



A Short History

1989-2005

Foreword

This (document) tells the story of the fulfilment of a vision that I as Bhatra Sikh woman born into a community that was living in a culture time warp had some twenty six years ago of developing and creating a project that would uplift the women of this community. The prospects for the women of the Bhatra Sikh community were dismal and in need of an urgent solution through sound planning and sincere effort. There was a danger of us going through this life without being recognized as part of the human race.

There was need for self-awareness, if we desired meaningful change for our daughters, daughters-in-law, grand daughters and the community as a whole then the intense struggle had to begin. The struggle was not only to educate our own people but also the wider host community of the real Sikh philosophy of equality for all including women which was embedded in the scriptures of our religion since the 15th century. Our Gurus and ancestors male and female always had the revolutionary and optimistic feature of loving the future. They fought battles and endured untold hardships not for the sake of their own easy lives but for the sake of the future of the generations to come.

Unfortunately for the women of the Bhatra Sikh community our elders chose to observe other Sikh communities move forward, rather than act to emulate them they chose to avoid rather than participate. They were inert and clever in inventing excuses and their multiple shortcomings led to our community always being on the sidelines of all the other ethnic communities rather than alongside them. Looking back at those early days I remember thinking I can't let my daughters grow up in the same way we were brought up with restrictions all the way at least let them have some quality of choice even though at times it was restricted but it was a choice nonetheless. It gave me the strength to allow my daughters to go forward and have an education and go forward in their chosen career path, in turn this allowed other mothers to see that if 'one lot' could do it then they could aspire to allow their daughters to have a choice. There was always the fear of overstepping the mark and by that I mean the fear of giving the girls too much freedom and allowing them to move in the same direction as the males wherein they would be open to relationships with 'white males' this was and still is the biggest fear for all parents of Asian girls from any south Asian community.

Fortunately for me it didn't happen I don't know if the opportunity ever arose and my girls just stuck to their boundaries or maybe they just kept a distance that gave off the message 'keep away'

It is, however, flawed. It is a first person account, not an academic history. The (document), therefore tells what I saw thought and believed from one perspective. Others, who were involved in the beginning of Sikh Sanjog, will no doubt recall differently. I am not saying that they are wrong, only that this account is what my memory reveals to me. I will apologise in advance to the reader for the frequent use of the first –person singular and the egocentric nature of the (document), but it is difficult to avoid those features and still do a first-person, participants account.

I always felt compelled to hold onto old minutes of meeting etc, knowing that they may come in useful at some point, they are therefore the basis of all the writings, most other records have been lost or destroyed over the years. In some ways, the account is also necessarily incomplete as the project is still changing to address the needs of the second, third and fourth generation of Bhatra Sikh women and girls Many events and key participants are not mentioned, others who deserve rich descriptions are only briefly mentioned I have recognised that there is a great risk in collating and being part of writing such a (document) many friends and colleagues will disagree with me and in some cases maybe offended.

Nonetheless, friends should be allowed to disagree, for me loyalty and commitment to Sikh Sanjog will take precedence over all. It has been my lifelong ambition; dream vision whatever you may wish to call it is my life. This vision also belonged to the core group of women who came along to those first meetings namely, Ashan Devi, Rani Kour Landa, Kulwinder Kour Kusbia, Darshna Kour Loha Runbeer Kour others have come and gone but this group is still with us today. The ‘others’ without whom we would not have gone forward were, Sybil Brown, Nita Brown and Jenny McCallum.

No one can be part of an organisation for over twenty years, without a great deal of help and support. In our case that help has come from a wide range of people, community workers, practice teachers, politicians, council workers extraordinary colleagues, mentors. Seventeen years ago our manager Mary Hastie joined us in her role as manager and fundraiser and earned a very respectful place in our community. Twelve years ago Pamela Couper our Training and Development Officer joined us she has over the years been instrumental in providing ‘tailor made’ training that has enabled the women to gain confidence and skills to achieve their goals. **(Unfortunately both these people are no longer with the organisation they moved on in 2010 due to conflict of interest)**

We have been called many things over the years but this reference I feel sums up our passion for the project

An intellectual loves truth, desires honour, aims for tolerance, collides with doubts and suffers from continuous struggle with instincts and passions. I need an hour when I can escape through the embrace of society from the vexation of life, then I feel reinvigorated, enthusiastic, and youthful ready to fight on for another twenty years.

I know we have a very long road ahead of us but I am sure that if we continue to show the same commitment that has been shown in the past we can only go forward.

Our sincere thanks to Jenny Lowe for volunteering to collate all this information and produce this document

Trishna Singh

Development Worker/ Business Manager

Introductory

The Mission Statement of Sikh Sanjog

Sikh Sanjog aims to provide a range of quality opportunities for Sikh women and their families, which reflects their educational, recreational, cultural and social needs, recognising the potential for lifelong learning and social inclusion.

It also provides a focus to promote links between members of the Sikh community and local resources.

The Early Years

1989

Sikh Sanjog was set up in 1989 under the name of Leith Sikh Community Groups. At this stage, a number of Sikh families were receiving help from Leith Home-Start (now Home-Start Leith and North East Edinburgh), another of the voluntary organisations based at 15 Smith's Place, Edinburgh. Indeed, 40% of the families visited by Home-Start staff and volunteers were from minority ethnic communities, mainly Sikh. However, they only catered for families with children under the age of five years, which meant that the support was lost when the youngest child in the family reached that age. It was also noted that in many Sikh families the older children took on a caring role for younger siblings. Sue King, a student on placement at Home-Start, recognised this situation and decided to organise a one-off outing for older children. This led to initial work to set up a youth group to provide on-going support. It was evident that Sikh boys and girls had specific needs which were not being met by services currently available in Leith – the majority of which appeared not to cater for or even to welcome members of the minority ethnic communities.

In January 1989 a Sikh Boys Group and an equivalent Girls Group began, under the Home-Start umbrella. An impressive amount of thought and planning went into this venture. Sue King's student dissertation makes clear the diplomatic discussions and lengthy consultations, which prefaced the setting up of the Girls Group. Every detail was taken care of – including the need for the group to meet during the afternoon. All those involved were aware that there were numerous potential pitfalls.

The immediate success of these two groups encouraged people to think of other possible initiatives. In July 1989 a meeting of parents and professionals was called to discuss further developments. Some basic funding was soon obtained for the new projects, including an award from the Unemployment Voluntary Action Fund (UVAF) as well as other Trusts.

The discussions to set up Leith Sikh Community Groups took place in the kitchen at 15 Smith's Place, which, for a considerable time thereafter, had to serve as the office for the fledgling organisation because of serious space

constraints in the building. It is noteworthy that the original name of the new group stressed its plurality of action and outreach, something that has been at the core of its development since the early days. In 1989 15 Smith's Place was already the home base for various voluntary organisations that had formalised their relationship under the name of 'Smith's Place Group' (later to become 'Family Resource Network'). Their stated intention was:

"To work for the purposes of the advancement of education, the improvement of health and social welfare of children and their families developing the premises as a centre for projects / activities; distributing information internally / externally; co-operative activities using member organisations' expertise; providing a centre for advice and support of parents and their children."

A good picture of these early days is provided by extracts from Trishna Singh's contribution in the Sikh Sanjog 2003 Diary (see below for more information):

"The first few years were spent at No. 15 Smith's Place in Room 6, having coffee mornings which doubled as Management Meetings.... The first stepping-stone of help, advice and support came from Home-Start. Sue King was a student placement with them when she started doing the groundwork, which eventually led to Leith Sikh Community Groups... It took a long time for the women to actually see us as independent from Home-Start. The first ten years were spent in making contact and gaining the confidence of the women in the community and trying to persuade them not to see us as a threat but as a helping hand."

It was realised that many Sikh women were isolated and, for cultural reasons, it was difficult for them to join any groups for social activities outwith their own religion. As a result the project aimed to address the unmet needs of women and their families.

Swimming sessions at Dr Bell's Baths were one of the first activities. This gave the participants confidence and also helped relieve stress. Some swimmers later progressed from the sheltered surroundings of Dr Bell's to use facilities elsewhere in the city. The Swimming Group has remained a core activity over the development of the organisation.

In May 1989 there was a trip to Butlin's in Ayr, leaving Smith's Place at 9.45 a.m. Those attending were reminded to bring entrance fees, a picnic and swimming costumes and towels. This was the first of many annual outings which later included Loudon Castle, Vogrie Park and has always been a key element in the social togetherness provided by the organisation.

1990

The Steering Committee (which included mothers of children in the youth groups) met regularly in 1989/1990. According to a letter of invitation to a potential recruit (sent in May 1990):

“This committee is responsible for deciding in what direction the project will develop and deals with matters such as funding and the overall management of the project.”

The letter mentioned that an ‘Ideas Day’ (to be attended by a number of people from the Sikh community) was scheduled for the following month to look at the future of the project as a whole. This particular letter was sent on notepaper bearing the name and logo of Leith Home-Start, underlining the ongoing close links between the two projects at this stage.

A meeting with one of Edinburgh City Councillors in August 1990 regarding financial support stressed LSCG’s underlying aim of enabling and empowering others. At this stage the various groups were already able to look back and see what they had achieved over the past months and this served to increase their confidence. It was acknowledged that it takes time to take such steps forward.

During the early Steering Committee Meetings (and later the Management Meetings) discussions tended to focus on three main areas, defined as:

- Stabilising existing groups
- Establishing new groups
- Investigating links with the Lothian Community

At the September meeting an increase in membership of both the Boys Group and the Girls Group was reported. Disruptive behaviour by some boys had been dealt with. The Women’s Group swimming activities were progressing, as were their plans for outings. Funding applications for costumes and sandals for the Bhangra Group had been submitted and preparations for a performance were underway. There was already evidence of a growing network of contacts ranging from Social Work to the Pilmeny Development Project and including the newly appointed Race Relations adviser at Lothian Regional Council. Additionally, Trishna Singh had attended a conference in Perth on ‘Anti-Racist Perspective in Social Work Training’ and she and Wendy Brownlea had been asked to present an anti-racist workshop for the Lothian Girls Work Resource Centre. Here we have early indications of the importance of LSCG (and later Sikh Sanjog) outwith the context of its community.

Funding applications, including a successful one to the Education Committee of the Regional Council, and the recruitment of volunteers were also recorded.

The First General Meeting was held in November 1990. About 35 people attended. It was conducted in Punjabi with an English translator and chaired/addressed by the Sikh women who had formed part of the Steering Group. A key function of this first General Meeting was to agree the draft constitution which would enable the organisation to become a formally constituted body and therefore eligible to apply for funding. It was stipulated that the membership includes all people who are interested in the Leith Sikh Community Groups.

The main concerns would be:

- *The development of groups for different ages according to the expressed needs of the membership;*
- *To provide a focus in order to promote links between members of the Sikh community and local resources;*
- *To involve the skills of members to achieve co-operative activities;*
- *To ensure that measures are taken to combat racism in policy and practice.*

It is interesting to note the emphasis on consultation, co-operation and skill-development.

Subsequently, a Management Committee was elected, replacing the Steering Committee:

Chairperson: Trishna Kusbia Singh

Vice-chairperson: Rani Kaur Singh

Treasurer: Ashan Devi

Secretary: Runbeer Kaur

Committee members: Kulwinder Singh; Darshana Singh; Jit Kaur; Nita Brown; Sybil Brown; Jenny McCallum.

Also appointed in an advisory capacity were Anne McCulloch (Community Education) and Jill MacDonald (Social Work).

The meeting also included discussion on ideas for the future activities of the Women's Group.

The Management Committee Meeting in November 1990 was well attended. This was the first meeting of this group, following the adoption of the constitution and their election at the First General Meeting. Guidelines relating to the roles of office-holders were distributed. Formal arrangements for meetings were notified. Contact details for all committee members would be recorded. A current account would be opened at the TSB. Grant applications (current and future) to: Community Education; BBC Children in Need; UVAF; The Pleasance Trust were underway. The newly constituted organisation was showing it meant business. Recruitment to appoint a secretary/book-keeper for 10 hours per week was in process.

It was noted that the Management Committee of the Smith's Place Group had requested a representative from the Leith Sikh Community Groups, thus recognising its independent status and consolidating the links with Smith's Place Group.

There was also a good attendance at the Management Committee Meeting held in December 1990. It was agreed that Smith's Place Group would be approached about arranging training for office bearers and new committee members: this shows a clear awareness of the importance of laying firm foundations. An important step forward was represented by the fact that the Constitution of LSCG had been accepted by Inland Revenue, meaning that the organisation was now formally recognised as a Charity.

1991

The New Year began with a Management Committee Meeting at which official compliment slips and headed paper designed by Rammish Raine were approved. The appointment of Zosia Ross as the new secretary/book-keeper was notified; Sue King – the student who had set everything in motion - now had a formal contract of employment. This meeting was attended by Marise McLeod from 'Women in Sport' – a reminder of the importance of this area in the planned activities. In the context of the broader community there was involvement in a 'Minority Ethnic Women and Work' course and in preparations for 'International Women's Day for an anti-racist workshop at Roundabout Minority Ethnic Consultative Forum.

The Annual Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 1991 reveal a total income of £15,507 (mainly from grants and student fees) and total expenditure of £14,314 with salaries/expenses being the main costs. The auditor commented that there was a need to be more rigorous in record keeping and he mentioned missing pages from the cashbook, loose petty cash records and the absence of other forms and statements.

At the Management Committee Meeting in April several substantial matters were dealt with – not least the lack of office space now that staff numbers and volunteers are increasing. Current roll (full- and part-time): Administration Worker; Family Support Worker; Resources Worker; Community Development Worker; 2 Women and Work students; 7 Social Work students (3 full time and 4 doing some family work). Obtaining a 'more secure base' was therefore of primary importance. Difficulties had been experienced in obtaining a telephone connection, something, which was considered a vital tool. Arrangements were in hand for training for committee members. UVAF funding had been obtained for a volunteer co-ordinator.

Highlights from groups and activities were performances at the Glasgow Mela an Eid celebration in Wester Hailes by the Bhangra Group and a visit to the Mela by the Women's Group.

At the following month's Management Committee Meeting a report was presented on funding and the boys and girls groups. Two of the boys were receiving training in photography. A programme of skill development was underway to facilitate progression of senior boys to role of group workers. It was noted that a part-time support worker for the Girls Group would enable greater continuity than is possible when it has to rely on a succession of student helpers.

By the time of the Management Committee Meeting in June the Chair is now Kulwinder Singh. Accommodation was still a pressing issue and the telephone situation continued unresolved: all options being too costly. LSCG gave up its kitchen base at 15 Smith's Place in favour of Room 5.

The possibility of assertiveness training for the Women's Group was discussed. A draft proposal for such training indicated that it would help women, particularly younger ones, to realise that they are valuable members of society and not just extensions of their parents, in-laws, husbands and children. The Meeting was pleased to note that the Girls Group won third prize for their float at Leith Pageant and Gala. There were also discussions on links with the Gurdwara and future developments regarding the Community Centre. The need for women to have a voice was underlined. (This was voiced again at the meeting in August.)

In the summer some women participated in a group survey for the Carnegie Enquiry into Third Age: Study on Education, Training and Information. Also, Kulwinder Singh attended a hairdressing exhibition at Huntley House Museum.

Five members/staff of LSCG attended the AGM of Smith's Place Group in October and presented a short report on their activities. Also in October, Trishna Singh, Ashan Singh and Kulwinder Singh contributed to 'Understanding Racism and Anti-Racist Practice' at the University of Stirling, talking about 'The Sikh Culture'.

At the Management Committee Meeting in December the members addressed the following crucial points: 'Where have we got to?'; 'What are the problems?' (Generally perceived as staffing/communication/supervision); 'How are we going to manage?' (This was prompted by the sick leave of Verona McCallum (co-ordinator of the project): arrangements to cope with her absence were put in place).

1992

At the start of this year it is noted that students, volunteers and staff carry out a considerable amount of Family Work. This will be a growing area in the organisation's activities. Students from other agencies visited LSCG to find out about the organisation and Sikh culture.

In March the Management Committee agreed that a working group should be set up to deal with the current dissatisfaction of the members of the Girls Group and to report back to the Management Committee. Views were expressed regarding the possibility of developing links with the Sikh community in Glasgow. Correspondence indicates that some difficulties had been experienced over a 12-month period in relation to the amount of support, which could be offered to the Sikh women in Glasgow as they embarked on setting up an organisation similar to LSCG.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 7 April 1992 with 19 people present. It was probably not the easiest AGM on record. The Development Workers made the following statement:

"The history of LSCG since the last AGM ... has been one of change and often difficult change. However, without change there cannot be growth and development and it is our belief that LSCG is now considering some of the difficult issues in a constructive way and we

hope that progress towards a secure future for the organisation is underway."

The Volunteer Co-ordinator for the UVAF Project outlined what she considered to be numerous obstacles which had prevented her from carrying out the role for which she was appointed and which had also impacted on the work of the organisation. She had decided to resign from the post and put forward a range of suggestions for improvements, including better communication between the Committee and staff. Discussion followed on the best way of organising the Girls Group, given that it had experienced several problems over the past months. A group of boys spoke in detail about their activities over the past two years. They made an eloquent plea for an increase in the number of hours of their worker: this would enable them to continue to develop their activities and learning. It was explained that funding was not necessarily available for this since the needs of the women and children had to be met. The issue would be discussed further.

Elections to the Management Committee and Office Bearers:

Chairperson: Kulwinder Singh

Vice-chairperson: Rani Kaur Singh

Treasurer: Ashan Devi Singh

Secretary: vacant

Committee members: Surinder Singh; Raj Kumarie; Jenny McCallum.

Also appointed in an advisory capacity were Anne McCulloch (Community Education); Jill MacDonald (Social Work) and Nita Brown (Student Project).

When the Committee met later in April a commitment was made to purchase a new typewriter for the organisation. A paper was presented which discussed various issues in relation to student placements and a possible redistribution of rooms within 15 Smith's Place was also considered.

Accommodation was again to the fore at the June Meeting discussed, in relation to sharing arrangements for Room 5 at 15 Smith's Place, between Smith's Place Group, LSCG and Leith Home-Start. It was recorded that LSCG were now occupying the downstairs room and the telephone extension from the kitchen was to be removed. The purchase of an answering machine was agreed, being seen as essential to the good functioning of the agency.

Ways of determining what type of service provision was required for children under 8 in the community were discussed. A more formal arrangement regarding student placements had now been put in place: it was hoped this would remedy some of the problems, which had previously been encountered. Supervision for students and staff was also mentioned and a proposal for a crèche at Portobello Baths during the Turkish Bath session was put forward, together with the continuation of the one at Duncan Place.

A lengthy report from Verona McCallum was presented. Key points: (a) a greater sense of a team approach now evident; (b) an improvement in the status and conditions of volunteers; (c) the increase in numbers for the Girls Swimming Group and the involvement of volunteers in this; (d) Girls Group: attempts still underway to see if it is possible to regain the trust of the parents and re-establish the group after a breakdown in the arrangements for the

conduct of the group; (e) Dance Group – the need for the boys to rehearse more before public performances was underlined; (f) some ongoing problems with the Boys Group (including worker's hours and venue) but attempts to resolve them were underway.

As a result of the departure of the UVAF-funded worker and in the light of her report (see above) a letter was sent in August to the Administrator of UVAF summarising the progress of the project today and requesting that a change of emphasis be allowed. Instead of a befriending project, as originally envisaged, it was now planned that volunteers would set up an information bank, and they would also be trained to run a crèche.

Two months later, the Management Committee held in August was able to see progress in several areas. Various funding applications (including the revised one to UVAF) were discussed. The Bhangra Dance Group had received £500 from the Scottish Arts Group – a notable achievement – and this would go towards the purchase of costumes (later put on hold pending discussions about the development of group). The Workers' Report highlighted numerous networking opportunities to which Trishna Singh and others would be contributing. The Girls Swimming Group was thriving and the development of a Girls Group, to be based at Pilmeny, was underway. A change of leaders for the Boys Group was imminent although venue problems were continuing (towards the end of the year they moved to Lorne Street Church Halls). The excursion to Butlin's at the beginning of the month was, once again, a success.

An entry about LSCG in the leaflet produced by the Smith's Place Group was approved at the Management Committee Meeting in September. Numerous financial matters were tabled, including: grant applications (SW Department, Telethon, Safer Edinburgh Project); acceptance of the UVAF grant offer for 92-93 and the need to set up a sub-group to recruit a Volunteer Co-ordinator. A joint counselling project with Pilton Health Project was being inaugurated: Trishna Singh and Verona McCallum were both involved at this stage.

A camping trip for the Boys Group had been a great success. The Girls Group had an enjoyable outing to Butlin's but it was decided that the group should be disbanded, as it proved impossible to restore parental confidence in the arrangements. It would be replaced by a group for 7-11 year olds.

By November the bank account had been moved from TSB to the Bank of Scotland. A well-attended Open Day, with considerable input from volunteers, had been held. The Safer Edinburgh Project application had been successful. Wendy Brownlee of Leith Home-Start was proposed as a new Committee Member – recognising the ongoing links between the two organisations. There was some concern regarding new arrangements for student placements. One of the current students submitted a brief written report on her work. The Girls Swimming Group and the group for 7-11's were both going well. There had been a request for a Sikh Boys Football Group. A planned Diwali party had had to be cancelled, much to the dismay of various individuals.

A funding application to Lothian Regional Council in November 1992 contains the following general statement that is helpful in providing an overview of the nature and role of LSCG:

“Leith Sikh Community groups is the only organisation developed UK wide to meet the needs of the Bhatra Sikhs. Since the inception of the project it has become evident that the existing funding and resources are not meeting the needs recreationally, educationally or socially – in that age groups are being mixed inappropriately, membership of the groups has had to remain closed and new groups are not being developed. The existing workload is demanding. This is compounded by the fact that we are engaged in working in a specialised way with a specific culture that brings with it necessary demands e.g. single sex groups, activities that encourage and promote a positive sense of black and, more specifically, Sikh identity.”

Membership of the organisation/groups was given as: 6-18: 56; Over 25: 49; OAP: 4 – giving a total of 109.

The Women’s Group submitted their views on TV programmes for Ethnic Minorities to Stevenson College, where the comments would be used as part of a teaching module. This is another example of the impact of LSCG on the wider community.

Progress

1993

A diagram included in the Annual Report (1992-93) presented on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting in May 1993 reveals an impressive list of activities: 0-5’s crèche provision; 6-10’s Junior Group; 11-15’s Boys’ Group; 10-18 Girls’ Swimming Group; 16-18 Agency Volunteers; Gidda Dance Group; Women’s Groups; Counselling Service; Student Placements; Family Support; Educational Remit; consultants to statutory and other organisations. It was noted that that over the past months the Senior Boys Youth Group, Bhangra Group and Saheliyan Girls Group had all been disbanded for various reasons.

At this point the committee had 9 voting members, 2 advisors and 1 consultant. The staff team consisted of 5 individuals, working a varied number of hours. There were 3 unpaid staff members and there had been a total of 8 students over the year (Social Work or Community Education). Additionally, for the Boys Group: 2 paid workers and 2 unpaid. A large number of people (paid staff or unpaid helpers) were thanked for their input and commitment over the past twelve months.

Reference was made in the Annual Report to the frequent requests from individuals and families for support in a variety of contexts. Response to this was on a voluntary basis by staff and also formed part of the remit of the students on placement. There was concern as to how this level of support could be maintained. Many had come to trust and rely on LSCG because:

“Other agencies do not understand our way of life” and “ We are asked to make changes we can’t and don’t want to make”.

One of the continuing functions of LSCG was to “*combat racism in policy and practice*’. This meant frequent involvement in:

‘Not only challenging but also ensuring that agencies, statutory and voluntary, demonstrate their commitment to anti-discriminatory and, more specifically, anti-racist practice’.

The UVAF Volunteer Co-ordinator provided an account of her work, which included the development of crèche provision by volunteers; liaison with local secondary schools and the compilation of information obtained from a questionnaire to school leavers and unemployed Sikh teenagers.

The group for children aged 6-10 had a current membership of 27 with an average attendance of 15. Activities had included making pakora, face-painting and mendhi, as well as various outings.

The regular activities of the Women’s Group had continued throughout 1992-93. A day trip to the Pilton Health Hut and a visit to the Glasgow Gurdwara had been included.

At the end of the financial year (31 March 1993) the income for the year was recorded as £36,774 and expenditure as £30,718: this represented a considerable improvement over the previous year.

In the Spring of 1993 Ashan Singh contributed to a training day for Social Work students at the University of Stirling.

An Away Day was held at Carberry Towers – a location that became a firm favourite for this type of meeting. It involved a look-back at the way in which the organisation had developed and its fundamental aims. The early difficulties experienced in getting funding included an instance when two of the Sikh women had to go to the City Chambers and speak in front of white males. A few years on LSCG has progressed to the point where the members were able to say “*they once would never have dreamt of doing the things they are able to do now*”.

1994

The broadening network of LSCG is shown by its links with Telford College regarding ethnic groups in March 1994 and, later that year, meetings with RSSPCC about joint concerns. Further, in August Trishna Singh contributed to discussions with the Jewel House Home for Older People regarding such provision for people in the Sikh community. A group of second year students from the MA in Food and Welfare at Duncan of Jordanstone College,

University of Dundee pay a fact-finding visit to LSCG in November. At the end of the year, LSCG is represented at Celebrations for Women held in the City Chambers. All the above are indicative of the great strides taken by LSCG since its inception.

The Women's Group breaks new ground in the summer by going strawberry picking. Swimming and aromatherapy are constant activities. There is also ongoing support for Sikh families through outreach work.

Awards from the Children's Work Fund, Tudor Trust and John Watson Trust financed a Summer Playscheme in 1994 for the Junior Group. There was a varied programme of activities and outings.

The Annual Report covering 1993-94 details 5 staff members and 10 committee members. In her Chairperson's Report Kulwinder Singh indicated that she was stepping down from the post after several years of involvement. She was glad that, through LSCG, she had been able to make a positive contribution to her community. In a ringing endorsement of all that LSCG had achieved she noted that:

"When I took the Chair the Sikh community was more insular than it is today and perhaps the best achievement we have made has been to allow the women, children and teenagers to develop themselves in areas which previously would not have been open to them."

This Annual Report also contained the first contribution from Mary Hastie in her new role as Co-coordinator/Development Worker (having previously been the Secretary/ Bookkeeper). She alluded to the pleasure, which everyone derived from working in a larger room at 15 Smith's Place, with the luxury of individual desks. Particular attention was given to a pilot scheme with the RSSPCC, which underlined the importance of family work to the Sikh community.

The Women's Group had experienced another good year with a women-only visit to the Filmhouse, swimming, aromatherapy, and a range of outings. The financial support of UVAF, BBC Children in Need and the Tudor Trust for the Project Worker's post was highlighted. Ten fully trained crèche volunteers had been of assistance in enabling the various activities of the Women's Group. A Girls Swimming Group had been set up and the findings of the questionnaire circulated to Sikh unemployed teenagers had been collated. The groups for children/young people reported a happy and successful year with a wide range of activities and an awareness of the time and energy of the staff and volunteers. Some outside bodies provided acknowledgement of the value of LSCG.

At the end of the financial year (31 March 1994) income was £32,792 and expenditure £41,517 – a less satisfactory position than twelve months previously.

A New Home

1995

An event of major importance was the move from No 15 Smith's Place where the group had been housed, in a range of rooms, since its inception, to the comparatively palatial surroundings of 19 Smith's Place. This move was made possible because of the success in obtaining funding from Social Work. This was a clear recognition of the value of the work carried out by LSCG with Sikh families, assisting them with problems relating to housing, health and education.

The links with Telford College are strengthened and the Women's Group visits twice in January 1995. In February Trishna Singh attended a meeting at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital regarding mental health issues. Two months later she gave a talk at Lochend Children's Centre on cultural awareness of the Sikh community and the difficulties, which may be experienced by Sikh women. In November LSCG had input to Fort Community Centre's 'Cultural Awareness' training.

An important decision was made in 1995 regarding the management structure of LSCG in order to ensure clear definition of roles and responsibilities of staff: it was agreed that Mary Hastie would be the Co-ordinator (full-time) and there would be a Development Worker (Trishna Singh), a Volunteer Co-ordinator and an Administrator (all part time). There would also be sub-groups dealing with Personnel, Development Policy and Finance: this meant that the Management Committee would meet less frequently from now on.

Summer 1995 saw the second Summer Play scheme in operation. In August three women sat the Lothian Region Mini Bus Test. The first of the confidence-building sessions was held in October. It was noted with pleasure that two of the women attending were mother-in-law/daughter-in-law.

The Annual Report for 1994-95 has an introductory piece by the new Chairperson, Ashan Devi. She gave a positive assessment of the preceding twelve months in which the LSCG net had been cast wider involving more families in and around Leith. It was encouraging to note that the Sikh community now felt able to approach LSCG more readily for information, support and help and to make their concerns known.

The Women's Group could look back on a good year, which included an Assertiveness Training course, which culminated in a trip to New Lanark, and a computer course as well as more visits to the Filmhouse. The Junior Group membership reached over 30 and was run by paid leaders and volunteers. Activities included learning to juggle and kite making. The Boys Group had an active nucleus of 8-10 boys who were encouraged to take responsibility for many aspects of the club – including the financial area. Activities ranged from rock climbing to a residential weekend away.

At the end of the financial year (31 March 1995) stated income was £49,981 and expenditure £41,376 – a pleasing reversal of the situation in March 1994.

Continuing to Grow

1996

Assertiveness courses were again underway and a highly successful Women's Fashion show was organised. Through Trishna Singh and others there are links - informal or formal - with Jewel & Esk Valley College, Saheliya, Social Work Ethnic Minorities Forum and Women Onto Work. The latter led to a course for BME women at Smith's Place, including placements for the trainees. The report on the course shows the positive reactions of both placement-providers and trainees.

The Women's Group showed it was forever pushing back the boundaries of its activities and concerns: planning for Vaisakhi celebrations; video of 'Bhaji on the Beach'; health workshop on PMT and Menopause; considering the feasibility of a group on 'Etiquette for daughters and daughters-in-law' - with a separate group for mothers-in-law.

The now well-established Summer Play scheme caters for 35 children this year. Enquiries about cultural information and details regarding LSCG come from various organisations, ranging from Mary Erskine's Girls School to residential schools in the Borders. It is also noted that: "*Outreach work continues and seems to be advertising itself.*"

In November 1996 the Management Committee took various key decisions including setting up a Training Policy for staff; progressing 'Training for Trainers'; organising Computer and Assertiveness courses.

Also in November LSCG members made a notable contribution to the 'Peoples of Edinburgh' exhibition at The People's Story Museum in the Canongate.

The Annual Report for 1995-96, with a simple but dramatic black and yellow cover design, breaks new ground by containing various illustrations in the course of its text. The Chairperson's Report refers to the constant need to fundraise to keep the four groups running. Elsewhere in the Report links with the Gurdwara are mentioned as well as occasional work with individual Sikh men. The employment of Pamela Couper as Volunteer Organiser (UVAF-funded) is noted and she includes a summary of her plans to recruit and train more volunteers to help with the groups – as well as obtaining experience to further their own careers.

The Report on the Women's Group from the Development Worker (Trishna Singh) reproduces a sample Attendance Certificate as awarded to women who completed the Confidence Building Course and Fashion Show. Various comments from the women are included. For example:

"I really enjoyed going to the women-only viewings at the Filmhouse. We wouldn't normally have gone to see these films but it was great getting the chance to."

"I never dreamt of going out to do something like that [referring to WOW]"(women onto work)

There is a rather ambiguous reaction to the Assertiveness Training course: *"It was really brilliant and I'd like to do it again."*

All the groups for children and young people report on an active and fruitful year – with a high demand for places for places for the younger age group. The Report concludes with comments from outside bodies: there is an acknowledgement from Social Work of the invaluable contribution of LSCG to the planning of two Open Days to give people from minority ethnic communities information about Social Work. Leith Community Education Team congratulates LSCG on its service provision in the area of child/youth work.

1997

January sees the launch of the new LSCG newsletter. Another Away Day at Carberry Towers takes place. This same month LSCG is represented on an interview panel for Edinburgh Young Carers. The organisation is also represented through Trishna Singh on Women Onto Work and its BME Women's Group; VOCAL; Leith Adult Education Forum; Well-being for Men; Skillnet. Mary Hastie and Trishna Singh regularly attended the Social Work Ethnic Minorities Forum Meetings with police regarding community involvement.

At the Management Committee Meeting in March 1997 staff members presented various reports. Key points to emerge include:

- A successful 4-week Volunteer Induction Training had been run
- A Drugs Training Evening had been provided for LSCG
- Girls' Group: a change of emphasis is needed to cope with large membership
- Women's Group experienced a series of taster sessions – leading to an aromatherapy course
- A pilot Drop-in and Advice scheme is in early stages
- Plans for adventure holidays in North Uist
- Liaison with Drummond High to encourage membership of groups
- Funding received for Creative Writing classes for Sikh women.

In July the Girls Group has an exciting overnight visit to Bonaly. Following on from the 'Peoples of Edinburgh' exhibition LSCG contributes to the 'Our Commonwealth' exhibition at Huntly House Museum in October.

Fellow occupants of 19 Smith's Place are now Home-Start Leith and the Student Project.

The Annual Report for 1996-97 contains even more illustrations and photos. The cover design incorporates elements of tartan in its design. A grand total of 70 children aged 5-15 using the services each week is highlighted. There is also a growing band of volunteers to assist with the work and groups. Funding is coming in from several sources but continues to be a concern. There is praise for the eight Sikh women who completed the 12-week WOW course for BME women, which included placements at Boots, Edinburgh University and Leith Academy. Comments from those who attended included:

"I know now that I've done the course it's helped build me up. Even now when people are trying to put me down I know what I'm capable of." 'It helped me a lot, if it wasn't for that I wouldn't have built up my self-esteem. It helps you to build up more confidence, to think straight."

Some of those working with LSCG in a volunteer capacity also expressed their views on what it meant to them:

"It's good the way the groups run because we're actually asking for the girls' opinions. It feels as if their opinions count. I like that." 'I enjoy the work I do with the Sikh Boys' Group immensely. It is my first experience working with a minority ethnic group ... and I have no plans to stop."

All the groups provided positive feedback on the past year. Further, all presented a clear vision of what they were trying to do and provided a thoughtful assessment of their achievements to date.

A large portion of this Annual Report is devoted to an anonymous overview and analysis of LSCG by a student placed there as a course requirement. It provides an interesting commentary on the organisation at this stage of its existence. (Some of the details given regarding the early days of the organisation have been incorporated into the opening sections of this History.) The writer noted, *"The culture of the agency appears to be based on democracy and co-operation"*. The aims included:

"Providing a secure environment where members of the Sikh community can meet and take part in educational and recreational activities and gain new experiences' and 'fostering a positive sense of racial and cultural identity and involving members in the planning and organisation of the groups to promote confidence in their own abilities."

It was noted that it would be good to expand the membership of the Women's Group to bring in other women from the community and to help them take part in activities from which they might feel excluded, although there were various difficulties in achieving this because of the overriding needs of family commitments and duties. It was also hoped that the Sikh women on the Management Committee would feel more confident to use their skills in this context.

Total income on 31 March 1997 was £55,276 and expenditure £55,179

1998

In January meetings took place with Leith Adult Education Forum – mainly in relation to a Punjabi class, which then meets regularly over the coming weeks. Links are made with Parent Network Scotland and with Lothian Association of Youth Clubs. Trishna Singh is involved with others in writing the script for a short film script entitled 'Shells'.

A Vaisaki Celebration was held at McDonald Road Library in April. The poster promises dancing; singing; stalls; magic show - and all for the price of a £1 entrance fee. This same month Trishna Singh spoke at Citadel Youth Centre and in August participated in the 'Faiths Fair' event at Napier University's Faculty of Health Studies. Later she contributed to the 'Spiritual, Religious and Cultural Care in a Health Care Setting' sessions at Napier University, organised by the Chaplaincy at the Royal Infirmary (and again in 1999).

As well as its usual summer outing the Women's Group visited the Buddhist Monastery at Eskdalemuir.

An invitation is extended to Prince Charles to visit LSCG (issued again in 2001).

Options and Outreach – and a Change of Name

1999

This is the year when the 'Options' programme becomes of supreme importance. National Lottery Charities Board funds it. A Publicity Plan is drawn up which includes the following in its first stage: completing the 'Family Tree' to give a picture of the Sikh community in Edinburgh; leaflets/posters/newsletter; information workshop at the Gurdwara. The second stage will involve one-to-one work with young people on their Individual Development Plans and links with local schools. Publicity and networking will continue to grow. A Scottish Office Ethnic Minority grant finances the Outreach Project.

In May the Women's Group headed south to the first Sikh Women's Conference in Birmingham – also visiting the new Gurdwara there.

The Annual General Meeting in May 1999 agreed to change the name of Leith Sikh Community Groups to *Sikh Sanjog*. The new name highlights the key role played by the organization in linking members of the Sikh community with appropriate resources. One month later the agency became a Company Limited by Guarantee.

In May Trishna Singh participated in a 'Cultural Equivalents' meets at University of Edinburgh's Medical School – the aim being to encourage a greater number of BME entrants to medical schools. The following month she met with the chaplain of Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh regarding prayer room arrangements at the hospital. The Edinburgh Sikh Gurdwara for assisting with the Diwali event specifically thanks Mary Hastie, Trishna Singh and Pamela Couper. Links with Shakti and Multi-Cultural Family Base are strengthened.

In December, Trishna Singh took part in the Family Resource Network Introductory Volunteer training and also attended the first of three Advisory Group meetings regarding Religion and Children's Services at Children in Scotland. There is recognition from The National Museums of Scotland of her involvement in the 'Heaven and Hell' project and exhibition.

Six women completed a WOW course – another great achievement.

The Annual Report for 1998-99 is a slender but colourful publication. For the first time it bears the name *Sikh Sanjog* on its cover. It celebrates 10 years of existence and the opening words from Ashan Devi are:

"From a humble beginning in the kitchen at 15 Smith's Place to hiring the McDonald Road Library for our AGM – this is how far we have come in our first ten years. Who knows what the next ten will bring?"

After paying tribute to past supporters and present staff she ends:

"It has been a magnificent achievement for all the community. Now we have working mothers, and younger girls know they stand a chance in higher education and maybe even to work when they leave school, whereas before it was finish school and wait for marriage to gain their freedom if any."

At the time of this Report (May 1999) it is recorded that there are 75 children/young people in the clubs and 18 volunteers.

The Annual Accounts, summarised in two colourful pie charts, show that income was £57,215 and expenditure slightly less at £57,109.

2000

Meetings about the Training Opportunities afforded by TOPPS feature a lot this year, alongside Options, Outreach and the ongoing groups/outings.

In April, Trishna Singh and Mary Hastie discuss the work of Sikh Sanjog with a representative of Children in Scotland.

Seven women visit Birmingham in the late spring for an unforgettable experience at the Sikh Naru Manch (UK) Residential Gurmat Camp and in November a larger party from the Women's Group have a stimulating canal trip – which was also a 'thank you' to volunteers – partly financed by an Interactive Connect bursary from Shell Better Britain Campaign. The WOW Annual Report for 1999-2000 includes a photo of 5 easily recognizable Sikh ladies.

Trishna Singh's contribution to the 'The Sikh Gurdwara' programme in the BBC Scotland series 'See You See Me – Building of Faith' is acknowledged.

An impressive 'Information Pack' on the Sikh Sanjog and the Sikh religion and culture was updated in March 2000. In November Trishna Singh provides a 'Cultural Awareness' session at the Eastern General Hospital.

Requests for personal references for working with children or older people become more frequent: a clear indication that the early work of LSCG has borne fruit in encouraging women to seek training and employment.

The Annual Report for 1999-2000 is a stylish publication with blocks of colour in its text. It records another successful year and notes that:

"Almost every agency in Scotland and a lot in England have heard of us and are taking notes on how our project is run and who runs it."

Sikh Sanjog has now become a membership organization – with a current total of 20. The regular activities and new projects are cited: in particular a Girls Support Group who are acquiring new skills in IT, digital photography, interviewing, reporting and marketing. The Options Programme and Outreach Project complement each other and clear benefits have emerged. Extra provision has been set up for the girls.

At 31 March 2000 income had reached £64,844 and expenditure came in at £63,254.

2001

TOPPS again features a lot this year. Through Trishna Singh and others there is involvement with the Race Equality Forum; ELREC; Saheliya Advisory Group; WOW; MCFB. The Punjabi class (through the WEA) is back on the agenda and various New Deal consultations take place. Meetings are held with L & B Police at their Fettes HQ. Skillnet's agreement to support a Computer Course for Sikh women, starting early 2002, is yet another success. It is advertised in a publicity leaflet as *"the first step into finding employment"*. In December Trishna Singh participated in the Men in Mind consultation on BME men and alcohol

June saw an excursion to Loudon Castle while July was the time of an inspiring trip to Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Centre in Eskdalemuir – assisted by an Interactive Connect bursary from Shell Better Britain Campaign. The aim was to look specifically at the cultural garden tended by the monks.

The December Away Day at Carberry Towers noted that the series of student placements has been beneficial and that the students have had a positive effect on families managing their problems. Also, as women may need support/counseling in the evenings phone calls at home are required. It is important that the service adapts to meet the requirements of those in need of it – something that the organization has always striven to achieve.

The Annual Report for 2000-01 is very similar in style to the one for the previous year. Ashan Devi notes that she has decided to resign after being Chairperson for eight years during which time the organization has grown in strength and scope. Mary Hastie commented in her Report on the way in which Sikh Sanjog's cultural awareness talks have played a major role in assisting other agencies (statutory and voluntary) to become more aware of cultural diversity. Social Work students on placement have also benefited in this respect.

During the year 2000-2001 a significant landmark was achieved in that all of the clubs for children or young people have a paid youth worker from the Edinburgh Sikh community.

The Options Project run by Pamela Couper achieved even greater success than anticipated with numerous enquiries for assistance. The Vacancy Mailing is sent out to 30 young people each week. Job applications and college courses have emerged as a result of this and three local schools have called on Sikh Sanjog for advice. The Female Support Group has been working with The Audience Business Project and Stills Gallery. The Youth Magazine has been well received. Sikh Sanjog won an award for the successful completion of a New Deal placement.

A summary of those who used the services of Sikh Sanjog in 2000-01 is revealing:

- Outreach Project: 39 families
- Options Project: 31 young people
- Youth Clubs: 68 children/young people
- Girls Support Group: 10 girls
- Outings and Celebrations: 277 women and girls
- Enquiries from outside agencies: 52
- Students on placement: 6
- Leisure/health sessions: 26 women

This year's pie chart shows that income on 31 March 2001 had risen to a record £98,752 set against expenditure of £89,954.

The Year of the Mural and the Move

2002

A document was drafted by Creative Art Works indicating how it planned to work with Sikh Sanjog – commencing in the early part of 2002. The project was part of Diversity 2002, a Scottish Arts Council initiative on cultural diversity, funded by the Lottery, in partnership with Edinburgh City Council. An introductory section explains how and why Sikh Sanjog came into existence and describes some of the characteristics of the life of Bhatra Sikhs (male and female). The project aims to work with Sikh Sanjog enabling them to develop their use of the creative arts as a tool for working with women and girls in the exploration of issues of identity, image and communication. Specifically:

- A community mural (fully transportable) will be produced through story telling, 'picture poems' and drama: key elements might include importance of wedding ceremony, changing perspectives and twin identity of Scottish Sikhs. The teenage girls would be encouraged to look at cultural traditions, body image, self-esteem.
- A Women's Diary, themed around the views, experiences and aspirations of Bhatra Sikh women and girls. It would be both a celebration and a training/learning resource.

The project worked across four generations of 16 Bhatra Sikh women. The large 6-panelled mural reflected the arrival and history of the Sikhs in Edinburgh since the 1940's, their background, the integration of their culture and tradition into Scottish life and the development of their unique identity. The early years of Sikh Sanjog are also reflected alongside a depiction by young girls about their dual lifestyle and identity. A digital version with elements from the diary and the wider project was made available as a teaching and study resource on the Edinburgh Grid for Learning. The mural and accompanying material were launched at the City Art Gallery in November 2002. (The following year Trishna Singh spoke about the mural when it was displayed to great effect at the Scottish Civic Forum.)

The colorful 2003 Diary contained historical and cultural material - visual and written - together with reflections and comments by the women and girls involved in the project. Some recipes were also inserted, including one for a Happy Wife. There were also work-in-progress photographs of the mural. A few extract:

- *"We need to rid ourselves first of the insecurities that we have about being Sikhs in Britain. We need to understand that having freedom of choice is not against our religion, rather it is the basis on which our religion was founded."*
- *"It was very educational. We learned new things about our culture and we heard childhood stories about each other that we had never heard before."*
- *"We thought we couldn't draw but we learned a lot together."*
- *"I also discovered things about my own life... it was good to look back."*

The Diary was included in the 'Objects of Desire' list in *The Scotsman* Weekend Supplement in December 2002 and was also displayed at the Mela.

This year Sikh Sanjog was involved with Khush Dil (Happy Heart), a community project which was set up to assist South Asian families with preventative health measures, particularly in relation to heart disease and diabetes. The now famous Women's Walking Group emerged from this.

In July, Sikh Sanjog moved across the road to 172 Leith Walk with other FRN organizations. It occupied a large basement area in the new premises.

A picture of part of the mural appeared on the cover of the Annual Report for 2001-02. The words '*A Brighter Future for Sikh Women and their Families*' are also included. The Project Manager's Report focuses on the renewal of funding for two key areas of work: Options and Outreach. This is a result of the outstanding success achieved to date by both projects. Comments from two young people on the Options Project reflect this: "*I can't believe the difference in me since I first came to see you*" and "*Going through the mock interview made the real interview feel more comfortable*".

The statistical summary of those who accessed Sikh Sanjog's services over the past year was very similar to that for the previous year.

Income on 31 March 2002 had again increased – to £99,973 with expenditure at £96,427.

2003

At a Management Committee in February Trishna Singh's report underlined her ongoing links with Saheliya, Multi-Cultural Family Base, Black & Ethnic Minority Consultation Forum, Alcohol Abuse Advisory Group.

It is also recorded that 8-10 girls are attending the study skills group, which runs regularly. A literacy class for older women and young mothers is proposed. The flourishing Walking Group has been experiencing acupuncture sessions. Options: active outreach work is ongoing (with parents and schools) to encourage involvement. International Women's Day is celebrated with an Open Day in March.

In April the Management Committee Meeting decided that a questionnaire should be distributed to determine service provision preferences. It is noted that there is a large waiting list for the Junior Club and transport problems for the Boys Group. The Swimming Class and Sewing Class are both thriving. 'Outreach': walking group and acupuncture going well, also Food and Nutrition group. 'Options': Literacy class and Study Club both progressing. Possible links with QMUC regarding tertiary education for the girls are being investigated – to include a group visit. Trishna Singh reported that she had attended Black Environmental Network Training to become a Diversity Trainer and develop one of their modules – promoting heritage and environmental sector as an alternative area of employment.

Some lively workshops resulting in a transcript of taped conversation between three Sikh Sanjog women and two representatives of Edinburgh International Festival took place around the topics of life/family roles/ marriage/activities/ children/generations. It was hoped that the discussion and anecdotes would form the basis of an associated presentation at the 2004 International Festival.

An article and photograph in NHS Lothian *Primary Links* Newsletter for May 2003 featured the 'Coronary Heart Disease and Diabetes Family Day for South Asian People' held at Leith Academy in March 2003, courtesy of the Khush Dil Project and involving women from Sikh Sanjog.

At the Management Committee Meeting in June it was noted that the New Deal placement was going well and that Options continued to make an impact. In relation to Outreach, in the past 12 months links had been made with 7 new agencies. In total 66 agencies have accessed Sikh Sanjog. There are 6 new families – a total of 69 for the year. There had also been an increase in home visits – aided by students on placement.

The launch, attended by 85 people, took place at the Filmhouse of *It's like juggling*, a video resulting from a joint project between Sikh Sanjog, Family Resource Network and Save the Children. Dealing with the complexity of leading a dual lifestyle as a young Scottish Sikh, the video will be used as a training tool for professionals working with people from different ethnic backgrounds.

At this stage the Women's Group has 70 members. Numerous trips took place during the year – e.g. Loch Katrine, up Scott Monument ('Healthy Hearts'), Royal Mile Museums, Southall Sikh Gurdwara. A sponsored walk for BBC Children In Need was also staged.

In October 2003 *The Edinburgh Times* included a feature and photograph commemorating the first anniversary of the Sikh Sanjog Women's Walking Group. The celebration cake bore the words 'Keep Walking, Ladies' and the outline of two feet. A walk round Pilrig Park completed the celebrations.

The following month meetings with Leith Sure Start were held to plan a joint Mother and Toddlers Group. A pilot group had taken place in May/June 2003 but had not been very well attended.

The Annual Report for 2002-03 proudly announces that it is No 14 in the series. The staff contingent has grown with the arrival of a Youth Development Worker who will engage with all club members in the 5-15 age bracket and an EYSIP Action Research worker who will undertake research in relation to social inclusion.

In this financial year income and expenditure both exceed £100,000 for the first time, with figures for 31 March 2002 being £114,900 and £117,721 respectively.

The Fifteenth Anniversary Year

2004

In March the Management Committee took the opportunity to reiterate the roles and responsibilities of committee members and financial controls. Plans to set up a funding sub-group were outlined. In relation to Outreach: planning for the annual Mela and discussion of best way of getting young people involved were noted. Options: the Study Group has proved beneficial to the girls who attend because of the special environment which is conducive to learning. Pamela Couper was considering a workshop for parents to enable them to see what studying means. Literacy class and a computer-training course had also been successful. The children's/youth groups were reported to be flourishing – at least two had been busy raising funds for future activities and some of the girls will be doing the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

In the same month Mary Hastie was awarded a Hidden Heroine's Certificate by Enact for Women. In a letter nominating her for an Elsie Award reference was made to her expertise and commitment to Sikh Sanjog and her outstanding leadership of a multicultural staff team. In particular, the way in which she encouraged everyone to demonstrate their full potential was applauded.

In March 2004 20 women took part in a fishing trip (East Linton) – partly funded by the Black Environmental Network Women's Group. It was described as an unforgettable experience.

April saw the start of regular Dolkhi classes: by September the group was ready to perform at the Mela – where Sikh Sanjog also had a food stall. Another trip to the Buddhist Monastery in Eskdalemuir took place.

Six younger women who were part of focus group for Volunteer Development Scotland were invited to Glasgow City Chambers for launch of the final Report.

September 2004 brought the launch at Ocean Terminal of the 'Young Roots' project. This explored various aspects of Sikh culture and produced a rap CD, impressive prints of Sikh heroines and sculptures of Sikh symbols – as well as a 2005 Diary that reflected many elements of the Project. The exhibition was later displayed in the Museum of Childhood.

October was the time of the first meeting of Young Sanjog Women's Group. Plans to set up a Walking Group were discussed and Paths to Health questionnaires were completed. The stated aims of YSWG were: weight loss; social interaction; toning; participation in activities such as sponsored walks, fundraising for Mother and Toddler Group and good causes. For later meetings the following were listed: (a) information on working with children and on CLAN literacy classes (b) issues relating to the health sector (c) visit from a yoga teacher (d) Bollywood exercise video (e) makeover session.

The 'Garam Gossip' Newsletter of October 2004 contained a variety of topics covered in a chatty fashion.

The Annual Report for 2003-04 was a very special one to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the organisation. Significantly, the cover has a picture of 'Young Sanjog – the New Generation'. A personal note in the introductory report from the relatively new Chairperson, Dalbir Singh, sheds light on what the agency has accomplished and is continuing to achieve:

"Sikh Sanjog is different from anywhere else... I myself have gained a lot since joining. I am a sewing instructor, emergency life support instructor, walk leader, aerobics instructor – all as a direct result for my involvement with Sikh Sanjog."

She adds:

"A lot of women have come out of their shell over the years to take part in some amazing activities that we would not have done in the past."

She cites as an example the Dolkhi Drumming Group which will be performing at the Mela. The theme is continued in the Manager's Report where Mary Hastie states:

"When we started in 1989 it was an uphill struggle for young people to be permitted to join our youth clubs. Now it is not only acceptable, but essential when you reach 5 to become part of 'Young Sanjog', our youth provision."

An idea of the development of the agency over 15 years is shown through some comparative figures.

- **1989:** 5 teenage girls; 4 teenage boys; 0 junior members; 20 people on annual outing; 3 families receiving support; 4 Sikh Women on Management Committee; no membership system.
- **2004:** 10 girls group members; 15 girls at study club; 15 boys group members; 40 junior group members; 540 people attending 4 events; 35 families supported; 10 women on Board of Directors; 95 members; 200 people seeking job search advice; 5 women have had New Deal placement leading to employment.

Similarly, the number and variety of all the groups – from Women's to juniors have increased dramatically over the period.

Over the 15 years Sikh Sanjog has worked with a range of key agencies including: Scottish Executive, National Heritage, Scottish National Museums, Scottish Arts Council, University of Edinburgh, University of York, Edinburgh Mela, Black Environmental Network, Black Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland.

The summary of the annual accounts shows that on 31 March 2003 income was £128,052, slightly exceeded by expenditure of £128, 658.

A well-attended 15th Anniversary Annual General Meeting was held at the City Chambers and addressed by Dougie Kerr, Councilor responsible for equality issues. There was a performance by the Women's Dolkhi Group.

Towards the Future

2005

It was reported at a Management Meeting in May that funding to run a Health Initiative had been received. Considerable effort was being put into a Business Plan, which would include financial procedures. A report from Trishna Singh underlined the width of networking arrangements currently in place. She also noted that Sikh Sanjog's reputation always precedes contact and people expect (and get) a very good input from the organisation. Recent initiatives included: Royal College of Surgeons: 'Walking for Fitness' photography to be displayed in the museum; Richmond Hope Bereavement Project – cultural awareness session; Edinburgh Festivals Development Programme: Women's Group involved in a theatre tapestry; Inter-Faith Council; cultural session for NHS Health Equality Inclusion staff; City of Edinburgh Council Housing Department focus groups. Some of the older women in the Walking Group registered as the Sikh Sanjog Team to walk in the 'Tesco Race for Life' to raise money for Cancer Research. Paths to Health had provided some funding for the purchase of trainers and pedometers. It was encouraging to note that some of the women were now confident enough to represent Sikh Sanjog at external meetings and had joined management committees, e.g. at MECOPP.

In June 2005, *Working Capital* magazine features 18 year-old Neelam Singh who is on a New Deal placement with Sikh Sanjog, having previously been involved as a volunteer. Her main area of activity is the Junior Club (32 children aged 5-10). She commented that:

"I'm getting lots more confidence and experience, as well as knowledge of how to deal with the work that goes on in the organisation."

The July Management Committee Meeting shows that the members are constantly thinking of ways to ensure the best service provision possible. A reconsideration of the Youth Work at Sikh Sanjog took place with various options being looked at. It was agreed to put forward the possibility of members bringing a non-Sikh friend with them. Also under consideration was a young persons' committee. Recruitment for the Drop-in post was underway.

The Annual Report for 2004-05 records that the Options Project has come to an end, having assisted an impressive total of 365 people over its six years of existence. The Girls Study Group will continue and now caters for a wider age range. The CEMVO Capacity Building Programme has helped identify the best way forward for Sikh Sanjog. The Youth Report gives evidence of the growing confidence of the members of the various groups as they undertake ever more ambitious activities – including Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions, plans for a weekend residential camp, very successful fundraising for the Tsunami Disaster Appeal.

Income on 31 March 2005 was £172,919 and expenditure £128, 658.

Punjab'n De Rasai

Sikh Sanjog hopes that the way to funders' hearts is through 'a punjabi woman's kitchen'. As Trishna Singh, business development manager with this enterprise café comments, "We want a wonderful big café and a big kitchen where we can employ lots of women. We want to fill the gap by catering at NHS, Police and other corporate events - as well as weddings and parties. We have a viable product, the commitment and the people. We just need the finance for bigger premises and to help us take it to the next level."

For almost 20 years, Sikh Sanjog has supported the Sikh Community, firstly in Leith and now across Edinburgh. The idea for a community café emerged partly from the project's commitment to developing women's social and practical skills but also because of the push for voluntary organisations to become more self sustaining.

One of only eight organisations selected from over 220 to receive an Enterprise Grant from the Scottish Community Foundation, the project has used this to employ Trishna for two years and to extend its successful lunch time café. It puts its success so far down to "research, business planning, a viable product and very hard work".

At first, the Sikh Sanjog provided the Wednesday food and volunteers for the community café in Dr Bell's Family Centre, cooking an Indian lunch under the supervision of Dr Bell's café manager. Trishna describes the pilot, "The women had never worked in a café, they had never worked with a white Scottish man but from this partnership, the women got training and the money we earned from takings funded a women's group. We are now renting our own premises and run the café for two days a week. We started in April with volunteers but five months later we have been able to employ three of them and take on further sessional staff. That's the way it's going. The only thing that's holding us back now is premises – and money."

The benefits to women have been immediate. Trishna says, "We tend to work with first and second generation women, and although their spoken English may be good, they haven't had further or higher education. If they work, it tends to be basic low waged work with no training. The café trains them in food and hygiene, customer care, talking to the public and links them into numeracy and literacy support in Sikh Sanjog if they need it. It's training which suits their needs and is focused on the café – so what they get also helps the café. They've developed confidence, self esteem and, as our customers tell us, the food is delicious and the service is great. "We have been a catalyst for lots of women to move into other things. Family businesses are not around to the same extent and women need to work but they need the skills and confidence to do so. The café is providing a stepping stone. "With a representative of the Chamber of Commerce on the board and capacity building through Pilotlight, Sikh Sanjog plans to move, in time, to a trading surplus. Trishna says, "If, five years ago, I'd said, 'We'll be running a café' the women would have laughed at me."

Postscript

The above pages attempt to summarise the history and key events in the development of Sikh Sanjog over a 16-year period. Although many of the facts, statistics, names and activities cited are in themselves testimony to an amazing development over a comparatively short period they cannot adequately convey a full sense of the impact and value of this unique agency. The energy, vitality and commitment of all those involved over the past years have made Sikh Sanjog what it is today as it continues to open up new avenues and areas for the Sikh community.

Jenny Lowe
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