

Dear Committee Members,

I am a young woman living in St. Paul, a recipient of SEWA-AIFW (Asian Indian Family Wellness) services. I got married in India forcibly and soon after that I was sent to the United States in 2020. From the day one, physical and sexual abuse started in India and yet my family and in-laws supported this guy and asked me to continue serving him as he pleased. I moved to Minnesota and soon Covid-19 Pandemic hit the world. My phone, my IDs and other documents were taken away by him. I was literally jailed inside his house. After almost a year, it became unbearable to continue being raped every day. Year 2021 was the most difficult phase of my life but also a trans-formative experience. I gathered all my courage and shared my situation with a neighbor friend. She encouraged me to connect with SEWA staff. The abuse did not stop even after calling the police and I was moved to a shelter with SEWA support. He ran away and jeopardized my immigration status. SEWA case manager and through their healing activities, I found a new home in Minnesota.

Without SEWA's staff assistance throughout these years, I would have been house-arrested, and probably beaten to death by now. Their assistance to find me an urgent shelter, transitioning housing, legal support and most importantly language assistance has been a lifesaver in literal sense. SEWA has been on top of their services to help and assist people like me in their worst times when our own families and friends do not stand with us.

Their staff provide incredible and invaluable emotional support to people like me. Their Indian meals and grocery program, cultural events, Art therapy sessions, free mental health counseling, legal aids, referrals, and material help including clothes and household items -have been proved to be extraordinary resources for me to survive in Minnesota. I can't thank them enough to provide me a refuge, a new life, and a family support wherein my own family has disowned me in the name of their honor.

This organization is a huge support system for Domestic/Sexual violence victims/survivors coming from South Asian countries. I urge the state to provide them funds for building and sustaining their efforts saving lives.

If you want to get more details of my case, I can be reached out through SEWA-AIFW. I hope my anonymity is respected for my safety.

March 21, 2023