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'No More Tears' expands to help abused women around the country

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No More Tears, a Plantation-based nonprofit group that helps immigrant women escape domestic abuse, is expanding its reach across the country.

The grassroots organization, founded by Somy Ali, a former Bollywood actress who was born in Pakistan, has made alliances with two Virginia organizations that help abused women. She also recently spoke at events in Dallas and Washington D.C., where groups there pledged financial support.

Ali, who formed No More Tears in 2006 to aid women of her culture, has helped 65 victims in South Florida. Operating from a spare bedroom in her Plantation home, Ali and a handful of volunteers help immigrant women flee abusive situations by finding them apartments, jobs and counseling.

Ali said she traces her budding national exposure to a \$10,000 in-kind marketing grant she received from Google in September 2010, which raised No More Tears' profile in Internet searches.

In October 2010, she got a call from the Laurel Center, a domestic violence shelter in Virginia. "There was an Indian woman needing help, and they didn't have any experience with the culture," Ali said.

Ali spoke to the victim on the phone in Hindi, a common Indian language, and pledged her help.

"I told her that I would fly up there and move her myself," Ali said.

In November, Ali was a guest speaker at a meeting of the Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs or North America in Washington D.C., where she collected \$5,000 in donations.

While there she met with representatives from the Laurel Center and with Faith, a Pakistani-run organization in Virginia that helps abused women and the homeless.

"I knew then I needed to go national," Ali said. "If established domestic shelters are calling me, there must be a need."

Ali, who has shied away from the limelight since her Bollywood days a decade ago, said she is getting more comfortable with the idea of using her celebrity to help No More Tears.

On New Year's Eve, Ali was the celebrity guest representing Bollywood at a fashion show in Dallas, which promised her a portion of the proceeds for No More Tears.

On a return trip through Washington D.C., Ali tried to make good on her promise to help the Indian woman in Virginia move from an abusive home, but the woman changed her mind.

"That's not unusual in domestic violence situations. I've seen it before," Ali said. "But I wouldn't call it a wasted trip, because I forged relationships with Faith and the Laurel Center. Now if they need help with a Pakistani or Indian woman, they can call us."

Next up is a fund-raiser by the Friends of Pakistan in Maryland, scheduled for March.

"All good things are happening. In spite of the struggles and the hardships, it's all heading in the right direction," Ali said. "I eventually want to be all over the U.S."

For information or to help, visit www.NMT.org.