



## Fine Tuning Economic Empowerment Tools for Battered South Asian Women

Manavi helps survivors of domestic violence to become economically independent

### SUMMARY

Victims of domestic violence who choose to leave abusive relationships face challenges to their long-term economic survival. These challenges are compounded in immigrant communities, where women often are isolated by culture and language.

From December 2009 to July 2011, [Manavi](#), a New Brunswick, New Jersey-based nonprofit, created a program to help South Asian<sup>1</sup> women who are survivors of domestic violence move toward economic independence.

“When we sent our clients to local agencies to get help with resume writing and job finding,” Project Director Maneesha Kelkar, MA, said, “the women were simply not able to get much from these resources. Even if they spoke English they did not quite understand the language.”

### Results

- Manavi staff created a set of culturally-appropriate economic empowerment tools and materials:
  - An employment toolkit that Manavi staff can tailor to the needs of individual women. The toolkit contains a needs assessment, training and education options, resume building and job search strategies, an inventory of community and online resources, and information on the legal rights of persons seeking employment in the United States.
  - An instructional video titled “Sonia’s Search,”<sup>2</sup> that uses the story of one Asian woman’s struggle to enter the American workforce to demonstrate effective interview skills. Available [online](#).

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<sup>1</sup> “South Asian” women are those who identify their country of origin as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan or Sri Lanka.

<sup>2</sup> Available [online](#).

- A training curriculum focused on interview skills that Manavi staff can deliver at employment clinics, mobile clinics, and during face-to-face and phone consultations.
- Manavi staff and volunteers delivered economic empowerment training to some 45 South Asian women through an employment clinic and individual consultations.
- Manavi staff promoted the program in the organization’s monthly newsletter, distributed flyers during a community awareness-raising event<sup>3</sup> (see news report [online](#)), and showed the “Sonia’s Search” video at its annual dinner in May 2011 attended by 200 people, including national and local legislators.

## Lessons Learned

1. **Be flexible in scheduling economic empowerment counseling services.** The project director found that many women were not able to attend scheduled clinics and workshops, especially those who had children or were still living with the abusive spouse. Scheduling individual counseling on an as needed basis worked better, said Project Director Kelkar

## Funding

RWJF supported this project from December 2009 to July 2011 with a grant of \$50,000 under the President’s Staff award allocation through which nonprogram officers can recommend organizations for consideration of grants up to \$50,000; no more than three organizations can be recommended and asked for proposals. If the proposal is accepted it is then assigned to the appropriate team and senior program officer.

## Afterward

Manavi has incorporated one-on-one economic empowerment training into its existing advocacy work.

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<sup>3</sup> See [news report](#).

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)*

### **Education or Toolkits**

#### **Curriculum**

*Employment Clinic: Interview Skills Workshop.* New Brunswick, NJ: Manavi, 2010.

“Sonia’s Search” (instructional video on interviewing skills). New Brunswick, NJ: Manavi, 2011. Available on [YouTube](#).

#### **Toolkit**

*Economic Empowerment Toolkit for South Asian Women.* New Brunswick, NJ: Manavi, 2010.