

Theme: Gender Based Violence



Photo - Daniel Francis

## Editorial



India is one of the most gender unequal countries in the world ranking near the bottom in two recent international measures of gender equality (World Bank, 2012; World Economic Forum, 2009). One way this is evidenced is in the high rates of gender-based violence. India, a signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has several pieces of legislation to protect women, however studies suggest that still more than one third of women in India have experienced one or more forms of violence (Ahmad, Khan, Mozumdar, & Varma, 2015; Kamimura, Ganta, Myers, & Thomas, 2014). Most of us have witnessed gender-based violence as occurring commonly among the communities we serve and even on our own compounds. Perhaps the most graphic example of this is the highly asymmetrical sex ratio's across India which evidence sex-selective abortion of female foetus'.

Gender based violence is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. Through the life cycle from womb to tomb women experience psychological, economic, verbal and physical abuse and violence. The behavior, perception, and attitudes resulting from the feudal patriarchal system prevailing in our society is one major reason behind gender based violence in the country. Multilateral organizations working towards eradication of gender based violence advocate engaging men as part of the solution.

This issue of Safar focuses on Gender-based violence to highlight this as a topic that we need to take further action on, and to also profile success stories of individuals and institutions working to bring change. We hope this issue will encourage all of us to stand against gender based violence in our communities to achieve the goal of gender justice.

- Feba Jacob and Kaaren Mathias

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## Chacko's Chai column

Domestic violence against women is a serious problem in India. Overall, one third of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence and about 1 in 10 have experienced sexual violence. In total, 35 percent have experienced physical or sexual violence. This figure translates into millions of women who have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of husbands and other family members. NFHS-3 collected information from married and unmarried women aged 15-49 about their experience of physical and sexual violence. Married women were also asked about their experience of emotional violence. NFHS-3 findings underscore the extent and severity of violence against women in India, especially married women.

### Violence by husbands against wives is widespread:

- Married women are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by their husband than by anyone else.
- Nearly two in five (37 percent) married women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their husband.
- One in four married women had experienced physical or sexual violence by their husband in the 12 months preceding the survey.
- The cycle of domestic violence is repeated across generations. Women whose mothers were beaten by their fathers are twice as likely to experience violence as women whose mothers were not beaten by their fathers: 60 percent, compared with 30 percent.
- Women married to men who get drunk frequently are more than twice as likely to experience violence as women whose husbands do not drink alcohol at all. However, even though alcohol is important, it is not the only factor accounting for the high prevalence of violence against women, as 30 percent of women whose husbands do



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not drink have experienced spousal violence.

### Majority of women and men say that a husband is justified in beating his wife

- More than half of women (54 percent) and men (51 percent) agree that it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife under some circumstances.
- Women and men most often agree that wife beating is justified when the wife disrespects her in-laws.
- Neglect of the house or children is the second most commonly agreed justification for wife beating for both women and men.

The above data from an NHFS report is shocking. How can EHA make a difference in a situation like this? Christians are not immune to this - earlier research showed that even pastors felt justified in abusing their wives! I think we need to start with our own hospital communities! Sensitizing staff about this issue is vital. Having a discussion during staff meetings, doing some of the lessons from 'Badte Kadam' on gender roles, and creating safe mechanisms for the abused to report to authorities may be some practical steps. Community health programs may have to do awareness programs, discussions in self-help groups, VHSNCs, and other community fora they are involved in. Let's all work towards gender violence free communities in our situations.

**Dr Ashok Chacko**, Director - EHA's Community Health and Development Programme

## Devotion

## Gender Based Violence

[ Rev. Prakash George ]

**G**ender-based violence is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination, and physical and mental integrity.

Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably, as most gender-based violence is inflicted by men on women and girls. However, it is important to retain the 'gender-based' aspect of the concept as this highlights the fact that violence against women is an expression of power inequalities between women and men (<http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>).

Do the Scriptures have anything to say about this subject? Reading through the Scriptures we understand that violence based on gender is unacceptable because man and woman are created in the image of God. Both are equal before God and cannot be discriminated against through violence. In redemption through Jesus Christ God has broken down the barriers that existed between man and woman. (Galatians 3:28)

There may not be many injunctions against gender violence in the Bible but the emphasis is on how to care for the woman, especially the wife. Here are some guidelines:

1. Love your wife as Christ loved the Church. (Ephesians 5:25)
2. Love your wife in the same way that you love your body and your life. (Ephesians 5:28-33)
3. Be considerate as you live with your wife, with respect ... (1 Peter 3:7)



Photo - Daniel Francis

4. Do not be harsh with your wife. (Colossians 3:19)
5. The husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)
6. Rejoice in your wife all your life. Let her body satisfy you. Be captivated with her. (Proverbs 5:18-19)
7. Women may be dressed in simple clothing, with a quiet and serious air; not with vanity about her hair and gold or jewels or expensive clothing; (1 Timothy 2:9)
8. Do not be captivated by other women. (Proverbs 5:20)
9. Call your wife 'blessed' and praise her. (Proverbs 31:28-29)
10. Honor your marriage; keep it pure by remaining true to your wife in every way. (Hebrews 13:4)
11. Be thankful for your wife and realize the favor you have received from God. (Proverbs 18:22)
12. Be one flesh with your wife in every way. (Matthew 19:5)

Another way gender violence is perpetuated in our country is through “gendercide” wherein selectively female fetuses are destroyed before they are born. This is abhorrent to God. We need to be voices which will put an end to such violence.

# A perspective on Gender Based Violence

[ Dr. Vandana Kanth, Project Director, Department of Community Health & Development, Duncan Hospital ]

It does not hurt much when my husband beats me as I forget after some time and also pain vanishes but the words that he uses to degrade and disrespect me kill my soul and spirit and I cannot bear it.

One woman during Focus Group Discussion, India

## What is gender-based violence?

Gender based Violence (1) is an umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and /or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. It is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalance. GBV is typically characterized by the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control and/or abuse. GBV impacts individuals across the life course and has direct and indirect costs to families, communities, economics, global public health and development.

- The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women states that:
  - Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and that "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men
- Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, declared in a 2006 report posted on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) website that:
  - Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to

her.

The Istanbul Convention, provides the following definition of violence against women:

- "Violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life

## Populations affected by GBV

Women and girls across the life course are most at-risk and disproportionately affected by GBV. It is experience by individuals across the spectrum of gender identities and gender expression. Men & boys also experience GBV. Certain vulnerable populations may experience increased risk of GBV including, but not limited to, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI), migrants, refugees, the internally displaced, older persons, and widows.

## Milestones on the international level for the prevention of violence against women :

- The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recognizes violence as a part of discrimination against women
- The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights which recognized violence against women as a human rights violation and which contributed to the following UN declaration.
- The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was the first

international instrument explicitly defining and addressing violence against women. This document specifically refers to the historically forever-present nature of gender inequalities in understanding violence against women.

**“If we wear modern or short dresses , the men in our community say that this girl in a way is giving us a hint that she wants to be raped”**

**Anonymous , Brazil**

- The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, linking violence against women to reproductive health and rights
- In 1996, the World Health Assembly declared violence a major public health issue, and included intimate partner violence and sexual violence, two kinds of violence which are often perpetrated as violence against women.
- In 1999, the UN adopted Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and designated November 25th as the international Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- In 2002, the World Health Organization published the first World Report on Violence and Health, which addressed many types of violence and their effect on public health.
- In 2004, the World Health Organization published its "Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women".
- The 2006 UN Secretary General's "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women," the first comprehensive international document on the issue.
- The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is the second regional legally-binding instrument on violence against women and girls.
- In 2013, the United Nation Commission on the Status of (CSW) adopted, by consensus, Agreed Conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

- Also in 2013, the UN General Assembly passed its first resolution urging states to put in place gender-specific laws and policies for the protection of women's human rights and to ensure that defenders themselves are involved in the design and implementation of these measures.

### **GBV - where it occurs**

GBV is a global problem. It occurs in every country and society. It happens in public and private settings including, but not limited to, digital and online spaces, educational settings and schools, the home, workplaces and in transit (1).

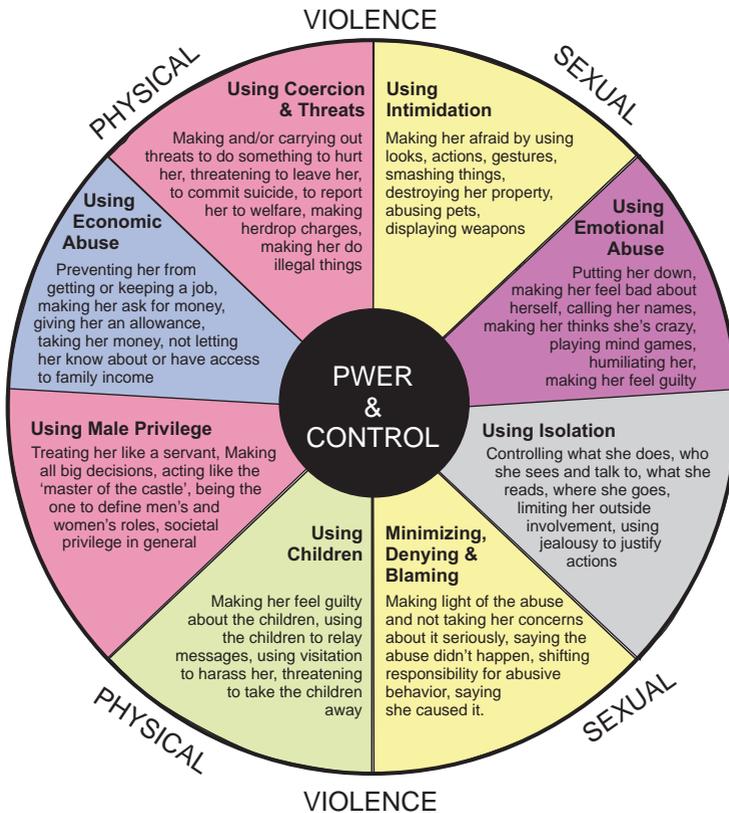
According to Shuani (2), the most important causes of gender disparity are poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social customs, beliefs, and attitudes towards women.

### **Power and Control Wheel to understand the pattern of abusive and violent behavior**

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the abuser, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, makes up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of someone's life and circumstances. The power and control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by an abuser to establish and maintain control over his partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.

**Types of GBV**  
Throughout the life cycle (WHO's typology table)

Phase	Type of violence
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcomes
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse
Girlhood	Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography
Adolescence and adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape); economically coerced sex (e.g. school girls having sex with 'sugar daddies' in return for school fees); incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy
Elderly	Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography



## GBV in India

Year	Reported violence	Reported dowry death	Reported rapes	Reported cruelty by a husband or relatives
2008	195,856	8,172	21,467	81,344
2009	203,804	8,383	21,397	89,546
2010	213,585	8,391	22,172	94,041
2011	213,585	8,618	24,206	99,135
2012	244,270	8,233	24,923	106,527

- According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, reported incidents of crime against women increased 6.4% during 2012.
- In January 2011, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) Questionnaire reported that 24% of Indian men had committed sexual violence at some point during their lives.
- Every 9 minutes, a case of cruelty is committed by either of husband or a relative of the husband (4). From 2011 to 2012, there was a 7.5% increase in cruelty by husbands and relatives (3).
- In a 2013 study by the New Delhi-based think tank National Council for Applied Economic Research, over half of the married women surveyed said that they went through some sort of abuse in their married life.
- Studies also indicate that economic and social gains have put women at far greater risk in a deeply patriarchal country like India.
- One study suggests that In India, 70% of women are victims of domestic violence (5) and 38% of Indian men admit they have physically abused their partners (4).
- A 2014 report in Population and Development Review, a peer reviewed journal, shows that women who are more educated than their husbands are at higher risk of domestic violence as men see in it a way to re-assert their power and control over their wives.
- The last government study done in 2006, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), revealed

that over 51 percent of Indian men didn't think it wrong to assault their wives. More shockingly, 54 percent of the women themselves felt such violence was justified on certain grounds.

- GBV invariable affects children: According to Dallas County Intimate partner violence fatality review team interim report, 44.1% of the cases directly impacted at least one child.

#### Challenges faced by women in accessing justice and limitations of measures:

**Lack of criminalization.** In many places, acts of abuse, especially acts such as female genital mutilation, marital rape, forced marriage and child marriage, are not criminalized, or are illegal but widely tolerated, with the laws against them being rarely enforced.

**Lack of awareness of the existing laws.** In many places, although there are laws against violence many women do not know of their existence. This is especially the case with marital rape - its criminalization being very recent in most countries.

**Existing laws are insufficient, conflicting, and have no effect in practice.** Some laws on domestic violence conflict with other provisions and ultimately contradict their goals. Despite advances in legislation and policies, the lack of implementation of the measures put in place prevents significant progress in eradicating violence against women globally. This failure to apply existing laws and procedures is often

due to the persisting issue of gender stereotyping. Another critical need is for fast-track courts to ensure cases get heard rapidly. The Indian legal system is notoriously slow and cases drag on for years, even decades.

**Lack of adequate crisis care including shelter homes.** Measures to address violence against women range from provision of emergency shelters and 24-hour hotlines for victims, including structural aids such as Transitional Housing, trauma recovery and day care centres inclusive of their children, parenting and legal classes, and skills training.

There is a lot of pressure to stay married, I have found that even highly placed women don't like to reveal that they are divorced or separated. They will hide it as much as possible.

Veteran lawyer and women's rights activist  
Flavia Agnes

However tougher laws alone cannot stem the tide of domestic violence if attitudes stay rooted in patriarchy.

Women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse often do not have a source of help or a place to go to seek refuge. Most often they have to return to their abusive husbands; some commit suicide. Their own families rarely help women in such circumstances.

We see it on the part of the police, NGOs, stakeholders and religious authorities. The protection officer is supposed to collect evidence, file an order and take the victim to court. Instead the tactic is to tell her, 'He slapped you a few times that's all. Don't make a big deal and sort it out', and she is sent back to the hellhole.

Veteran lawyer and women's rights activist  
Flavia Agnes

### Role of men in ending violence:

It is important to sensitize men in ending domestic violence because men are the ones mostly involved in initiating domestic violence and so we must start from them. Nanduni, Sri Lanka

It is extremely important to consider the role of men in combating domestic violence. Violence against any gender must be seen in totality and at a family level. Targeting and sensitizing only women is a one-sided approach which creates one-sided development.

All of these horrific scenes flashed through my head of one of my now sweet little boys, grown up and hurting another person – hurting a woman. And suddenly, it was all clear to me. It hit home. This is our problem! This is our issue! This is my issue! There is no violence against women – no domestic violence, no dating abuse – without the abuser. And that, in great part, historically and statistically, is us! Men. How truly horrific that the only role we men are perceived to have played in this issue, is being the problem!

If we really want to end domestic violence we have to stop it before it starts. We have to change our culture. Men have to own violence against women as a man's issue – a man's problem. For men to be part of the solution we have to challenge the way we think, the way we behave and talk, the way we raise our children – both our sons and daughters. We have a responsibility to reach the next generation of men – boys my son's age – and challenge the way we look at women and look at ourselves.

Crayton Webb, US



Photo - Daniel Francis

1. Integrate GBV services in antenatal care clinics, through employing trained social workers and training health care providers dealing with pregnant women.
2. Train primary health care workers in screening of GBV cases and appropriate referrals and management.
3. Involve men in the sensitization and awareness process about GBV.
4. Provide training on life skills for youth and counselling sessions for teenage girls and boys.
5. Firmly implement laws against violence towards women and girls.
6. Involve domestic violence survivors at national and state level when making policies.
7. Strengthen and build resilience and capacities of individuals and survivors, creating positive models of women who overcame adversities to become the Champions and advocates for the cause.
8. Expand provision of adequate Shelter homes and

directory at district and block level so that immediate support at the time of crisis is in place.

9. Improve awareness of gender sensitization of judiciary, law makers and police officials.

10. Deal with mental health crises through clinical psychologists and through trauma care program centers.

11. Organize support group meetings for victims of GBV.

12. Provide reserved In-house facilities / inpatient care for survivors dealing with physical injuries, including those making suicide attempts.

13. No one sector working alone can effectively address the complex issue of gender-based violence. NGOs can provide critical services to victims, advocates can lobby for comprehensive legislation, businesses can provide jobs which reduce the vulnerability to violence, but only the government – particularly the criminal justice system – can hold offenders accountable for their crimes. The Justice Institute trains these sectors to work together collaboratively to protect current victims, prevent future victims, and end impunity for perpetrators (6).

14. Change the perception of society towards the value and dignity of women, treating them on par with their male counterparts.

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## Success Story

### from CHDP Fatehpur

*Daniel Francis, Project Manager, Fatehpur*



*Photo - Daniel Francis*

*Women at the DM office with their applications*

Women's empowerment is a broad term and sometimes it is possible to deceive ourselves within the framework of activities. When a group of women from a Muslim community decided to do something about lack of a drinking supply, they went to the highest office in the district. The picture speaks for itself.

These eight women, members of the village committee, went to the DM and submitted their request for a new hand pump. Their request was granted not long after. In a community where women are excluded from a lot of decision making, this picture of them walking to claim their rights is a refreshing sight.

Neelam (name changed) got married in 2014 to a rich business man in Delhi. Her life was nothing short of horror. Neelam, barely 20, was badly treated within days after marriage. She was locked up, beaten and denied food at times. She continued to be at the receiving end of abuse until one day she went to the police. The matter was not resolved and the violence persisted. She then left her husband and returned to her home at Fatehpur. As advised by the project staff, Neelam registered her complaint with the probation officer in Fatehpur. She has since refrained from going back to her husband's place. Spreading awareness about the help available for women victims has been an important aspect of our work in gender.

A middle-aged man, after attending the first session of the couples' workshop, wanted his wife to attend the second session. Being convinced that women are no less than men, he encouraged his wife to sit on a chair, which is unusual. In a culture where women are subdued in every form, this little act goes a long way to show the impact of couples' workshops on the attitudes of men.

A girl was allowed to marry the man of her choice, without the traditional custom of arranged marriage. She was taken by her family to the temple where she was married in secret. The family did not reveal these details to the village folk as this would have invited social stigma for agreeing to their daughter's wishes. This decision, a rarity in the cultural context and contrary to the norm, demonstrates valuing opinions of girls and not forcing them against their wishes.



*Photo - Daniel Francis*

*Women and children in front of the DM office*

A very busy village engaged in brewing and sale of illegal liquor and gambling has a positive story to tell. Children and women, who are usually the only ones sober in the village, had decided to do something about the lack of electricity. They went to the DM office carrying placards demanding their right to electricity. Though not yielding much result, the initiative is commendable. Their follow-up visits continued while their men continued to languish under the influence of alcohol and gambling.

# Violence against women

[ Daniel Francis, Project Manager, Fathehpur ]

**T**he problem of violence against women in India has increased markedly over the past few years. The Delhi incident surely effected the emergence of the issue but violence against women (VAW) has had a long prevalence in India. When taking a deeper look at the issue, the problem of VAW has its roots deep in the mindset of people. In a culture where wrong ideas are passed on from an early age, this problem is sure to propagate itself in ways and means that cannot be contained.

No culture in the world will identify as associated with violence against women, but discrimination against women? Yes. India is known for its skewed cultural ideas on gender.

Gender violence and gender discrimination are equally devastating. They have similar repercussions. A woman raped will not just experience physical trauma but serious mental, emotional and social trauma. Similarly, a girl given less food and other resources than her brother will bear the physical consequences, and at the same time will struggle mentally and emotionally because of the discrimination involved. Not every woman in India will endure violence in her lifetime, but it's hard to imagine a woman who has not been discriminated against. Gender discrimination hence remains an 'acceptable' part of Indian society as it connects with the social, cultural and religious systems. Biased ideas are so engraved in people's minds that it seems very normal. Systems are hardwired and so standardized that it becomes impossible for people wishing to make a difference to do so without facing opposition.

Three reasons which may contribute to the

existence of the problem are:

**Hierarchical thinking-** Respect in relationships exists because of the hierarchy in it.

**Shame culture-** The culture of shame and silence shrouds every crime and keeps the issue subdued as much as the victim herself.

**Ritualistic traditions-** Indian culture is hardwired with traditions that are difficult to break away from to make a difference. Formal education has not brought about many great changes in this regard.

## The 'heart' of the issue

Recently several discussions took place about how stringent laws would deter perpetrators of violence. Comparisons to corporal and other severe forms of punishments meted out to convicts in some countries were made and justified as to why the same should be practiced in India. The events after the Nirbhaya incident in December 2012 made some progress with regard to the law and the processes around it. More cases have emerged, which can be attributed to increased reporting. Increased reporting can be further attributed to change in the mindset concerning reporting of crimes against women. But the real question is can stringent laws deter violence against women? Can a change in judicial law change a behavior while the law in the heart remains rooted in biased and lopsided attitudes?

Given the enormous spectrum of problems a woman can face in this context, what can be a permanent solution to end or at least minimize it? I think the issue lies at the heart. Only a change of heart can fully bring about a gender neutral society much needed in the country. Some of the positive steps we made in our efforts were made with the help of couples' workshops. It was interesting to

note that most of the couples in our context did not have ideals about marriage.. And when ideals are non-existent, the chances for violence to occur are far greater.

After one of our sessions on marriage, one couple's life changed for good. The man would no longer beat his wife because he learnt it was wrong. Our recent surveys reveal that women believe some violence is acceptable and even necessary when a wife makes a mistake. If basic knowledge on moral standards about gender and marriage aren't there, what then does the heart have anything to change for?

Aimed at changing attitudes and beliefs in gender, three approaches were considered in our work.

Approach	Rationale	Intervention
Sensitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sensitizing adolescents to gender equality in the adolescent meetings.</li> <li>■ Couple meetings to sensitize couples on gender equality, family values, and other gender related issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adolescents are the community of tomorrow and hence interventions are aimed at long-term perspective changes in the community.</li> <li>■ Family is the basic unit of society where ideas and practices are passed on to the next generation.</li> </ul>
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community meetings with government agencies to inform people on accessing help and support for gender based violence and family conflicts.</li> <li>■ Use of media to advertise helpline numbers.</li> <li>■ Women and key community members visit the police station.</li> <li>■ Selection and training of individuals to be gender focal persons in the village.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prevention must involve government and police help, and awareness about these facilities can help women in times of impending violence.</li> <li>■ Trained passionate individuals tackling violence can enable women reach out for help when necessary.</li> </ul>
Protection of victims and legal	<sup>1</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Networking with women's welfare agencies and special women protection units and dissemination of information.</li> <li>■ Helping women to file their grievances for legal aid if situation warrants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Protection of victims is done by state-run agencies and NGOs working on the issue. Networking is a key step for referral of cases.</li> </ul>

Of the above approach, sensitization consists of the key elements of transformative change. Gender violence and discrimination against women are deep issues that will require intense and prolonged grass-root level work. To abolish the practice of Sati, it took Raja Ram Mohan Roy almost 17 years of focused social actions and legal battles.

In the fight against VAW and gender inequality it could take several generations, but it has to start somewhere. Although it seems very challenging, we can take some hope from the efforts of people like Mohan Roy that change is possible – slowly, but surely.

## :: INTERVIEW ::

## A telephone interview with Dr. Shishir Chandra

Programme Manager, Sahayog, Lucknow

[ (By Feba Jacob, Editor, *Safar*) ]

**Safar-** *Could you please tell us about Sahayog's work with men and boys - its major initiatives?*

**Dr Shishir-** Sahayog is an NGO working since 1992 to promote gender equality and women's health from a human rights framework, by strengthening partnership-based advocacy. We try to focus on values like equity, equality, participation, transparency and effectiveness across all the projects and programmes associated with Sahayog.

Working with boys and men: The idea of working with men and boys came in 2001. Our team got together and discussed that if gender violence is an issue in community where men are the key actors, we need to work with men on this issue. Thus we decided to work with men to sensitize them about gender equality. We hosted a network called MASVAW – Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women. This network, formed in 2002, includes men who believe that violence against women is not just a women's issue but part of a larger societal issue of patriarchal norms. Anyone can be part of this diverse group, but the principle requirement for joining is that they do not commit violence, and that if something happens around them they will take a stand and initiative to stop it. This could be through writing, opposing directly, helping people file a FIR, doing some policy advocacy, or sensitizing people.

We also started a campaign - HISAAB – Hinsa Sehna Bandh - to demand accountability and stop tolerating violence. Many civil society organizations, activists and academics in Uttar Pradesh along with the Women's Group and women's organizations joined us for the campaign.

In earlier years it was in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, but later people from other parts joined us and we covered about 40 districts from 2002 to 2005.

**Safar-** *What are the key strategies adopted by your organization which can be considered as successful in dealing with this issue or in promoting gender equality or women's rights?*

**Dr Shishir-** As men are the perpetrators we need to work with them, and to do that we focus on their peer group. People are not violent at birth - violence is a learned behaviour, and it can be unlearned. We work with men and boys to change the violent behaviour. The upbringing and conditioning of the boys takes place in a patriarchal society where they are expected to be a bread winner or a leader. This patriarchal expectation not only affects women, but also men. So to work with men we need to challenge patriarchy, which is not an easy task. This whole idea is around the framework of human rights as gender equality is a human rights issue.

Strategies:

1. Training – Residential and periodic training are provided for key potential leaders.
2. Campaign activities - Organized to generate mass awareness.
3. Research to identify new areas of work.

We also have large networks and alliances. Greater acceptance can be created only by sensitization. Handouts and other literature are produced for the leaders as well as the community.

**Safar-** *Based on your experience of working with men and boys, what are the key reasons they engage in violence?*

**Dr Shishir-** Well, the main cause of violence is the

unequal distribution of power in our patriarchal society with a system of gender hierarchy which discriminates against women.

**Safar-** *Could you please share few examples of changes you've seen?*

**Dr Shishir-** Yes, we have many examples where people's lives were changed - where men started involving their wife in decision making. Men should understand the core issue and challenge the patriarchy. We need to work with men to develop greater sensitization.

After attending training, one person said he was shocked when the trainer asked him to assist his wife in the kitchen. But later he accepted that sharing and caring within the family and helping his wife with household chores changed their relationship, and they are happier now.

**Safar-** *What are the key challenges faced while working with men and boys? How did you overcome these?*

**Dr Shishir-** Acceptance by them is the key challenge. Most of the men think that they are privileged by birth. Talking to them about sharing those privileges may develop some kind of insecurity among them. Society also has preconceived expectations about men. Sometimes society is not willing to accept a changed man and his masculinity is questioned.

Through community dialogues, group sessions in colleges and schools, street demonstrations, focused community level campaigns, and other IEC activities these issues can be addressed to a great extent. Forums of men who believe in gender equality are also helpful.

**Safar-** *How effective are the existing policy and legal framework for the prevention of violence?*

**Dr Shishir-** The provisions of existing legislations are very strong to ensure prevention of violence,

but the effective implementation of the same is the biggest challenge. There should be adequate budgetary provisions for establishing implementation mechanisms at various levels. In addition, there should be regular monitoring of the implementation process.

**Safar-** *What are the ideal roles and responsibilities of NGOs in ensuring gender equality or responding to violence?*

**Dr Shishir-** Mainstreaming gender issues in every project is very important. We need to work with the men and boys in order to ensure gender equality and stop violence. Every organization should have a gender policy.

*Thank you so much Dr Shishir for your time and input.*



May the God of hope fill you  
with all joy and peace as you  
trust in him, so that you may  
overflow with hope by the  
power of the Holy Spirit.

*Romans 15:13*

*Blessed Christmas*  
—&—  
*Happy New Year*

# Domestic Violence and Advocacy

[ *Punita Kumar, Programme Manager, Advocacy* ]



Photo - Daniel Francis

**D**omestic violence is a topic of discussion which seems very biased, as we assume that it is perpetrated by men against women. 'Domestic violence in India includes any form of violence suffered by a person from a biological relative, but typically is the violence suffered by a woman by male members of her family or relatives.'

From a health perspective, studies have confirmed there is a broad relationship between violence and fertility. The study<sup>1</sup> suggests 'Domestic violence can be assumed to be associated with almost all social and behavioral aspects of fertility: efficacy, planning, self-esteem, husband-wife communication, structured objectives, knowledge of family planning methods, health seeking behavior, locus of control and value of the child. In the condition of empowerment women are more likely to share family concerns with their husband and are more likely to plan everything including family.' (A. K. Sharma & Niharika Tripathi, 2016). I would like to mention not only marital violence but also the episodes of violence faced by people with a disability, children, and the elderly in the family. These people are not usually considered in discussions about domestic violence. The types of violence that they face vary; for example, children

may face more physical and verbal abuse, and elderly people may face emotional and financial abuse.. The core issue is that women, children and the elderly are equally vulnerable to violence in their domestic place called 'home'. A home which provides us with security, love and respect has become a centre of violence for many of us.

I advocate the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act not only to protect women, but also the equally vulnerable elderly and children.

Another important point is that since the Domestic Violence Act the number of divorces have increased. Many of us see the Act as a reason for the increase in divorces. But another way to look at it is that increasing numbers of divorces can be considered as a positive indicator for women's empowerment. Today more women take a stand against domestic violence because the law allows them to demand their rights.

The prevalence of domestic violence is very high and reporting of cases is still very low. The number of cases actually processed under the Domestic Violence Act is very low.

Domestic violence not only breaks the body; it breaks the soul of the individual. It takes the respect and dignity of a human being. It cracks the home and breaks the society. Episodes of domestic violence leave the people involved with psychological distress for their entire life.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.academia.edu/7959171/Domestic\\_violence\\_and\\_its\\_impact\\_on\\_fertility\\_behavior\\_Evidence\\_from\\_Nationally\\_Representative\\_Household\\_Survey\\_Data\\_in\\_India](http://www.academia.edu/7959171/Domestic_violence_and_its_impact_on_fertility_behavior_Evidence_from_Nationally_Representative_Household_Survey_Data_in_India)

## HR Movements

### Appointments

[ *Hemlatha* ]

Ms Prerana Singh	Project Manager – Youth MH	Burans, Dehradun
Ms Edlin Lugun	GNM C H Nurse	Karuna, Duncan
Ms Victoria Rojalin Patra	ANM CH Nurse	CH Project, Duncan
Mr Santosh Kumar	Community Coordinator	CHDP – Fatehpur
Ms Shanti Lata Murmu	Community Coordinator	Madhipura CHD
Mr Anmol Abhishek Minz	Community Coordinator	Madhipura CHD
Mr Sunil Kumar Bagh	Project Officer	Prem Jyoti CHDP
Mr Ramswaroop Kushwaha	Community Coordinator	MCH Project, Chhatarpur
Mr Christopher Barla	Project Officer	TATA Project, BCH

### CHDP NEWS

- ★ Wheel chair distribution program was organized from 3rd to 7th October 2016, at Fatehpur in Partnership with Joni and Friends.
- ★ Mental Health training was organized at SHARE from 5th to 9th September 2016.

### NEXT ISSUE OF SAFAR

Safar Issue 24 is focusing on

#### Community Disaster preparedness

Please send contributions to Feba Jacob

([fjacob@eha-health.org](mailto:fjacob@eha-health.org)) by

**15th January, 2017**

Editor – Feba Jacob

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Proofreading – Jane Moutier

Translation – Aditi Singh

### Upcoming Events

#### Training on Community Mobilization

**Dates:** 23rd to 27th January 2017

**Venue:** Naveenta Retreat Centre, Delhi

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