home for boys, Juvenile home for boys and Juvenile home for girls. This committee was appointed after the order of Gujarat High Court to improve conditions in the state homes for children in the state of Gujarat.

Business of selling Illicit Liquor:

Drinking and making of liquor is a part of the culture of the tribals residing in the area. This practice has been disturbed due to a ban on sale and manufacture of liquor in Gujarat. Due to lack of employment opportunities in the villages and seasonal requirement of wage labour, brewing and sale of illicit liquor has become an easy way of earning money in rural areas. As government becomes strict in implementing prohibition, exploitation of the weaker and poorer sections involved in the liquor trade increases. Usually the male members in the family makes the liquor while women sell it. Now, as police is becoming stricter, they have started using their children in bootlegging. Children aged 8-18 years carry liquor and come to the city. This group is now getting arrested and criminalised.

After almost two years of experience in the field, the worker feels that for more intensive work, there should be one more worker working solely on problems of criminals and those into liquor business to explore alternatives for their rehabilitation.

MAHILA DAKSHATA SAMITI

Our Project Advisor Dr. (Mrs.) Sanober Shekar was invited by the Police Commissioner, Mumbai to be a member of the newly formed Mahila Dakshata Samiti formed under his chairmanship to look into causes of violence against women, gain an understanding of the legal and social constraints, monitor cases and activate suitable support services for the care of victims of such violence. It was decided by us that our social workers attached to the police station unit would attend these meetings as they were directly in touch with the field realities.

The first meeting of this committee was held on 29th August, 1996 which was attended by all the fifty members of the Mahila Dakshata Samiti. These members comprised mainly of women corporators from different parties, social workers, activities and academicians from and educational institutions.

Some of the issues which came up during this first meeting are as follows:

1. The powers and duties of the Mahila Dakshata Samiti members, as well as their duration.
2. The expectations from the police as to have the members could help them.
3. Zonal meetings of the members could be organised more regularly for easy communication and co-ordination.
4. The telephone numbers of police stations and zonal D.C.P.s should be provided to the members.
5. A separate register should be maintained about crime against women in all the police stations.
6. Women police officers should preferably investigate crime against women.
7. A member of the MDS should remain present while recording dying declaration of women victims.

Thereafter, there have been meetings with the respective zonal DCPs & the zonal members of the samiti, which has recently been regularised to meeting every month. The meetings mainly centre around presentations by the police officers regarding crimes or complaints recorded against women during the past month, action taken in such cases and whether help or guidance of the Samiti members was sought/required in handling them.

Two cases were referred to Prayas through the DCP and a local police station of the zone.

The first case was of a married lady being harassed by her father-in-law. The couple along with their two children are staying in a separate room in the same building. The lady came to our office a couple of times for immediate help - first when she was not being allowed to stay in her own house and recently, when she wanted us to help her in recovering some of her documents from her father-in-law's house.

The social worker felt a more in-depth handling of the case was necessary, rather than just providing the lady with emergency assistance. But the lady would not allow the social worker to meet her husband or in-laws. This forced the social worker to counter question the lady, which proved slightly helpful. On further probing, it was revealed that about five years back, her case was being handled by another NGO, SAKHYA (Anti-Dowry Cell of the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan) who had helped her from the harassment of her in-laws for dowry.

Some years later, trouble began again when her husband began suspecting her character, started drinking, coming home late, beating her up and forcing her out of the house. During this time, she had taken the help of the Special Cell for Women and Children (a TISS project attached to Mumbai Police). In turn, she was referred to Majlis, a legal aid organisation to help women, to prevent her eviction from her marital house. But the lady did not pursue the matter seriously.

On discussing the case with SAKHYA, they were ready to offer further help in the case, if the lady approached them again. This was conveyed to the lady who very reluctantly agreed to go to SAKHYA. Our social worker felt that SAKHYA would be able to help the lady better as they were involved in the case from the beginning.

The second case was referred by Shri Sunil Paraskar, DCP, Zone III. This was a marital conflict case. The husband was an employee of the police working in the Wireless Section and living in police staff quarters. The family was a joint family consisting of the mother-in-law, elder brother-in-law, his wife and children and two younger brothers-in-law. The girl was from a rural background, slightly educated and not well acquainted with city life. She was not able to adjust in the joint family environment. Due to this, she would frequently go to her brother's house at Thane.

It had been two years since the couple was married, but they had hardly spent any time together. They could not even go for their honeymoon due to a family member having taken ill. Thereafter, they would rarely go out for movies or outings. This further affected their relationship and led to misunderstandings and lack of faith in each other.

When the social worker met the couple separately, both had different stories to tell. The girl's family was ready for a compromise but there was a difference of opinion amongst the family members. The elders were willing for a mutual divorce if things did not work out but the girl's elder brother was not willing for it. He wanted his sister to be accepted by the boy and his family as he had spent a lot on her marriage. He said that if they were not willing to accept her, then they could pay him the marriage expenses he had incurred, or else, he would register a criminal case against them u/s. 498(A) IPC.

The man stuck to his decision of a divorce firmly. On counselling him, he agreed to see if matters could be settled and compromised. He agreed to come for meetings at the DCP's office in the presence of the DCP, Prayas social worker and his wife. He would generally come alone or with some friends. Shri Paraskar, the DCP, showed a lot of interest and made serious efforts in this case. Much counselling and clarification of past incidents did not really help. The man was prepared to face the consequences of proceeding for a divorce. He was not ready for a compromise as he had lost faith in his wife and her family.

Meetings at the zonal level have found some success as a few members are regular in attendance. It was recently decided that small awareness campaigns could be held in the colleges of the zone where issues such as police-public relations, drugs, HIV/AIDS infection and the role of the Mahila Dakshata Samiti, could be discussed and information disseminated to students.

PROTECTIVE HOME:

Last year witnessed quite a few important incidents/developments. Till February '96, social work intervention in Protective Home mainly were in the following areas:

a) Case-work:

The main focus here was on counselling the inmates and giving them moral and emotional support. The social worker also helped in arranging for police assistance to escort them to their native place and recovery of their personal property from the brothel, arranging for legal aid, paying home-visits (wherever possible), medical assistance, and helping the client plan her long-term rehabilitation or the 'next step' according to her needs and wishes.

b) Group-work:

Group activities are conducted by the worker like games, discussion on various topics relevant to present society, sharing on issues (to the extent possible), painting, hand work e.g. collage, embroidery etc.

c) Administration:

This involves interacting with Protective Home authorities, police, judiciary and officials of the Women and Child Welfare Department and other NGOs on the issues which emerge from day to day work with the client and which may have a considerable impact on or is relevant to the phenomenon of prostitution.

d) Mass Raids:

The High Court of Judicature at Mumbai had directed the State Government in Suo Moto Writ-Petition 112/96 to Show cause why action should not be taken against the government of Maharashtra in respect of the continuous of minor girls forced into prostitution.

In this connection, a decision was taken by the government on February 1, 1996 to raid the red-light areas of the Mumbai city. In accordance of this decision, 484 minor girls from the red-light areas of Mumbai were rescued by the police on February 5, 1996 and were produced before the Juvenile Welfare Board. The 'children' there after were remanded to the various homes for the neglected children established under the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 like the observation home, rescue homes and reception homes. A considerable number of girls came to Protective Home comprising mostly girls from Nepal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka West Bengal and Bihar.

Most of these girls initially felt that they were brought in the Home forcibly and not according to their choice. Mistrust, anger, depression and confusion were prevalent amongst them.

Talking to them was very difficult. let alone rapport building or working out a future rehabilitation plan. Work done with them were mainly:-

- 1) Answering their questions/queries as to why they were there, who gave the order and what were the procedures regarding their cases.
- ii) Working on the immediate problems/needs faced by them. The worker felt that the only way to establish a relationship/make a dent was to start providing useful services.

There were problems of lack of water, medication, sanitary napkins, soaps and required diet for inmates and special diet for patients suffering from illness like tuberculosis etc. The home authorities were finding it difficult to provide these facilities as their numbers were large and existing staff was not enough to cater to their needs. The social worker, accordingly, concentrated on trying to solve these problems like getting medicines and other amenities on donation, taking the girls to hospitals with the help of the concerned police stations, etc. The social worker also brought these issues to the notice of higher authorities.

Almost two months were spent in looking into and working out these problems in collaboration with the Protective Home and Women and Child Welfare Officials. Things were not easy and there were continuous agitations from the girls. Quite often, the worker had to face their outrage, because she was one of the few persons to pay regular visits and spend the whole day with them inside.

Through counselling, sometimes confrontation and continuous provision of services, the social worker was gradually able to establish rapport with the girls. They began to accept her and a few started thinking about alternatives in life other than going back to the prostitution.

Around this time, Prayas started activities inside Protective Home in a more regular and systematic way with the appointment of a full-time training instructor. This involved recreational as well as educational activities like drawing, painting, games, music, stitching, knitting and literacy etc. The objective behind this was two-fold:

- a) Providing the girls with a mode of income through vocational training.
- b) Helping them explore their areas of interest through the different activities conducted by the teacher.

Some of the girls had responded very positively to these activities and started thinking about alternatives in their life.

The services provided by PRAYAS during this time were mainly:

a) Counselling

b) Paying home-visits (wherever possible) and contacting family members elsewhere e.g. Prayas social worker in Delhi had contacted the husband of a woman who was from Delhi and was sold off in Mumbai. On paying a home visit, our worker found that the husband had been frantically searching for her, and with the help of police escort, she was reached back to her family.

c) Visits to organisations/institutionals which was perceived to be helpful in future rehabilitation e.g. visit to Mundwa Certificate School, Pune, in the case where a girl was shifted from Protective Home to Mundwa Certified School (as the girl had requested the worker to visit her) and in re-establishing herself in society when she came out of the institution.

d) Arranging for medical assistance by accompanying the girls to the nearby hospitals for treatment and arranging for the medicines as per the prescription.

d) Conducting recreational and educational activities.

e) Raising issues faced in the field with higher officials e.g. interacting with the police regarding the issues like regular arrangement of escort, recovery of property; with women and child welfare officials regarding the need for legal aid, medical facilities, permanent post of a probation officer in protective home, etc.

f) A report was submitted by PRAYAS (at the request of the Advocate General, Govt. of Maharashtra) to the Mumbai High Court during the hearing of the Suo Moto Writ Petition, describing its work with the rescued girls housed in Protective Home and Reception Centre. The report also included the problems coming up and PRAYAS's suggestions regarding short term as well as long-term plan of action.

g) Follow up of cases, wherever possible or desired by the inmate was maintained e.g. in May '97, two workers of PRAYAS visited the organisation working for women and children in Nepal. The objective was to get an idea about the process/the next step usually starting after the release of the girl from the institution.

h) Visit of National Commission for Women :

The National Commission for Women from Delhi visited Mumbai in the month of March '97. It visited Protective Home to see the situation there after the mass raid. It had a meeting with NGOs and women's organisations in Mumbai, to discuss various issues and problems related to the rehabilitation of the girls rescued during the mass raids and queries related to it.

1) Police Notice Para:

One of the major areas of PRAYAS's work in Protective Home is to network between the various government organs regarding issues emerging from regular case work and considered to be relevant in the process of social re-integration of the women and girls in Protective Home. Interaction between PRAYAS and Mumbai Police started off on a regular basis to discuss issues such as the role of police in rescue of the girls from red-light areas and desired co-ordination between Protective Home and concerned police stations regarding arrangement of escort, recovery of property, escorting her back to her native or any other place of her choice etc.

A series of meetings took place over a period of time involving the Addl. C.P.(Crime), D.C.Ps.(Crime) and A.C.P.-Zone II and S.P.I.s of Nagpada, V.P. Road, D.B. Marg and Bhandup police stations and PRAYAS workers. It was a common platform where both groups could exchange their specific problems and ask for advice/suggestions. This effort resulted in a Police Notice Para (circular issued by the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai to all police stations) in January '97, which was also circulated by us to Protective Home, Reception Centres and officials of the Department of Women & Child Welfare.

j) Workshop by Women & Child Welfare Department:

On 17th November '96, Department of Women & Child Welfare, Government of Maharashtra in collaboration with Maharashtra State Women's Council, Mumbai, had organised a one day workshop on 'Prevention of Child Prostitution & Rehabilitation' in which PRAYAS was invited and took part in the group discussions on two major issues: (a) The Role of Police in Prevention and Rescue & (b) Rehabilitation and Vocational Training.

Conclusion: One year's full-time work in Protective Home led to the development of the following services in the area of rehabilitation:

- i) appointment of a full-time worker for recreation, educational activities and vocational training.
- ii) developing legal aid services for inmates.
- iii) building networks with individuals and organisations in various states towards assisting migrant women in rehabilitation.

Working with the system has its own unique problems, more so, when the perspectives differ. A conscious effort has to be made to build a platform whereby genuine sharing of thoughts become possible, notwithstanding the occasional healthy difference of opinion. This approach has helped us in being perceived as an agency, whose stand has been strengthened and clarified, leaving no scope for vagueness or suspicion.

AFTERCARE UNIT:

The direction of our work in aftercare changed from job placement to vocational training after we realised that the skill base of our client group was very poor and unsustainable in the job market. In prison, most clients would tell the social worker that if he found jobs for them, they would give up crime. Accordingly, in the initial years, we concentrated on making contacts in the community to create job opportunities for those who came to us after release.

We were able to place our clients as unskilled labour in small scale industries, peons in offices, helpers in garages and repair shops and as domestics in homes of people. We found, to our dismay, that they would give up or be asked to go from these jobs in no time, for reasons such as lack of interest in work, fights with colleagues or superiors, need to be treated as someone special, inability to handle money and indiscipline at work.

We realised that these were the kind of jobs our clients would have landed up with on their own and lost them without our help. They came to us because they felt that through our contacts, we could get them something better. The employers similarly responded to us because they thought we were getting them highly motivated people who would be loyal employees later because of the chance they had given them. After an initial 'high', expectations would come crashing down and their relationship would snap, never to be repaired again. Prayas would have lost a prospective employer in the process and the pressure would come right back on us to find new jobs for the same clients along with the additional task of finding jobs for our new clients. We gradually realised that we were chasing a wild goose and that we had to change tracks, if we were to realise our goal of rehabilitation.

It was around this time that the idea of a Prayas Workshop took shape. It was conceived with the twin objectives of providing temporary employment to those clients who were in urgent need of it and teaching them at least one skill while they were with us. It also gave our client group an opportunity to learn work ethics, discipline and the need to save money within a sheltered environment. At the same time, it gave us an opportunity to interact and observe our clients on a fairly regular basis to identify their talents and interests towards future training or employment.

Once the workshop came into existence, it took the pressure off us to find immediate employment for those who came to us for help. The daily stipend of Rs.30/- that we paid them for working at the workshop took care of that need. The average period spent by a client in the workshop is about six to eight months. During this period, he/she learns to make cloth bound stationery items from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and literacy, education, pursuing hobbies, attending lectures and participating in group discussions from 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Once a client has spent sufficient time with our social workers, he/she is encouraged to leave the workshop and take up some job or training course of his choice. These decisions are jointly taken and a clear message is given that workshop is meant to be used as a breathing space to take their future place in society. Clients have gone from the workshop to take up training in driving, motor mechanics, small businesses, social work, beautician's course, tailoring, computer course, acting, etc.

Not all of them have been able to complete these trainings successfully, but it has served the purpose of checking out their ideas towards a more realistic future plan. Some have taken up jobs which they felt would match their interests and expectations after leaving the workshop but have come back if the plan failed. The workshop has been used by many as a place from where they can experiment with their ideas till they find their appointed place in society.

Another emerging feature of the workshop is the referral of clients by other NGOs working with vulnerable groups such as women in distress, street children, children released from juvenile institutions, etc. We have accepted to take such clients into our workshop for two reasons - we have vacancies in our workshop and these groups are vulnerable to crime or could be victimised by the criminal justice system. Having a mixed population in the workshop also helps in mainstreaming of our client group. But, there is a danger of the referred clientele being criminalised or stigmatised because of Prayas' image of working with released prisoners. In future, in view of this, we may have to change the image of our workshop as a training and rehabilitation centre for male youth and women in vulnerable situations, rather than a workshop for released prisoners.

The educational background of most clients is upto the primary level and therefore, they are not able to qualify in most formal training courses. We have been trying to encourage them to restart their education through literacy classes in the workshop and asking them to join the open school system. A few have responded positively by going for further tuitions and sitting for examinations or joining night school. In most other cases, we have been able to revive their interest in education but it may be a long time before we are able to see any results due to their poor levels of literacy. Getting a committed volunteer to regularly teach them and catering to their individual needs will go a long way in fulfilling this objective.

We have been regularly organising educational visits to institutions and agencies to broaden the horizons and the information base of the clients coming to the workshop. These visits have been made to vocational training centers, employment agencies, services for various categories of vulnerable/handicapped groups, art galleries, museums, etc. Examples - Don Bosco Technical Institute, Govt. Polytechnic Institute, National Association for the Blind Workshop, National Association for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped, Shramik Vidyapeeth, Ghar Udyog, Shilpa-

laya Technical Institute, Alert India, Rationing Controller's Office, Tehsildar's Office, Ward Office, Samaj Seva Niketan, Jehangir Art Gallery, Taraporewala Aquarium and Nehru Science Centre.

Since our clients cannot be sponsored for formal courses (due to lack of minimum qualifications), we have been trying out the idea of on-the-job training with them. We have identified employers who have agreed to train clients sent to them free of cost. During their training period, these trainees would be paid a minimum stipend of Rs.30/- by Prayas so that they do not discontinue the training because of the need to earn a livelihood.

Some of the resource persons identified so far are - motor mechanic, garment unit owner, theatre person, computer professional, horticulturalist, driver, electrician and t.v. repairer. The concept here is - the workshop, instead of being based in one place will gradually move out to where the resources are easily available - in the community. This will also help in reducing dependence on Prayas and faster reintegration by strengthening the links of the client with the community. The results of this approach would be visible only in the coming years.

Another significant change in our approach has been to open up the option of clients going back to their native state in the wake of the difficulties faced in living life without support in Mumbai. Most of these clients do not want to go back to their families without achieving what they set out to achieve when they had decided to leave their homes. But they are willing to consider going to their home state if some support is available there.

Accordingly, we decided to identify resource persons in their states who would act as their guide and help them find employment and shelter. Eight such cases were tried, out of which two came back to Mumbai. Success in such cases depends on the ability of the resource person to provide support and the client's willingness to struggle in a new environment. As an approach, we intend to continue this strategy as it has yielded the desired results so far.

Some of the areas which we have not been able to tackle successfully in a client's life are alcohol and drug addiction, marital conflict, property rights and increasing dependence on Prayas for finding shelter, catering to health needs, financial help during emergencies and sorting out their relationship problems. How much a client is able to get what he/she wants depends on the amount of pressure the worker is able to withstand and how serious he perceives the need of the client is.

A few policy decisions that we have taken to reduce dependence and strengthen the ability of the client to handle his own problems are as follows:

- Nothing will be given free. If a client needs any financial help, he can work at the workshop and earn his requirements.
- The social worker will not do anything for or on behalf of a client. He will initially accompany the client and later push him to go on his own. These are with regard to accessing legal rights, government schemes and educational facilities. Some examples here are getting a caste certificate or a ration card, trying to avail of the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana scheme, getting a warrant canceled or the case expedited in court, getting admitted to a night school/open school or availing the facilities offered by another NGO.
- Where a client does not fit into the criteria for eligibility of a scheme, try and push the agency concerned to accept our group as one of the beneficiary groups of their scheme. This will ensure that the pressure on us gets diverted to those whose responsibility it is to reach out to vulnerable sections.

Apart from those who are taking the help of Prayas by coming to the workshop, there are others who keep in touch with us without using this service. The reasons for this may be:

- The clients have adequate family support and therefore do not need the stipend.
- The stipend we offer is too less to fulfill their needs and they prefer to work elsewhere as wage labour.
- They are qualified or skilled enough to find better options.
- They find it below their status to work at the workshop.
- The type of training we provide does not match with their interests.
- They do not want to keep in contact with ex-offenders.

There are two ways in which such clients remain in contact with us - through the aftercare worker/unit worker who refer them to aftercare and through Umang, the self-help group which we are trying to promote. They come to meet the aftercare worker once in a while or in a moment of crisis e.g. when they fear police arrest, need some emergency financial assistance, are suffering from a health problem requiring our intervention, or there is some family problem which they want us to sort out. Some are keen to participate in Umang activities and hence come whenever there is a meeting or programme organised by Umang.

The issue of follow up becomes more pertinent in such cases. How often should one pay home visits? If a client requests the worker not to come to his house for some reason, how does one believe what he says, particularly when he requests the worker to intervene on his behalf in case the police suspects him to be involved in some offence? If a client does not turn up or call for a long time, should the worker assume that all is well with him or should he assume that he is in some trouble? In this situation should he pay a visit?

We have had mixed experiences in pursuing both the approaches. In the final analysis, we have always paid a visit regardless of the ethical dilemmas involved, whenever we have been in doubt and honestly admitted to the client why we needed to visit him. Our experience shows that a timely visit has saved many a client from a taking a wrong decision at the right time. At other times, we have later regretted the decision of not having paid a visit a few days earlier.

By and large, it can be said that clients who have not come to the workshop are less dependent on us for their day to day needs and our relationship with them has consequently been, on a more equal footing. But to what extent we have been able to make a dent in their ways of thinking or in their attitude is difficult to say. On the other hand, clients who have attended our workshop on a regular basis have undoubtedly become more dependent on us, but we have also been able to struggle with them regarding their value systems and attitudes more successfully.

It would be fair to say that people have used our services as per their felt need and in the process, reaped the consequences of using that path of development - its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Now that we are more conscious of the impact of using a particular approach or method, we should, in future discuss the implications of using a service with the client at the outset.

Case Example:

Case 1

The case was referred by a metropolitan magistrate to Prayas. A young boy named Shaukat with an innocent face came next day to Prayas. The worker spoke to him regarding his interests, family background, future plan etc. He responded positively but something seemed wrong. He appeared to be lost in some other world. He also looks restless. The option of attending our workshop was given to him whereby he could learn stitching and binding work. He agreed to come from the next day.

In the evening his mother called and informed us that he was arrested by the police in his attempt to steal a tape recorder from a car under the influence of some drug.

The worker met Shaukat at the lock-up, where he admitted that he was drug user, but was keen to give up the habit and required his family's support in this. He asked the worker to meet his uncle for his bail as was he not sure that his parents would help him.

On visiting his house, his mother narrated the family background. She accused her husband of not caring for their only son and the family. According to her, he used to fight with her and was not giving enough money at home for the household expenses, inspite of a sound shoe business. She said she still recieved support

from her parents and had spent much of her savings on Shaukat's legal expenses. She now felt helpless to help her son and suggested to the worker to meet her brother in this regard. The worker felt the need to meet the father and other members of the family in order to arrive at a more complete picture. A meeting was accordingly fixed for the same.

On meeting the father, he had a different story to narrate. He accused his wife of ruining Shaukat's life because of her unconditional support and unreasonable love for him. She protected him whenever he tried to intervene with his wrong doings. As a result, Shaukat stopped respecting his father. In spite of all this, the father allowed Shaukat to run his shop. But he created problems there too. According to him, Shaukat had been committing petty thefts since the last two to three years.

According to the uncle, both parents were to blame equally. It was due to their constant fights and their selfish attitude that the son had gone into wrong ways. The joint meeting was attended by Shaukat's grandmother, two uncles, aunts and his parents. Initially accusations were hurled against each other by the parents. The others also got involved and there were heated discussions. The mother expressed her frustrations, how her life was totally dependent on her husband, how much she had done for the family and her sufferings in bringing up the children while the husband was busy making money. She directly asked her husband whether he recognized his obligations towards the family and whether he needed to give some time to the home situation. She also stated that when he feels frustrated, he takes it out through his drinks. What avenues did she have to take out hers.

It was now the husband's turn to reply. Firstly, he admitted his mistakes but he also accused his wife of not caring enough for him. Both spouses thus ventilated their feelings and a clearer picture emerged. The parents slowly realised that the disturbance in the family environment is leading to their son going on the wrong path.

The worker allowed the steam to be let off. He counselled the parents about the need to take a mature approach and help Shaukat to give up his wayward lifestyle. He gave them information about existing de-addiction services and Shaukat's willingness to give up drugs. He also suggested that the family meet him in court so as to assure him of their support.

On meeting Shaukat in prison, the worker informed him about the developments in the joint meeting. Shaukat could not believe his ears and was very happy. He also admitted that he had troubled his family a lot and that he was willing to change his ways. But he did not feel that he needed to go to a de-addiction centre to kick his habit. He was confident that if his family lived with mutual love and caring he would be able to give up his habit without much trouble. Regarding his future plans, he said he would join his father in their shoe business.

On Shaukat's next court date, the family had a emotional reunion with their son. They decided to get their son released on bail immediately. After about a week, Shaukat and his parents came to visit PRAYAS with a box of sweets, looking very happy. The father said that Shaukat was helping him in his business and was fine at home too. Follow-up was maintained in this case for six months.

Conclusion:

This case showed us the effect of family disturbance on the mental development of a child. It also showed us that if family members realise the effect that a disturbed environment can have on their children, it is possible to retrieve the situation. Instead of using the child as a weapon to settle scores with each other, parents could centre their lives around their children as a way to divert their focus from their mutual differences.

Case II

Manish approached Prayas after his release from prison, where he served a three month sentence after he pleaded guilty. He was introduced to Prayas by one of his acquaintances. On approaching Prayas, Manish's stated need was that of shelter and assistance in dealing with the police who he thought would harass him (since he was charged u/s 110 Cr.P.C., which is a preventive arrest used by the police for persons with a past criminal record).

Initially, our response was in accordance to the needs stated by him. Arrangements for shelter were made at a hostel, while visits were made to the ACP's Office to allay his fears regarding the police. Manish told us that he was falsely accused in his case. He had pleaded guilty earlier as he thought this would hasten his release. The fact that he was labelled a thief disturbed him. We also found that there was an intense fear of the police in him.

Meanwhile, we noticed that his intake of alcohol was also an increase. During his visits to Prayas, he would often talk about his past, his father who had left Bombay and settled elsewhere, his dreams of settling down and leading a good life. He described himself as being similar to a kite, without any strings, as having no one to go to. It soon became apparent to us that Manish came to Prayas for two reasons - financial assistance and emotional support.

Although a preventive detention case was pending before the ACP's office, Manish did not show any initiative in co-operating with us. For instance, when visits were planned to the ACP's office, he would not turn up. It appeared as if these were merely grounds for continuing a relationship with Prayas.

Manish was offered work at the workshop as this would enable him to earn his living till he settled down and found a job. Besides, it was felt that this would give him an opportunity to focus on something other than his own problems. Manish regularly attended the workshop during his first few days. However, he soon started coming in late, sometimes after drinking, as a result of which he was not allowed to attend the workshop. Manish was now on the streets as he could not stay at the hostel due to the alcohol problem. There was pressure on Prayas for financial assistance.

To overcome his problem of erratic attendance, we decided to alter our rules slightly so that clients like Manish could be reached out to and at the same time, we would not have to compromise on maintaining discipline in the workshop. As per the new rules, clients could also be paid on an hourly basis. We felt it was a necessary to take such a step as it was clear that Manish would/could not abide by the workshop timings. Refusing him attendance at the workshop (due to non-adherence of workshop rules) meant that he would be spending more time on the streets, or working at a neighbouring liquor bar to meet his expenses.

At the workshop, attempts were made to influence him towards giving up alcohol. During this time, the girl he was in love with for the past few years decided to terminate their relationship. Since his alcohol problem was on the increase, Manish started loosing the support of people who were earlier supportive to him. This phase carried on for around six months.

Manish tried to get himself many a job and often succeeded. He is a very talented person and has no difficulty in securing a white collared job. However, he would not continue with the jobs for more than 2-3 weeks. After loosing a job, he would come back to the Prayas workshop. At Prayas, he would pressurise us for money. He would come up with small requests like permission to make a telephone call, travelling expense to go somewhere, lunch or dinner expenses.

There was a tremendous need in him to talk and express his feelings to certain workers (with whom he shared a good rapport). From his behaviour, it was evident that he was emotionally disturbed. He sometimes behaved like a child, wanting to be taken care of often and expressed his dissatisfaction with Prayas. He wanted a more personal relationship with the workers of Prayas, more like surrogate family members.

His physical and emotional turmoil began to increase. He was referring a lot to death, and the fear of dying. However, this was not sufficient to motivate him towards changing his life-style.

Six months after his contact with Prayas, one day, he came to the office, asking to be taken to hospital for treatment and detoxification against his alcohol problem. Apparently, as he was sitting in a local bar, he witnessed the sudden death of another customer who was also at the same bar. Our workers accompanied him to the hospital. The doctors admitted him despite his intoxicated state. Admitting him at that point was important as staying outside could mean staying on the streets, working in the bar, being susceptible to influence of alcohol and a possible decline in his motivation to quit the habit.

At the hospital, the doctors admitted him on condition that a person stays with him for 24 hours. Workers of Prayas were not able to meet this requirement themselves. Manish had no supports left in Bombay. This problem was shared with members of Umang, the self help group of clients started by Prayas. Umang members got together and decided to help out by staying at the hospital, arranging for food and blankets for those who stayed at night and keeping in touch with the doctor concerned. This was probably the first time Umang as a group mobilised their resources in order to help one of their members.

Meanwhile, our workers felt that the family should be involved in assisting him. Since we had received no response from our correspondence with the father, workers of Prayas made a visit to where his father was residing. After much difficulty, the father

was located. His father told us that he could not help his son in any way. Manish's mother had died when Manish was a one year old baby. A couple of years ago, the father had remarried & had three children. His present economic condition was not very sound and he felt he could not leave his family and come to Bombay. He said he had done enough to help his son and that he could do no more.

Back in Bombay, during his seventeen day stay at the hospital, Manish made good progress. The doctors considered him an ideal patient. He seemed more at peace with himself. But, he was scared of dealing with life after discharge from the hospital, which gave him a protective environment. Hence, he felt the need for going to a rehabilitation centre after his release from the hospital.

Arrangements were thus made for him at a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts in Bombay. On discharge, Manish said he first wanted to meet his girlfriend and show her that he had changed. However, after meeting her (and having an argument) he started drinking once more. Due to his relapse, he was asked to visit the centre for one week, after which if his motivation was sustained, he would be admitted for rehabilitation. However, Manish kept skipping the visits.

The next three to four months saw a pattern wherein Manish would insist on being taken to hospital for detoxification. After discharge from the hospital (and sometimes in the midst of treatment), he would revert to drinking once again. It seemed as if he was going in for detoxification only because this meant that he would be taken care of, even if it meant for just a few days by others (hospital staff, Umang members, Prayas workers).

We then decided that in future, workers would not accompany him to the hospital. We would give him information and guide him in this process, but he would have to go on his own and get himself admitted. This, we felt, help him to value his efforts and sustain his motivation. Manish started visiting different NGOs working in this field. However, he would leave before treatment was completed. By now, he was loosing support from Umang members who were not convinced of his motivation to change. He was in & out of the workshop and would often land up after a few drinks.

This was a very difficult phase for us. We continued paying him by the hour but other clients started objecting to having him at the workshop, due to his drinking problem.

Once, on being refused money, Manish ingested a bottle of phenyle and was consequently hospitalised. This seemed not so much an attempt to harm himself, but appeared as if it was more an attempt to derive a sense of power over the other.

On our part, we were continually faced with the issue of the method of intervention that needs to be adopted. While we felt inadequate working with his drinking problem, and referred him to

other specialized organizations for the same. Manish could not sustain his contact with them. He was not in agreement with their ideology, that of giving up of self to a Higher Power in order to give up habit.

Six months after we visited Manish's family, his father came to our office, looking for him. The purpose of the visit was to collect some important documents which he thought Manish had. We used this visit to take an opportunity to bring about a reconciliation between the two. After long discussion with the father, he finally relented.

The father seems to be a very intimidating person and Manish seems ambivalent towards him, though he definitely cares about him, being his only link with the past, his only family. He cherishes memories about his childhood, specially times spent with his father. Yet, Manish could never stand up to his father and could not express his feelings before him. The father, having served in the army, always adopted an almost military approach while dealing with his son.

The next few days witnessed an attempt by both of them to reach a compromise and be more tolerant towards each other. A couple of weeks later, the father returned for the documents. This time, Manish followed his father to their residence where he stayed for a few months. After this, we recieved a letter from him from Nasik prison. According to the letter, there were conflicts with his father and he had begun drinking heavily once again. The father therefore had him arrested.

After his release, he came to Bombay and approached us once again. He was physically very weak. However, in the days to come, he seemed more in control of himself and his alcohol problem. For over a month he was off alcohol. The workshop activities did not particularly interest him. In keeping with his interests, he was offered work with Umang Patrika. He started making his future plans and worked consciously towards it. However, once again, he slipped and reverted back to alcohol.

Our contact with Manish saw different phases. He had started trying out options on his own. However, since he has been in touch with us, we have so far not seen him stick to one place of work for very long.

While continuously evaluating the process of our work and its outcome, our methods and relationship with Manish was being constantly being defined. After a period of time, assistance in tangible services (such as financial assistance, accompanying him to the hospital, etc.) were reduced but Manish was assured that we would not close our doors to him. From Manish's point of view, he once described Prayas as a 'station' wherein to stop in times of a turmoil before going ahead once again.

On our part, we were constantly searching for answers, and attempts were being made to develop strategies in accordance to Manish's needs. This was a difficult process. Many other social organisations (specialized in the field of alcoholism) disagreed with our method of work. However, we could not get any clear cut answers from them as some had already closed their doors to him. Psychiatrists diagnosed Manish as having a disorder. They also believe that such disorders are difficult to treat and therefore not much could be done.

We feel Manish is trying. As long as this happens, there is hope. Our efforts to assist him in exploring different options and resolving his conflicts will continue.

The group was created for members to come and sit down, read, hear and work together. The members were given the time to sit with an objective of creating a sense of belonging. A piece of their land. All its members had new things to be informed that they would own for the responsibility. The group was created for members to come and sit down, read, hear and work together. The members were given the time to sit with an objective of creating a sense of belonging. A piece of their land. All its members had new things to be informed that they would own for the responsibility.

We tried to inculcate a sense of responsibility and develop an ability to take decisions among the members by discussing the authority. A system has been started whereby Prayas makes a monthly donation of Rs. 1000 - to Prayas which they can disburse to assist in need of emergency assistance.

The members have decided that this money will be given as a loan to clients for purposes such as health or living in the family. Prayas has an emergency emergency fund, payment of living expenses to ensure employment or to go to the native place to attend to an emergency. Prayas has a fund for living in any other purpose with the group. Prayas has a fund for living in any other purpose with the group. Prayas has a fund for living in any other purpose with the group.

We have found that this system has reduced the gap between the alcoholic worker and the client, as they no longer share a relationship of bargaining for help. It has also released the worker from the pressures of making judgements about the seriousness of a case. Thus, allowing him to play a purely advisory role. Members are also more aware of their life situations and are therefore able to take more informed decisions whenever someone approaches them for help. Finally, this system has given them a sense of power and has increased the group feeling.

UMANG

This year Umang witnessed a lot of ups and downs. We stopped the monthly meeting due to continuing poor attendance in these meetings. Instead, we decided to have a meeting on every alternate friday at the workshop in the 4 pm slot. This space was created for the trainees in the workshop (who were also Umang members) to air and discuss grievances about each other, workers, rules in the workshop and policies of Prayas. Gradually, these meetings came to be known as the Umang meetings.

A corner of the workshop was set aside as a space for Umang with a table, a chair, a bench, a notice board and an almairah. The notice board was used to keep messages for each other and information of general interest like government schemes, employment opportunities, news items, poetry written by members, etc. The almairah was used to keep books of the Umang library. A Borrower's Register was opened and maintained by the Umang members in turns.

This Umang corner was created for members to come and sit there, read, chat and meet workers/other members during their free time. All this was done with an objective of creating a sense of belonging, a place of their own. All old members and new clients were informed that they could come for the fortnightly meetings to discuss any matters related to Umang.

We tried to inculcate a sense of responsibility and develop an ability to take decisions among the members by divesting the authority to give emergency financial assistance to Prayas clients, in Umang. A system has been started whereby Prayas makes a monthly donation of Rs.1000/- to Umang which they can dispense to clients in need of emergency assistance.

The members have decided that this money will be given as a loan to clients for purposes such as death or illness in the family, travelling expenses to secure employment or to go to the native place to attend to an emergency, emergency rations, payment of fines or any other purpose which the group feels is deserving enough. The sanctioning authority for these funds is rested in the trainees or members present in the workshop on that day.

We have found that this system has reduced the gap between the aftercare worker and the clients, as they no longer share a relationship of bargaining for help. It has also released the worker from the pressures of making judgements about the genuineness of a case, thus, allowing him to play a purely advisory role. Members are also more aware of their life situations and are therefore able to make more correct assessments whenever someone approaches them for help. Finally, this system has given them a sense of power and has increased the group feeling.

The fortnightly meetings have greatly added to this group feeling. It is a forum where they come together and are able to openly criticize any member of the group or the staff without having to take names. Any act, incident or policy in question gets discussed and the workers present in the meeting facilitate a process which aids learning for future.

In spite of all these developments, members are still not able to trust each other fully. They are not comfortable to meet in each other's houses or in some neutral territory outside Prayas. Even though sub-groups of two or three members have got formed, suspicions continue to exist about whether all members have given up crime for good. This is understandable in a context where association with the wrong elements can mean rearrest by the police. This issue remains a stumbling block in the movement of Umang towards self reliance.

However, members have responded to each other's needs, particularly, in times of crisis. They have admitted each other to hospital and stayed nights if required, taken each other into their own homes when someone has been rendered shelterless, paid for food when someone is going hungry and rushed to inform at Prayas when someone has been rearrested. In one such case, a girl who was asked to leave her home during a week-end (when we are closed) went to a male member's house (whom she had met in the last Umang meeting) out of desperation. This member took her in and she stayed with his family for the next 15 days. Soon their friendship turned into love and they got married.

Umang Patrika has been regularly coming out with an issue every 3 months and contains writings of staff, Umang members, clients in prison or in institutions, and officials of the CJS who wish to contribute. The Patrika has greatly increased the self esteem and confidence of Umang members and their image before the police has improved. For Prayas too, the Patrika has been a great help in convincing functionaries of the CJS and members of the larger society about the genuineness and usefulness of our work.

The future of Umang depends largely on the extent to which we are able to take forward the process which we began last year - of giving greater responsibility to members, actively seeking their support and participation in the work of Prayas, increasing their financial autonomy and wresting the group with a sense of purpose.

SEMINAR ORGANISED BY PRAYAS ON "YOUTH IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW":

The Dept of Youth Affairs & Sports (Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI) had constituted a Committee to prepare a National Perspective Plan for Youth 1995-2020. The purpose of the plan, as stated, was to address the present problems of youth in our country, and to attempt to increase opportunities to help them become economically productive and socially useful. In response to these objectives and also taking into consideration the needs and aspirations of youth, the committee had identified twelve subjects on which attention was to be focussed as this would help in giving a definite form and shape to the youth programmes under the broad framework of National Perspective Plan.

Accordingly, the Committee had selected twelve organisations across the country to conduct National Level Symposiums on each of the given topics. Prayas, being a project working in the field of criminal justice administration, was requested to conduct such a symposium on one of the selected subjects, namely, "Youth in Conflict with the Law".

This symposium was organised by Prayas between the 6th and 8th January, 1997, at Maratha Mandir Hall in Dadar, Mumbai, with a conscious attempt to explore alternatives and arrive at suggestions which would form part of a social policy. The aims of the seminar were:

1. Providing an opportunity for persons concerned to highlight problem areas and consequently make valid suggestions.
2. Stimulating a direct and open exchange of experiences, ideas and views to develop a long term perspective.
3. Evolving policy implications for the institutions with whom such youth are interacting with.
4. Exploring the use of existing government schemes and programmes for mainstreaming affected youth.
5. Visualizing a comprehensive policy towards prevention of crime and deviance in our society.

With these objectives in mind, we had invited participation from youth directly affected, persons from different occupational groups, youth groups, experts, representatives of the criminal justice administration and non governmental organizations. This programme was a progressive step taken by the government at integrating stigmatized young men and women in the development process.

The topics proposed by us for discussion was as follows:-

1. Media and crime
2. Crime and the economic scenario
3. Crime and social class
4. Politics and crime
5. Crime against women
6. Group related crime

7. Emotional conflict and crime
8. Socially stigmatized groups
9. Rural and tribal crime
10. Women in crime
11. Youth and the criminal justice system
12. Youth and education

The seminar was a success both in terms of effective participation by the wide variety of delegates invited and the practical suggestions that emerged for a comprehensive government policy on youth affected by crime. It provided a forum for representatives of many marginalised and stigmatised groups of our society such as released prisoners, children of prisoners and prostitutes, eunuchs, homosexuals, ex-criminal tribes, youth groups and people having a close understanding of rural crime to put up their issues and problems on an equal footing with government officials, academicians and policy makers.

Many of the above mentioned groups felt that for the first time, such varied groups could come together to discuss their problems and deliberate on ways to counter stigma and societal discrimination against them so that they could join the national mainstream. It was also an expectation from these groups that this seminar would be a beginning of a process of mutual consultations and lobbying with the government to bring about policy changes. These groups felt that Prayas could play a lead role in this regard.

The report of this seminar has been sent to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India with a long list of practical suggestions with policy implications. We hope that the government would take these suggestions seriously and bring about relevant changes in their schemes for vulnerable groups who are affected by the criminal justice system. We also wish to network with some of the like-minded organisations who came for the seminar both with regard to rehabilitation of cases and to form a think tank which could meet on a sustained basis on issues of mutual concern.

EXTENSION WORK:

1. The initial years at Prayas was spent in focussing and consolidating our work. We opened up to the media only in the last couple of years. Articles in the press in English, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati helped Prayas to reach people who had hitherto not heard of it. This included government officials, NGOs and beneficiary groups such as prisoners in Maharashtra.

2. It was during this phase that Prayas undertook two major studies outside of Mumbai and started its first extension activity in Gujarat. A study on children of prisoners at Tihar is nearing completion (refer to the Section - Update on Research Projects).

We had also undertaken a national study on prostitution to understand the phenomenon and to study successful interventions for rehabilitation. This study, which covered eight states, has helped us gain useful insights into the subject and will help our work with rescued prostitutes at Protective Home, Mumbai. We were also able to identify government officers, individuals and NGOs who can be useful networking partners with Prayas for rehabilitation purposes.

An interim report of this study was submitted to the National Commission for Women (as it had funded the first part of the study) for its perusal. Dr. Sanobar Shekar, who is the Project Director for this study is working on the study towards a final report. It needs to be stated here that while doing this study we have come to realise that the phenomenon of prostitution is very complex with wide ramifications on our social structure. There are no easy answers to this problem. One needs to get deeper into the phenomenon to be able to suggest what might work in the areas of rehabilitation and prevention. The report of the study is being eagerly awaited.

3. The involvement of the Project Advisor and the Project Director with national bodies and initiatives has also helped spread the credibility of Prayas outside Maharashtra. Smt. Sanobar Shekar has been a member of the Sub-Committee on Custodial Justice to Women and another on Women in Prostitution constituted by the National Commission for Women. Mr Vijay Raghavan is involved in gender training for police officers of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. His association with the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration at Mussourie and the Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration at Pune for this purpose, will help Prayas to build networks with the administration and raise long standing issues related to the criminal justice system.

4. The Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Human Resource Development (GOI) has responded favourably (this includes financial support) to our appeal that young offenders should be seen as a human resource to be invested in. It is in continuation of this vision that Prayas was selected by the Ministry to conduct the seminar on "Youth in Conflict with the Law" towards

the seminar on "Youth in Conflict with the Law" towards preparing a National Perspective Plan for Youth (1995-2020). The report of this seminar will be part of chapter of the National Perspective Plan for Youth (see Section on - 'Seminar Organised by Prayas' for details).

5. The Commissioner of Bilaspur division in Madhya Pradesh requested Prayas to help the district administration with prison reforms initiated there. As part of these efforts, a team from Bilaspur headed by Superintendent of Bilaspur District Jail, visited Prayas and learnt from our experiences. Subsequently a team from Prayas went to Bilaspur to conduct training for the jail officials & NGOs of Bilaspur. The result of this collaboration is taking shape in the form of a project (Kiran) in Bilaspur at the administration's initiative.

The impact of the above mentioned happenings can be seen through the interest that is slowly getting generated among NGOs and individuals to initiate work in the area of criminal justice. We have been receiving requests from organisations in Maharashtra to help them start work along similar lines. "Abhivyakti", Nasik called us for discussions to share our experiences with them, as they are starting work at Nasik Central Jail. An organisation based at Ahmednagar, Gramin Vikas Kendra, wrote to us asking for more information about government schemes and sources for funding, as they are working for the rehabilitation of ex-criminals tribes. Letters have also been received from Jalgaon, Pune and other parts of rural Maharashtra expressing a desire to start work like Prayas and requesting guidance for the same.

All this has become possible because we, at Prayas, have consciously tried to build a team of social workers committed to the field and with a common vision. Prayas is at a stage in its life where it can play a lead role in stimulating developments in the field of criminal justice.

LEGAL AID UNIT

Court visits made to meet lawyers, magistrates and other officials. Cases along lawyers from Prayas.

Males 14
Females 11

Total Visits 25 (approx.)

All visits were in prison. Police Station visits.

STATISTICS

PRISON UNIT:

Male Section:

New Cases	410
Applications written for legal matters	1087
Home Visits	356
Court Visits	15

Women's Section:

Average No. of Phone Calls made to families of women prisoners	192
Applications for legal matters	174
New cases	120
Home visits	260
Court visits	13
Hospital visits	18
Police station visits	8

FAMILY SUPPORT UNIT

Cases referred by women prisoners	35
Home visits	81
Request cases from male section	4
Referrals from outside agencies	1
Organisational visits	37
Court visits	7
Children admitted to institutions	5
Sponsorship for children (School fees, uniform, etc.)	2
Emergency assistance given to children	4
Attendance of children in the balwadi	30

LEGAL AID UNIT

Court Visits made to meet lawyers, magistrates and other officials	133
Cases given lawyers from Prayas	
Males	14
Females	11
Prison Visits	31
Applications written in prison	350 (apprx.)
Police Station Visits	12

POLICE STATION UNIT

Nature of cases	One time intervention	Continuing Cases
I. Women's Cases		
a) Marital Discord/ family conflict (Streedhan, Force Marriage, Shelter Problem, Alcoholic, Runaway etc.)	17	20
b) Disputes among neighbours	03	01
c) Love affairs	01	01
d) Burn cases	02	-
II. Children & Youth Cases		
a) Missing children	04	-
b) Children abandoned	01	-
c) Truant children	01	-
d) Delinquent children	01	02
e) Young offenders	07	04
f) Street youth	01	02
III. Psychologically disturbed persons		
a) Mentally-ill persons	01	02
b) Substance abuse	05	-
IV. Others		
a) Property disputes	-	01
b) Aged persons	02	-
c) Miscellaneous	01	01
V Persons heard attentively with empathy and guidance given but sought no further intervention		150 cases (apprx.)
Total		
Cases	76	
Home visits	52	
Visits to other Police Stations	16	
Hospital Visits	05	
Court Visits	05	
Organisational Visits	57	

ESPLANADE COURT UNIT

Counselling	66
Legal Information	53
Home Visit	35
Visit to NGOs	4
Police Station Visits	8
Application written	5
Meeting with	7
Phone Calls	16
Visit to Work place	8
Visit to hospital	4
Letters written	3
Advice given	4

PROTECTIVE HOME UNIT

New Cases	76
Police station visits	9
Home visits	10
Cases taken up for rehabilitation	10
Rehabilitated cases	2

WORKSHOP UNIT

Total Trainees	
Males	15
Females	10
Bulk Orders recieved	5
Sale Cum Exhibitions held	10

AFTERCARE UNIT

Total Cases	
Males	25
Females	17
New Cases	
Males	15
Females	9
Home Visits	
Males	34
Females	65
Institutional Visits (Shelter)	
Males	66
Females	42
Letters of introduction issued to avoid police arrest on suspicion	1
Police station visit	
Males	30
Females	15
Shelter provided	
Males	12
Females	7
Training sponsorships	
Males	8
Females	3
Court visits	
Males	16
Females	7

STAFF POSITION

1. Project Director	1
2. Project Co-ordinator	1
3. Project Advisor	1
4. Prison Unit	
a) Male Section	2
b) Female Section	2
5. Family Support	1
6. Home Visits	1
7. Legal Aid	1
8. Esplanade Court	1
9. Police Station	2
10. Protective Home	2
11. Workshop	2
12. Aftercare	2
13. Research	2
14. Administration	2
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Total	22

STAFF POSITION

1	Director
1	Deputy Director
1	Project Advisor
1	System Unit
2	Male Section
2	Female Section
1	Family Support
1	Legal Advisor
1	Legal Aid
1	Business Office
2	Police Station
2	Executive Office
2	Research
2	Administration
2	Total