The peacemakers

In the last year, My Choices has peacefully resolved over 500 cases of domestic violence in the city. On the eve of International Women's Day, the team tells ZEINAB ANZIZ how and why they do it.

Wednesday mornings are a busy time at the My Choices centre at Lakdi Ka Pul. The steady stream of women coming through the door is not deterred by the dark clouds that loom over the city, threatening to break into rain that begets slushy roads and traffic jams. Women, most of them clad in burqas, occupy a mat that is laid out for them, talking to each other, comparing notes and occasionally consulting the senior counsellor, Pearl. These women, the peacemakers, are the foundation of My Choices and are committed to helping victims of domestic abuse in their local communities. Through them, the NGO has been working on wedding out domestic violence from the grassroots upwards, empowering many women to fight back against their abusers and reconciling many families through education and counselling.

The organisation was started early last year and has since trained 80 peacemakers and opened 678 cases, 77 per cent of which have been peacefully resolved. We met some of the core team members including co-founder Anjali Ratnaratna, senior counsellor Pearl Choragadi, team leader and legal aid Archana Rao, programs manager Farrama, junior counsellor Saeed Majeed and head of marketing Hannah Nair, to hear their side of the story.

Continued on page 4