Forum To Engage Men (FEM)

Working with Boys and Men for Gender Equality

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Forum To Engage Men (FEM):
Working with Boys and Men for Gender Equality

The Context

For all of us who have been working in different ways on issues of gender equality the one problem that constantly confronts us is of masculinities and the stiff resistance it offers to any change towards building an equitable and non-violent world. We know from our experience that efforts at dismantling the patriarchal world order will have to challenge the complex web of masculinities, which distributes patriarchal privileges to men. We also know that masculinity affects as well as reveals itself through the functioning of large social structures of governments, finance, religion as also institutions like schools, families, work sites and collectives. It is deeply implicated in the everyday lives and practices of boys/men and thereby affects girls/women too. And arguably masculinity is most visible and virulent in situations of various forms of violence - domestic or those that take place in the public sphere. Besides women who are subjected to certain specific forms of gender based violence, other boys and men too suffer and become targets of this expression of masculinity.

From our diverse efforts and work with communities we have learnt that it is difficult to challenge and change ideas of masculinities but not impossible. We have always had men from different social settings as allies in the work on gender equality. Many of us within this proposed network are men who have been deeply influenced by the ideas of the women’s movement and believe that as men we have a lot to gain from posing challenges to forms of power systems that provide us with privileges but in doing so also deprive us of the benefits that would accrue from a more equal world. In more recent times we have also learnt from the activism and politics of the gay/queer movements the important ways in which concepts as well as practices of masculinities are challenged by non heterosexual expressions of sexuality and why most forms of masculinities display a pathological hatred as well as fear of all other forms of sexual expression but heterosexuality.

We are a diverse group of individuals and organisations that share a vision of working with boys and men on issues of gender equality and violence. Professionally as well as personally we have come to a point where we feel that it is critical to intervene in the area of masculinities. We need to go beyond the most obvious and visible signs and symbols of masculinities to discover knowledge as well as ideas on how boys and men can become part of movements that carry messages and actions towards gender equality. If men can be part of so many fronts on which inequalities of different kinds are being challenged then there is no reason why they cannot be part of the ongoing struggle to partner with boys and men against violence and gender inequalities. When we talk to men and boys individually we often hear stories of the hierarchies that exist within the system of masculinities, we hear stories of violence, coercion and subjugation. We also hear stories of tenderness, yearnings and unhappiness. The challenge that lies in front of us is to make these voices audible and create the belief that change is possible. We have to demonstrate that the path towards equality and non-violence is the only way out of the coercive nature of masculinities.

We understand masculinities as a gender system that distributes patriarchal privileges to boys and men in a hierarchical order.
• It disprivileges girls and women as a group and utilises gender based violence to perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders.
• It is a policing system that ensures a hierarchical distribution of privileges based on class, caste, sexual orientation, cultural difference, physical appearance, etc.
• The fact that certain forms of masculinities tend to dominate by subjugating other forms can be clearly seen in the context of caste conflicts or in the marginalizing of men who may not be heterosexual.
• It is these inherent contradictions and conflicts within different forms of masculinities that, we understand, can provide the motivation for boys and men to stop being participant to practices that are based on violence and defence of inequities.
• We would like to contribute to efforts at involving boys and men in the struggle for gender equality by creating a platform that will enable all of us to discover strength in numbers and ideas.

We Propose

Many of us have been thinking, working and acting in our separate spheres on the issue of masculinities. We now feel that it is the time we come together to create a platform that can be a support base for our work, ideas, learning’s; and make more public the discussion on masculinities and of boys and men in support of gender equality and non violence.

We are proposing a process by which organisations, institutions and individuals in India who share the common concern of working with boys and men on issues of gender equality and non-violence have collaborated.

• This is not an organisation but a process that will be constantly evolved. The shape this process can take will be determined by the active participation and responsibility sharing of those who want to join the process.

• The guiding principles of the process are inclusiveness, diversity, co-operation and democratic functioning.
• The process will facilitate learning and sharing, resource and technical support, forging more partnerships and taking these ideas into the public domain.
• We expect this process to be a catalyst for independent initiatives in different parts of the country.

Who Can Join

Since this is not being proposed as an organisation, all those who agree with the principles expressed in this brochure can join this process:

• Organisations, institutions and individuals who adhere by the principles of gender equality and non violence and are willing to take a public stand on these principles may join this process.
• Our aim is to forge partnerships with diverse actors in the field of social activism. We look forward to collaborating with social justice movements.
• We are also interested in working with similar efforts or networks in the south Asian region as well as other parts of the world.

Processes carried out

• Contact with groups, organisations, movements and individuals with a proposal to join this process is ongoing.
• Four regional facilitation meetings successfully held in various locations (Assam, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu) throughout India to provide an opportunity for people to join this process through discussions. Several workshops were held on understanding masculinities and developing interventions on gender issues with boys and men in different settings.
• A national meeting was held to review the process and develop a future strategy to consolidate learning's from the regional discussions and plan for further regional and local level processes.

**Immediate Plans**

• Efforts are ongoing to collaborate with various social justice movements at the local and national level.
• Forging partnership with academic institutions, media, etc. to ensure sustained efforts on the overall issue of violence against women.

  • Promoting research in Universities and colleges on the issue of masculinities.
  • Developing, Sharing and Learning from good practices on working with boys and men to prevent gender based violence.
  • Developing a local resource pool of experts on Gender and Masculinities.
  • Resource mobilisation.

  *We invite you to join us in this movement for social change as:*
  - Become a partner
  - Be part of the campaign
  - Involve boys and men for gender equality

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Background

The enforcement of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (referred as PWDVA, hereafter) was a matter of great joy for the citizen’s in favour of justice and equality. The Act draws its rationale from Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India that allows the State to take special measures for women to remedy historical disadvantages and equalize relationships within the home. Recognising the fact that women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence because of their socially ordained position of inequality vis-à-vis men, the PWDVA guarantees substantive justice to women within international framework of human rights.

However, the benefits ensured within the Act remained unmet to a great extent due to administrative apathy and lack of awareness among people. Civil societies, NGOs and other concerned groups and individuals across the nation have been partnering to attend this problem. One outcome of such partnerships has been the ‘Jaago Re’ campaign in Uttarakhand. MASVAW Uttarakhand, with support from Oxfam India and under the secretariat of CARE (Center for Advancement of Rural Empowerment) organised this campaign to ensure better implementation of the Act in Uttarakhand. The two broad objectives of the campaign are:

- To increase awareness about the PWDVA, 2005, its significance, the accessibility mechanism and other issues related to its success;
- To increase government’s accountability for effective implementation of the PWDVA, 2005.

Methodology

The campaign was initiated extensively in all the six districts of Kumaon region with a strong strategic linkage with Garhwal. Around 200 villages were covered under the campaign by the 19 member networks and organizations viz. Saajha Manch, Mahila Samakhya, Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW), Mahila Adhikar Manch, Sabla Sangathan etc.

An RTI was filed by the group as a first action to acquire accurate information of the State’s status with regard to the implementation of the Act. The reply from the Department of Women and Child Welfare, Government of Uttarakhand clearly indicated that the state had barely got off the block. According to the data cited, 232 cases were filed in 11 districts in Uttarakhand. Out of these 185 cases were filed in Dehradun of which only 40 cases had reached logical conclusions. The rest 10 districts had registered a total of 47 cases, of which only 8 had been resolved. Keeping in mind this information, the campaign was launched on 25th November 2008, with a broad vision to have an effective 16 Days of Activism Campaign.

Strategies

- Awareness/sensitisation on the Act, various issues of VAW and responsibilities of various government departments with regard to the same.
- Partnerships with civil societies, NGOs, cultural groups, Government authorities, different media and responsible individuals.
- Support to survivors and others for taking action in situations of violence;
- Dialogues with government and non-government actors on different aspects of the Act and its implementation/non-implementation.
Activities

- **District dialogues** with the district magistrates, police, bar associations, protection officers along with other active citizens, members of organizations, academicians, media persons, SHG members, workers’ groups, women’s groups etc. explaining various segments of the Act and its implementation, the hindrances and possibilities and so on.

- **Padyatras** (rally) in villages/towns for motivating people to break the silence around domestic violence and supporting survivors of violence to come forward and take action.

- **Community meetings** on issues of VAW, the PWDVA and other related issues.

- **Wall writings/paintings**, distribution of leaflets, posters etc. on VAW, the PWDVA and so on.

- **Street plays, puppet shows, film shows** focusing on various aspects of VAW and the PWDVA.

- **Work with school students and NCC cadets** for awareness building and sensitisation.

Key Achievements

- Increasing number of cases being filed with more number of women reporting abuses.

- The issue has become much more alive; demands for more work are being made from different NGOs and individuals including Panchayat members.

- Increasing participation of women in different activities of the Campaign.

- Media and police are also identifying and sharing many cases with Protection Officers.

- In some areas Health department has started giving information to ASHA/ Anganwadi workers on the Act and other related issues.

- In Champavat district, the CMO has issued a circular to all the medical officers ordering them to provide treatment to the survivors free of cost and inform police and other relevant groups immediately.

- In many districts, the magistrate who is officially the chief of the monitoring committee as provisioned under the Act, were not aware of any such committee. No district reported of any committee action. Hence, the district dialogues resulted in district officials taking up these matters with a serious note. In Champavat, a district committee was immediately called upon by the magistrate, which marked a success of the same.

- The combination of Government and civil society activities and interventions, the media coverage via providing them relevant stories, interviews and editorial pronouncements contributed to a heightened awareness of the issues related to violence and the importance of the Act.

- Relationships and network with state ministries and organizations from other states have been developed.

- Bar associations started giving information to people in counseling meetings.

Challenges

Some major challenges identified during and after the campaign are as follows-

- An acute need for budgetary allocation and infrastructure development.

- No systematic approach developed so far by the government in Uttarakhand to implement the PWDVA. This increases complexity in handling some of the tasks.

- Lack of interest among most of the people sitting in State administration.

- The issue of domestic violence has remained as a personal problem to many, thus affecting people’s participation.

- Patriarchy is still dominant at all levels of the society.

- Common people lack in information/actual information about the Act.
Sustainability

The campaign has been getting recognition from various sections of people. Especially the participation of women in increasing number is seen as a major step towards sustainability.

‘Jaago Re’ is now being taken forward by most of the women’s movements in Uttarakhand.

The platform of dialogue generated between the organizations and State actors is taking a shape of link between the government and the people.

It makes way for constant review of the Act and its work and makes the implementing authorities more accountable for further progress.

Review meetings are conducted with Campaign Coordinators and representatives of different partner organizations. These are primarily intended with identifying the hindrances and possibilities of the Campaign and coming out with new options wherever necessary.
The 16-days activism refers to the large campaign on the PWDVA (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence) 2005, aimed at ensuring effective work of the Act in dealing with the issue of domestic violence. In Maharashtra the campaign was planned in a meeting of FEM (Forum to Engage Men) members in the State in September 2008 following a consultation facilitated by FEM in Pune in August 2008. The primary objective of the campaign in Maharashtra was to reach out to men for wide spread awareness about the PWDVA 2005.

Methodology

A core group was formed to coordinate the campaign and ensure its wider outreach and connect with various ongoing social movements. Thereafter a five-days training on gender, men, masculinities and PWDVA was organised in Maharashtra. Some Audio Visual materials were developed with the aim to engage men and boys.

Some key milestones:

- 16 Days of Activism campaign from 25 Nov to 10 December 2008 with an aim to reach out to men and youth in Maharashtra;
- Campaign review meeting in Nagpur in January 2009 which came out with a two point agenda being developed; it focused on 1st - Personal change and 2nd - Reaching out to more men in Maharashtra;
- Review meeting planned in Beed in June 2009.

The campaign is active in 11 districts (in western Maharashtra, Marathwada, Vidarbha and Konkan regions of Maharashtra) including Pune, Satara, Nagpur, Ratnagiri, Beed, Parabhani, Osmanabad, Amravati, Chandrapur, Solapur and Gadchiroli. Various activities to reach out to men to address issues linked with PWDVA, 2005 are being carried out in more than 500 villages and towns of Maharashtra by over 20 participating organisations.

Following are some of the activities:

- Public meetings in villages to address men and raise some important discussions on the notions of masculinities.
- Dialogues with Protection Officers appointed under the PWDVA, 2005.
- Awareness/sensitisation activities through street plays, rallies, road shows, lectures, small meetings with men and other cultural activities.
- Dissemination of communication materials to different stakeholders and common people.
- Programmes with schools and colleges on awareness/sensitisation.
- Screening of documentary films and discussions.
- Display of women painters’ painting in public spaces and road shows
- Seminars and policy dialogue with concerned government offices including district and block level Women and Child Development (WCD) departments.

Campaign materials developed:

Poster 1 - Addressing issues of Violence against women and delivering a message that says ‘Life free of violence is women’s Human Right.’

Poster 2 - Description of PWDVA in simple and effective language.
Sticker 1 and 2: Messages about PWDVA to raise awareness among the community members.

Handbill: Background of 16-days activism, Violence Against Women and messages to address men and masculinity as integral component to prevent gender based violence.

FEM has played active role in initiating the process, while SAMYAK actively facilitated the process and coordinated orientation and training programme with the partners, and was involved in development and dissemination of communication materials. The entire process is being facilitated with the help of Swissaid India. MASUM and Nari Samata Manch were the two organisations that were involved actively in training programme and development of communication materials.

Challenges

- **Low response from Protection Officers** - The protection officers, being from the Revenue Department were already busy with other jobs and it was tough to get time with them. Furthermore, the fact that they all were males and were not well-informed about the Act and its importance also limited their cooperation in the whole process.

- **Low participation of men in community programmes** - The participation of men other than Dalit men was very low in different programmes undertaken in communities.

- There was also the need for adequate training and sensitisation of male facilitators on issues of masculinity and gender equality.

Achievements

- Out reach to more than 100 villages;
- Various audio visual materials have been developed and distributed to different stakeholders and general public as well;
- Wide awareness developed on the PWDVA.

Sustainability

FEM partners in Maharashtra have taken the responsibility both collectively as well as individually to take the issue forward.
Men’s Action for Stopping Violence against Women (MASVAW) was initiated in the year 2002 as a statewide movement in Uttar Pradesh as a campaign with men and boys to promote gender equality, and advocate for equal rights and a violence free world for women. The men involved in this campaign were mostly the youth who since then have been tirelessly working to achieve gender equality and promote volunteerism in order to sensitize people on the overall issue of violence against women.

In the year 2005, a massive campaign titled, “Chuppi Todo Hinsa Roko” (Break Silence Stop Violence) against violence was launched in 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh as a part of 16 days of activism campaign. This campaign was prepared 6 months in advance and a repute newspaper published the status of women in 10 districts of the state with a strong proof of data. This data was widely used as a foundation in this campaign to make people aware of the gruesome facts on the status of women and through this campaign MASVAW widely made it accepted among people, human rights activists, and other women’s movements that this issue is not restricted to women, but is an issue of men too. Men too, often seen as perpetrators of VAW have an inevitable role to play in the prevention of gender based violence.

Activities with the Media

During the campaign, media was actively involved and its role discussed that media is an important and active pillar highlighting the abuse and violence against women. Media has an inevitable role to play in re-imposing gender equality and highlighting various issues of violence against women and other men. The role of media was very prominent in Uttar Pradesh and it was found that five leading Hindi dailies were widely circulated and read in various interior villages of the region. Every newspaper has two pages allocated for each district which highlights the various local issues in the region. Every district has its own ‘Editorial Desk’ which works on identifying and reporting the important issues that needs to be prioritized and given a wider coverage on the two designated pages. The process of reporting is generally entrusted with the 2, 3 reporters at the Block level who mostly are the agents selling newspapers. Most of the reporters write articles are report with out monetary rewards. They mostly earn their living by getting commission from selling of newspapers and through the commissions earned by getting advertisements. No expenditure is incurred on such reporters by the organization and it’s on their news that the Block Level Editors edit the news and send it for further publication. Major portion of the article gets cut at this level and hence, the actual picture in terms of plight of women’s condition is unseen and remains far from the reality.

Few members of MASVAW were professionally involved with the media, and it is they who identified the need of working with this class. It was the MASVAW group which saw media as an important class/group and worked to strengthen it from a gender sensitive perspective. Most of the published articles, while reporting on violence against women lacked a sensitive approach and thus the need were felt by the MASVAW to engage media in its initiatives so as to ensure a sensitive approach while addressing issues of grave concern on VAW. Looking at the wider coverage, reach and readership MASVAW identified and called for Media, as one of its strategic partners in achieving gender equality and preventing gender based violence. Raising the potential of media as a powerful stakeholder was one of the major concerns of MASVAW.
**Strategies/ Activities**

In the year 2005, a 3 day workshop on ‘Gender and Media’ was organized in Lucknow with more than 30 media persons from more than 10 districts of the state. In implementing the strategies for the media, a resource pool of experienced media persons was constituted in the workshop. It was unanimously decided in the meeting that the perspective building of the media on gender issues needed to be done and also while reporting cases; the overall aspect of human rights had to be kept in mind.

Experienced and gender sensitive media persons, and academicians were identified and promoted as the resource persons to carry the work forward. In the workshop, experienced people from media and the activist women from women’s movement were also involved as the resource persons. The workshop was participatory in nature with sessions on group discussions, films, role play, and practice exercises. To raise the analytical skills and to look at the aspect of reporting, several newspaper cutting (with articles on the social issues, especially on violence against women) from leading and local dailies were used in the workshop. Participants at the workshop took an oath that while reporting an incident, they will analyse their articles and not make it sensational and would also ensure that, re-traumatisation of the survivor of violence doesn’t happen. The participants also agreed in principle to follow the principles of human rights while reporting in the newspapers and would also advocate for providing relief and justice to the survivors of violence.

At the closure of the workshop, the ‘personal change plan’ was framed for the participants to look at the change from the personal as well as professional/ public front. The participants from the respective districts took a responsibility to have another meetings/ workshops at the district level with the local reporters and sensitize them on the overall issue of fair and sensitive reporting on violence against women. These meetings were continuously held in the respective 10 districts with more than 30-40 Journalists and local reporters. As a follow-up, the MASVAW secretariat also facilitated in calling and arranging resource persons.

In the second year of its intervention with media, workshops were held with a new batch of media persons. The strategy of decentralization was adopted by MASVAW and the workshops were held in 3- 4 regions where journalists and reporters from 4- 5 districts are invited as participants for 2 to 3 days workshop. As a strategy, the districts covered by MASVAW in its campaign ensure that media persons in the region are associated with the campaign and enhance their skills through sensitization workshops.

**Achievements**

This campaign with media persons was successful in achieving its objective to a certain extent. The region in which, MASVAW has initiated this campaign rigorously, clearly depicts the sensitive reporting and a wider coverage to the issues of violence against women with sensitivity. Newspaper articles and reports in the local dailies are much more refined now. There has been an effective and sensitive reporting mechanism at the local level. There are a few reporters who used to send a one- time article or report from the local level, but after attending MASVAW workshop they haven’t stopped since then and are actively engaged in fair reporting of the cases of violence against women. They are also participating in the follow-up of articles related to violence against women in other newspapers and ensure that the speedy judicial probe begins in such cases. There has been remarkable change in the attitudes of the media persons. One’s who just thought of themselves as newspaper agents or as
advertisement seekers, now think of themselves as human rights activists who have this responsibility of protecting and advocating human rights. Gradually there are a lot of media persons who have been actively involved in annual campaigns of MASVAW. They are now actively advocating for gender equality and protection of human rights in the respective areas. There have been few reporters and journalists who have benefited individually and professionally from the campaign. In a two way process of benefiting each other, on the one hand MASVAW campaign has assisted media persons in achieving the responsibilities/appointments at the district level as a ‘Desk Editors’; and on the other the campaign got a wider acceptability and presence among media.

Challenges

There are some challenges which confront the media now a day. Due to the growing professionalism, newspapers face commercial competition from each other. Also, newspapers are dominated by an ideology and so, at times trainings/skill building workshops/campaigns help in getting a wider circulation of the newspapers but expecting a positive change under the influence of the west remains a distant reality to achieve. Few of the newspapers refuse to publish an article/report an incident under political pressure from the local political parties and this tends to bring a setback/frustration to the individual reporter. Reporters who don’t have a formal appointment with the newspapers are available as participants for the workshops but the one’s who have a formal job find it difficult while seeking permission from their seniors to be part of such workshops designed for them. Senior editors have still not been able to recognize the positive affects of such workshops conducted by MASVAW or perhaps they don’t want to bring a positive change in the existing structure. At the initiation of the campaign it was well thought that the ‘Patrakar Sangh’ (Reporters Collective / Press Club) at various levels has enough resources and that might be used for raising the capacities of individual reporters in enhancement of their skills. But this hardly happens and also restricts the scope of learning for an individual reporter. There is a domination of one or the other political party on all the newspapers and so, MASVAW members from media tried to have a positive dialogue with them and bring a change in the overall outlook. But, this couldn’t happen as of now. Newspaper owners haven’t been interested in instructing their editors and reporters on the overall issue of violence against women and on sensitive reporting. Media has few sensitive men who can be used as a resource to sensitisise other young entrants to the field of print media. Even continuous follow-ups are a big challenge confronting MASVAW activities.

Future Course Of Action

Despite of several challenges confronting MASVAW regularly, efforts haven’t been withdrawn. Reporters associated to MASVAW independently registered a newspaper titled, “Lok Abhyuday” and publish it monthly for circulation. Since this is an initiative of the MASVAW movement its coverage and circulation is limited and the reporters are none other than the sensitised media persons from MASVAW.

Every year, new media persons are trained by the experienced MASVAW members on issues of reporting on violence against women. Due weightage is given on the enhancement of skills of the new entrants to the print media. Also, the students from the Journalism and Mass Communication Institute are placed in MASVAW Secretariat for two days each in a week. They assist in publication of “Lok Abhyuday”, the monthly newspaper. As a result of MASVAW interventions and its positive change, various private institutes demand a session on the issues of Gender Equality, Preventing Gender
Based Violence, and Human Rights from the MASVAW Secretariat. Few senior media persons are also on the Advisory Board of MASVAW. The collective efforts from sensitised media persons and other members associated with MASVAW ensure that the work with common people and institutions keep going. The wholehearted effort from MASVAW indeed shows a ‘ray of hope’ and there is no doubt that we will soon be having gender sensitive media persons who will ensure speedy trials and justice for the survivors of violence, follow-ups and put concrete efforts to bring violence against women to an end.
Background
The work with youth in the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth was initiated by Dr. Sanjay, Reader, Department of Social Work who is also an active member of MASVAW (Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women) since 2003. The work of involving youth and students in stopping violence against women in the university began with a poster making competition and a seminar on gender equality. The response of the students to the programme prompted Dr. Sanjay to further increase his efforts of involving youth, especially boys on the issue of stopping violence against women.

Interventions
In the university following the poster competition and seminar a programme titled- ‘Kaisa ho Campus Apna?’ was initiated in the University. The students of the Fine Arts Department painted posters depicting the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. The posters were developed to build the sensitivities in the mindset of youth, men and boys, on the overall issue of violence against women. The posters also motivated them to be the ‘agents of change’. Similarly, Nukkad Natakash (street plays) were presented and performed on achieving gender equality, and sensitizing youths on the issues of gender based violence.

Apart from the students of his department, Dr. Sanjay is constantly in touch with the students from the departments of Law, Education, and Fine Arts. He conducts weekly and fortnightly Focussed Group Discussions (FGDs) on gender sensitisation, violence against women, masculinity, sexuality and their linkages with Gender Based Violence apart from Drug Addiction, Alcoholism, Domestic Violence, etc. These activities have been happening on a regular basis for now over a year.

Programmes that Dr. Sanjay organises regularly in the university and the community in Varanasi every year are:

- Poster competitions and exhibitions on the theme of engaging men and youth to achieve gender equality and in creating a safe and supportive environment for women
- Training programme on masculinity and its interlinkages with violence against women using films
- Gender sensitisation trainings programmes with Media persons, Master of Social Work students, Law students, etc.

Apart from his interaction with the students and community in Varanasi, Dr. Sanjay has started raising the issue of Gender related concerns in Master of Social Work curriculum of different Universities and in the due course because of his persistent efforts a major course on ‘Gender, School and Society’ was launched in Faculty of Education, Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Moreover, number of Ph-D and Master level dissertations is now being undertaken on gender related issues. This has induced a lot of research work on the issues of masculinities and on engaging men and boys to achieve gender equality.

Dr. Sanjay in the past couple of years has also singularly tried to push the issue of involving boys and men in stopping violence against women with other university and colleges. Owing to his functioning as a teacher in the university, he often has to visit other colleges for conducting examinations or other such matters. In every occasion he tries to look for
possible people who could carry forward the work with the students and teachers.

**Challenges**

The ongoing efforts have introduced a remarkable change at various levels; however, there are a lot of challenges that have appeared time and again and act as hindrance to the over-all efforts.

### 1. Administrative challenges

He got a show cause notice from the University authorities. He was even stopped to carry on these activities in the campus and demands from his fellow colleagues grew to put these efforts focussed on ending violence against women to an end. It is quite evident that the overall structured academic syllabi and the formal course curriculum restricts the scope of creativity. He has initiated gender sensitization concerns through NSS, as its Programme Co-ordinator and has organised Gender Trainings in 10 days camps of the NSS. He goes on further to say that, he has called for other feminist teachers/ academicians to talk on these issues and address the issue of violence against women by incorporating their views and ideas in order to share and learn from their experiences but hasn’t got a favourable response.

### 2. Personal Challenges

Being a male it’s difficult to address such issues aimed at addressing root causes of violence against women in a traditional setting. At times, people doubt his intentions and character, as to why being a male, he is keen to work on the issue of sensitising youth and men on gender based violence. People think that Dr. Sanjay wants to be surrounded by girls and women and therefore he works on this issue. This was very shocking for him and he had to give extra effort to bring other men and boys to his viewpoint.

### 3. Issues of Volunteers

There are students who leave after completion of their two years course and then he has to initiate on a new note to recruit new volunteers. This consumes a lot of time and energy. On the other hand, there are few students who see this as a way to come around girls, and so, they come and participate in these programmes.

### 4. Ideological challenges

A person has to face a lot of ideological challenges in this battle to achieve Gender Equality and sensitise and engage men and youth. Being a man it was initially difficult for Dr. Sanjay, yet because of his efforts has seen a ray of hope in these youth.

**Conclusion**

As a result of his persistent efforts, cases of eve teasing/ molestation on the campus have reduced because of the wholehearted efforts of the sensitised youth. The Youth have been sensitised and their attitudes have changed a lot. He holds lot of discussion on issues of sexuality, violence and gender equality with his students which even help them in their future while working in various development sector organisations on gender issues. The students keep sharing with him, that they have never seen a single teacher who has given them time and such learning. This inspires Dr. Sanjay to work with more commitment. An environment created by engaging men and boys at any of the levels acts as a tool to combat gender based violence and this is quite evident from the experiences shared by Dr. Sanjay. He wishes to have a meeting of the ex-students of the department and see, the changes in their personal lives and how they are dealing with their responsibilities in their respective family settings with a view to have a proper monitoring of his initiatives.
Working with school and college youth by engaging them in the overall process of achieving gender equality
A case of school intervention in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Background/ Context

Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) has been working relentlessly to achieve gender equality with the active involvement of men and boys at the local/community level in various parts of Uttar Pradesh. MASVAW has over the years been working in 35 districts of the state. One of the integral components of MASVAW is working with youth in schools and colleges of its intervention areas. In due course MASVAW has initiated a lot of action aimed at ending GBV.

An incident of molestation, rape and brutality on a schoolgirl named Payal promoted MASVAW to start an intervention programme with youth in schools. She was coming out of a coaching institute when she was abducted, raped and brutally killed by a man within 50 meters from her residence. The culprit after mercilessly burning her dead body, left from the site. In the overall incidence, everyone was keen to know the response of the school authorities where Payal was a student. The school’s (both students and authorities) response was horrible on the over-all incidence that triggered massive unrest among the public and MASVAW. The school authorities weren’t worried and not even concerned at the fall out of the incident. This insensitive reaction and response from people on such an act of violence led to MASVAW’s school intervention programme. The programme titled ‘Parivartan programme for Youth’ was initiated with 15 schools in Lucknow.

Activities/ Methodology

The work with students in schools started with first convincing the teachers and the students about the existence of violence as they were reluctant to accept the fact that violence existed in their environment as well. MASVAW then developed a curriculum for working with the schools and started working with 5 schools initially. MASVAW negotiated with the school authorities for conducting classes with the students from standard 9 onwards as this would be the group of students to leave school and go to colleges and universities.

They created a ‘Media Clipping Chart’ on the incidents depicting violence on women, ranging from domestic violence, dowry deaths, molestation, etc. This led the school’s youth to think on, how to stop such incidents, and who is exactly responsible? Can they as a group do something about such incidents happening daily around them? MASVAW team is now working with Jubilee hall, a hostel for class XII students who are on the verge of going for their further studies to schools and colleges.

As a strategy, MASVAW also included teachers in the over-all efforts to achieve gender equality. This was done with an aim to have few teachers as role models who would in turn take the work further. There were instances where few people and teachers discouraged MASVAW’s initiatives/intentions by saying such activity were of very little use to these teachers. Regular meetings with teachers on Gender Issues were conducted. MASVAW believes that teachers as role models have a larger role to play in conducting of workshops with the youth in schools/colleges.

Working with school youth was important because there were many such incidents in which girls had reported abuse by teachers and other male students. This led MASVAW to feel
the need to make a friendly and sensitive environment in school/college campuses through a sensitive approach.

**Observation/ Changes/ Outcomes/ Impact**

After 2006, due to MASVAW’s constant effort, positive response’s from Boys and Youth is being observed in the locality. There were certain ‘so-called’ bad image boys who came to MASVAW and talked and recognized its efforts; and are now working with MASVAW as volunteers. These boys have formed a group called “Changers” with a belief in; first change self and then change others. The group aims to stop the incidence of abuse, violence against girls in schools, and colleges, etc. Apart from these positive outcomes MASVAW’s efforts have shown a sensitive campus through Road SHOWS in these schools, groups. MASVAW identified boys, who would stand in front of girl’s schools after school hours and abuse girls. MASVAW then, through its posters, on stopping violence against women tried to target these group of boys. Regular exhibitions through road shows were initiated, and one such exhibition was showed at the railway station in Lucknow. MASVAW kept suggestion boxes on prominent locations in the district asking for people and youth’s suggestions and comments on the campaigns/activities. MASVAW developed an Inland letter saying, “Yes, I am concerned about rising incidents of Violence against women and girls”. As learning experience, MASVAW advocates that the sooner the better to start with young boys and girls in achieving gender equality. It’s comparatively easier to sensitize these young minds. To carry on with another activity towards Children’s rights, MASVAW organized a peaceful march on NITHARI CASE (Case of child sexual abuse at a village called Nithari in Noida, UP) with more than 100 youth. MASVAW believes, if youth get a proper space and context, they can do a lot of activities towards eliminating GBV and creating a supportive environment for themselves.

**Conclusion**

Working with youth is an integral aspect of minimizing the incidents of violence against women. Regular campaigns, Road Shows, Media Clippings, and other sensitization programme have been found to be effective in dealing with cases of abuse. As a strategy, teacher’s role is very crucial in sensitizing the young minds. Community mobilization and community driven initiatives have a wider outreach and acceptance among local people. Regular follow-ups with youth, teachers and various groups is a must to keep a record of activities and its impact on people. Also, these acts assist in rapport-building and in keeping long terms goals of achieving gender equality alive. Having collaborative efforts with Law Colleges, Media Schools, Fine Arts Departments of various Universities and colleges would assist in further replication of MASVAW goals, and more so in involving men and youth to end a culture of existing gender discrimination.
HUMSAFAR - A Support Center for Women in Crisis

Background

Information culled from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and other sources indicate that Uttar Pradesh ranks first in the ratings of recorded crimes against women in India. Among the survivors very few have been able to seek help for the violence. Those who try with legal means are also left with uncertainties or even more harassment.

In such a situation, HUMSAFAR, a support centre for women in crisis was started in Lucknow in 2003. Managed by a group of volunteer individuals and organizations, the primary concern of Humsafar has been to work for justice, empowerment, rehabilitation and protection of women survivors of gender based violence, along with raising social awareness regarding gender based violence. HUMSAFAR works in very close collaboration with MASVAW who provide them with inputs in forming the community response groups. The community response groups comprises of men and youth from the community who respond to VAW cases. They also provide the social support group for the survivors. This group also acts a pressure group within the community that makes the community realize the need to respond to VAW cases.

Methodology/Main Activities

Humsafar has been providing the following services in gender based violence/discrimination-

- **Casework**
  - Providing information on VAW
  - Counseling
  - Social mediation and negotiation with family
  - Police report/ facilitate filing of FIR
  - Medical support for treatment and certification
  - Legal support through legal clinic
  - Rescue
  - Protection/shelter in emergency
  - Supporting in economic rehabilitation
  - Being independent witnesses for women exercising their choices in marriage/partnerships

- **PEACE** - (Public Education Advocacy through Community Extension)
  - Public education campaign -developing neighborhood watch committees in communities.
  - Working with educational institutions - schools, colleges and universities.
  - Identifying volunteers for Citizen Support Group.
  - Mobilising public opinion on Cases of VAW.

- **Friend Support group**- Volunteers from students and other youths, professionals from various disciplines, housewives and others are brought together in a group called ‘MITRAMANDALI’ to ensure support to women facing violence.

- **Networking**- with organisations, partners of national networks etc.

Key Achievements

Humsafar has attended around 484 registered cases till now while telephone counselling has been provided to many more. It has helped many victims of rape, other sexual abuses, domestic violence, marital disturbances and other severe forms of human rights violation through rehabilitation, legal support and protected many others from further violence. Many challenging cases of domestic violence, police harassment, special marriage etc. have been dealt with successfully.
HUMSAFAR has also been actively part of campaigns on prevention of domestic violence in partnership with many civil society groups, trade unions etc. It has been working closely with MASVAW (Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women) and international network AMAN, Global Voices for Peace in Homes for promoting women’s human rights. HUMSAFAR partnered with networks and women’s organizations across the state to carry out an intensive campaign “Ab To Jaago” on the implementation of the new law on Domestic Violence. It has also been conducting various sessions on VAW and PWDVA with govt. and private hospitals in the state.

Main Challenges

i) Distance- Sometimes the locations of the cases are too far or remote for the centre to ensure rapid intervention and support. Since they don’t have their response centres in those areas, the responses for the cases are delayed.

ii) Timing- The time frame for HUMSAFAR’s crisis intervention is usually not fixed; sometimes they need to visit the spots or meet the victims at night. In such situations it becomes very difficult for the centre to respond and therefore they have started developing the youth response group in the communities.

Sustainability

Along with providing immediate services to the victims the Centre keeps constant watch on the situations. Network and collaboration are maintained with other relevant movements, organisations, voluntary groups and individuals to develop a culture against violence and discriminations against women. The activities and strategies are discussed with the partners and others and reviewed for greater effectiveness. Some of HUMSAFAR’s plans for near future include:

- Networking with some govt. women’s associations Railway board etc.
- Liaison with Media.
- Building up strong network in rural areas/outskirts.
- Organising self defense trainings for girls and women in educational institutions.
- Formation of more male youth groups in communities for working at night with survivors.

Conclusion

In a state of wide spread and unattended VAW, HUMSAFAR has remained as a major hope for many in Uttar Pradesh. Its support for women in crisis could be continued more meaningfully through establishing more sub-centers in different corners of the state. A wider and stronger collaboration and coordination with various other movements/organisations is also expected to yield better work and coverage. Besides, extensive utilisation of media, especially for ensuring accountability of government agencies and creating public opinion is a must.
Background

The issue of domestic violence in India has remained a major threat to women's security and wellbeing at home. It was the enforcement of the PWDVA in 2005 that brought much hope for those who have been dreaming of finding a practical solution to the problem. However, like many other laws in our country the success of PWDVA has also been hampered due to limited public opinion and awareness about it. The status of the Act remained far from being effective in a place like Uttar Pradesh where domestic violence against women has been a widespread phenomenon. Civil societies, NGOs and other groups have been making constant efforts to meet this challenge through promoting awareness about the Act and dealing with different aspects of its implementation. ‘Ab To Jaago’ campaign has been one such huge effort and refers to the sixteen days of extensive activism organised in U.P. under the partnership of organizations and networks across the state for better work of the PWDVA, 2005. The Campaign was launched with the following broad objectives-

- create awareness about PWDVA, 2005 at a larger level;
- facilitate dialogue on PWDVA, 2005 at the district level; and
- make the government accountable for implementing this Act.

Methodology

Strategies- The campaign was planned to create an extent of awareness, sensitivity and discussion at different levels that combines people’s participation and government’s accountability for effective implementation of the Act. Accordingly, people from different sections of the society were targeted through mass media and other forms of communication. Apart from conducting awareness and sensitisation programmes for people at all levels, dialogues were conducted with citizen’s groups, bureaucrats, police, public prosecutors, protection officers, media people and others to discuss different functional aspects of the Act including the factors behind its implementation/non-implementation. Partnership with different groups and organizations and potential individuals have been emphasized to increase coverage and ensure a coordinated and sustained effort.

Activities- Carried out extensively in 41 districts of U.P. the Campaign saw a large variety of activities which are summarized below-

- Dialogues with teachers, students, media persons, police, women and others focusing on importance of the law and factors determining its implementation.
- Lawyers’ meeting- Meetings were held with lawyers including retired and working judges, activists and others to discuss the legal issues surrounding proper implementation of the Act, especially role of advocates and other legal experts in ensuring proper usage of the Act. The issues of infrastructural limitations, role of Protection Officers, myths and misconceptions about the DV Act were also discussed.
- Doctors’ Dialogue- Dialogues with doctors and medical students were held to discuss the Act while focusing on domestic violence as a major health issue.
• Rallies, candle march, street plays, puppet shows were held in the target areas.
• Community meetings were held in rural and urban communities.
• Wall writing/painting, distribution of pamphlets and posters on VAW and PWDVA to people at different places including zoo going crowds, theatre crowds, crowd at market places and so on
• Poster competitions, speech competitions among students.
• Theatre/Film festivals displaying different aspects of VAW and related issues.
• Talk show on FM Rainbow - A talk show on All India Radio was organized with Risha Sayeed, a feminist lawyer, highlighting different aspects of the law for listeners. Several people phoned in with questions and received explanations on the Act including myths about the same. Some women and men also phoned in and discussed their own problems.
• Press Conferences with reporters from major news papers focusing on various features of the Act and issues of domestic violence.
• Signature campaign for supporting the Act.

Achievements

• Out reach to 41 districts of Uttar Pradesh and exposure to the existing situations.
• Relationship with many organizations, networks, movements, social activists and so on working on the issue of VAW at different levels.
• The issue of domestic violence has been established at different levels and the Act has got publicised much at grass root level. Many new organisations and cultural groups have been involved with the issue of domestic violence and many more are seeking training materials on the campaign.
• Communication and coordination developed with district administrations, different government departments, PRIs etc. An increased cooperation and contribution from these departments is also seen in the post-campaign period.
• The platform to work on issues of VAW has been developed in schools, colleges and universities.
• The district dialogues have resulted in good understanding of the Act among various government actors; it also helped in rapid and proper treatment of the cases.
• Many cases have come out during the campaign; the channels/ mechanisms for reporting the cases have been developed at different levels.
• Some of the campaign activities have been added to different national and international movements.

Challenges

• Due to limited monetary resources the campaign had to limit its plans in many situations.
• Sometimes it was not easy to receive cooperation from government officers. Moreover the administrative complexities also caused delay in performing some of the campaign activities.
• Many of the government actors like Protection officers, police and many service providers at district level didn’t have adequate orientation about the Act and their own role in its implementation.
• In some areas it was difficult to get active participation of media due to absence of good relationship.
• In a few areas where participation of women and women’s groups was very less men’s effort seemed to be inadequate in meeting the campaign objectives.
• Protection officers were already busy with some other job and could not give much time.

Sustainability

The partnerships developed and sustained through the campaign have been contributing in
different ways towards a more active and wider treatment of the campaign objectives. Because of the establishment of the issue of VAW in many new areas and the awareness on the PWDVA, many new organisations have added activities on the same line with their regular programmes.

The initiatives taken involving teachers, students and authorities in schools and colleges/universities have contributed to a culture where the issues are being discussed and treated with actions.

The relationships and communication channels developed with different government departments and officials are also expected to facilitate effective handling of the issues in future. Efforts are also taken to maintain regular involvement of media in reporting and attending cases of violence as well as sustaining other campaign objectives.
Involving Men in the Campaign to Stop the Declining Sex Ratio in Orissa, India

Background

Bhavani Nayak has been working on issues of gender inequality in and around Bhubaneswar (Orissa). He has been associated with MASVAW since November 2008. His efforts in the past led him to think that Gender equality can only be achieved once boys and men are engaged in the over-all effort to end GBV. Orissa has seen a sharp decline in the sex ratio in the city and adjoining areas, though the tribal population in these areas used to have a comparatively better sex ratio. This led Bhavani and his team to think of working out a strategy to deal with the declining sex ratio. They realised that it was essential to involve men in the process, so that the men also took the responsibility of changing the skewed sex ratio.

At the Institute for Social development, he started his work with women issues since the Orissa Cyclone in 1999. The networks he and his organisation are associated now is Swadhikaar Forum which is a forum comprising of organisations that run shelter and short stay homes for women and children. There are a total of 42 NGOs who run short stay and shelter homes. They work on Legal aid training, research and documentation of the activities focussed on ending discrimination against women.

The existing culture and tradition in the local communities itself posed a challenge for Bhavani in his work. Earlier, when Bhavani and his team tried getting in touch with government officials on the alarming issue of declining sex ratio, they were hardly given a chance to talk. It is only when they got dumps of foetuses in Bhubaneswar that the government acknowledged the issue following which the monitoring part of the overall issue was given to Institute for Social Development.

Challenges

The hostile attitude of the government officials posed a lot of problems for the Institute for Social Development. They had to mobilise a lot of resources on their own. Even advocating for such a cause wasn’t easy alone and so they formed a network called Swadhikar Forum. Keeping to the objective within a large network is a constant challenge that they face regularly.

Methodology

After tying up with MASVAW, a campaign titled, “Naye Mard ki nayi Soch” was launched from November 2008 in Bhubaneswar and adjoining areas on the issue of involving men in reversing the declining sex- ratio. They organised a capacity building programme with various stakeholders. A one-day orientation meet was held in Bhubaneswar. The meet saw people discussing challenges faced by men at the local level, like low literacy, judiciary and police’s poor response, gender related policy and programme of the government not being implemented properly. The over- all data showed the alarming decline in the sex- ratio, because of the above stated social indicators. This led the forum to think that it were mostly men who need to be sensitised in this over- all process of ending son- preference, sex selective abortions, etc.

Strategies

The teachers of the schools/ colleges were trained and asked to work with students and communities. It was felt that the teachers had the potential to influence people that the root cause for such practices was the unequal gender balance and hence it was this relationship that needs to be balanced. Building the capacities for peer monitoring and also
involving non-NGO stakeholders was done as strategy to put a further check on the disturbing trends. Corporate houses have also been approached for fund raisings in order to sustain the campaign and ensure its outreach. Also, regular follow-ups with various stakeholders like lawyers, doctors, youth clubs, etc. were done to monitor the campaign in a holistic way. Swadhikaar Forum is working tirelessly in 10 worst-affected districts of Orissa, in terms of declining sex-ratio on this overall campaign. They have divided the communities in two belts namely, the tribal belt and the coastal belt, to ensure proper monitoring and sustainability of the campaign. These areas have been identified on the basis of number of reported cases of female foeticide.

**Sustainability**

To take care of the sustainability part as a future plan, they are now insisting on Alliance building, regular media interactions, funds raising efforts by involving corporate sectors, review of its activities, etc. Various non-government organisations are being approached as a strategy to form effective state-wide networks to ensure a better outreach and long term sustainability of the programme interventions.

A similar campaign has also been initiated in Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh.
Background

Saharanpur District of western Uttar Pradesh is one of the districts with low sex ratio in the state. Chilkana is a small town of that district which borders with Haryana and has a population of around 20,000 with roughly 50% each of Hindus and Muslims. The decline in the sex ratio is evident all across the Saharanpur district of Western Uttar Pradesh. Although the reasons are more or less the same, yet the interventions designed and aimed at preventing people from adopting such practices were not enough.

The Need was felt by MASVAW in the region that change can be brought into the attitudes and practices when there are concrete efforts with the various organisations working in the region on the issue of local social concerns. Hence, in the year 2008, MASVAW called for a planning meeting. Five organisations from Saharanpur and adjoining areas got together and discussed on building a strategy on developing a campaign to sensitize various stakeholders on the issue of Declining Sex Ratio. Addressing the root causes of the decline in sex ratio was discussed at length in the meeting and it was felt that it was essential to involve men in the process so that they also take the responsibility of prevention of maternal mortality, child nutrition, etc by being active partners and not being the protectors. Thereafter the campaign ‘Naye Mard ki Nayi Soch’, was initiated by MASVAW.

Methodology

MASVAW’s efforts derive its strength from its members who are group of young men and youth who work tirelessly at the community level, and facilitate range of activities, like

- Spreading awareness through posters depicting root causes of DSR,
- Community mobilization at the village and the block level, involving doctors, lawyers,
- Organizing nukkad sabhas with village men, Sarpanchs, youth, etc,

The local men and youth are being mobilised to work within areas of domination of both the communities at various levels, village, blocks, etc. It was felt that the learning starts from home and hence, parents have a positive role to play in the overall process of socialization. Some of the organisations partnering with MASVAW in its efforts are Samajik Ekta Manch, Jan Jagriti Sansthan Baliya Kheri Block, Ghaar Chhetra Majdoor Morncha Muzaffarabad Block, Dalit Alpasankhyak Vikas Sansthan Muzaffarabad Block, Astitva, and Achal from the district level.

Few educational institution’s hostels in the district which accommodates students from diverse backgrounds have also been involved in the campaign.

Following various ongoing meetings in every village of the block targeting Sarpanchs, Teachers, Lawyers, Doctors, Village men, Students, and Youth, etc MASVAW organised a District Level Meeting in Saharanpur where 70 -80 men from 20-22 villages participated. The meet saw people discussing challenges faced by men at the local level, like poor literacy, hostile attitude of men, poor response from the police and various programme and policies of the government not being implemented properly. The people could connect to the issues discussed in the meet and in unison, agreed all these factors to be detrimental for their development. This led the forum that is
based on the idea that it is mostly men who need to be sensitised in this overall process of ending son-preference, sex selective abortions, and such social evils

**Strategies**

Building the capacities for peer monitoring and also involving non-NGO stakeholders was taken as a strategy to put a further check on the disturbing trends of the declining sex ratio. The importance of girls is being felt at the community level with the serious decline in the sex ratio in the adjoining districts of Haryana. MASVAW District Forum as its strategy aims to organize *nukkad natak* on the Declining sex ratio campaign with the artists (who are mostly men/ youth) from the Samajik Ekta Manch. Further strategies on working with media and involving them in the process of bringing an end to the DSR is being adopted as future objectives of the MASVAW team.

**Challenges**

The existing rigid socio-cultural tradition in the local communities initially posed a challenge for MASVAW team in its work. Earlier, when MASVAW team tried getting in touch with people from both, the Hindu and the Muslim communities on the issue of declining sex ratio, they were hardly paid any heed. Despite the initial non-cooperation and doubt of the people, the honest and continuous efforts of this team laid a foundation for a fruitful discussion at the community level in all the villages of the respective five blocks, Sarsawa, Gangoh, Bialiya Kheri, Rampur, and Muzaffarabad. The preference for son was overtly evident in the patriarchal mindsets of both the communities across Chilkanas. The team through its approaches agreed that the elders were the staunchest subjects and were more resistant to new ideas and approaches than the younger subjects. The question that still remains is reaching out to the root causes of declining sex ratio and putting an end to it.

**Sustainability**

The MASVAW team has approached corporate houses for funds in order to sustain the campaign and ensure its outreach. Regular follow-ups with various stakeholders like lawyers, doctors, youth clubs, etc. is undertaken to monitor the campaign in a holistic way. To take care of the sustainability part as a future plan, the team now insists on alliance building, regular media interactions and coverage in the local media, funds raising efforts by involving corporate sectors, review of its activities, etc. Various non-government organisations of the region are being approached as a strategy to form effective local networks to ensure a better outreach and long term sustainability of the intervention programme aimed at bringing a healthy environment where, women and girls are seen and treated to be equal in every sense.

The MASVAW members feel that within three months they have observed a positive change; however, it would be too soon to say more in terms of figures. But, there is no doubt that the team is putting in its honest efforts to engage boys and men in his activities designed in consultation with MASVAW to address the declining sex ratio campaign in the region. Since the campaign has started from January 2009, the effects of the interventions are yet to be realised and experienced in the local community.
Case study on
WE (Women Empowerment), a voluntary group working with media institute on women empowerment issues

Background

‘WE’ (Women Empowerment) was established as a support group to assist different groups working for women empowerment. It is a relatively informal organisation with members from different professions and disciplines. Later WE started working with men and as a part of this it has been making efforts to involve people from various sections such as journalists, lawyers and activists in an effort to address the root causes of violence against women.

Activities

While working in the field of gender equality and Violence Against Women, WE felt an acute need to influence the thoughts of common men. The initiative was materialised through a workshop at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism in Kushabhau Thakre Jansanchar Evam Patrakarita Vishvavidyalaya, Raipur. While conducting these workshops for sensitising students and teachers they tried to focus on the issue of gender equality in the context of religion, economic condition, social structure and other important aspects of people’s lives. For making this approach more effective they developed a curriculum known as ‘VACGESR’ (Value Addition Curriculum on Gender Equality And Social Responsibility) to be studied in colleges and universities. It was designed and tested involving various professionals, teachers and others. Teachers were trained on this curriculum before starting the course in Raipur Media University. The curriculum has now been started informally in some other universities across Chattisgarh as well.

The responses, especially from teachers had not been satisfactory in the beginning. The efforts were not reaching out to students as per the expectation. However, it was inspiring to see some responses from the student community. Around twenty students came out as a group through this training. There are about 12 students in Raipur who are actively engaged in raising women’s issues along with publishing investigative reports on various issues involving VAW. The core group named WE is constantly engaged in organising training for teachers, youths and others to make a sustained effort. The teachers are being regularly contacted and called for in all the meetings at various forums for rapport building and involving academicians in our initiatives.

Challenges

i) Cooperation from teachers has been very poor. While some colleges (running self paid courses) affiliated with the host (initiator) university are teaching the course, teachers from other colleges don’t respond well because there is no compensation attached.

ii) Students who get motivated and try to initiate activities often fail to meet the resource need; resources in the form of films etc. are urgently sought by them.
POONAM KATHURIA

Most studies on violence against women indicate that perpetrators of violence are almost exclusively men. The violence continues because it is acceptable. The need to build a culture that does not accept Violence against Women seems imminent. Also imminent is the need to involve men in building this culture. While it is possible to view men as potential allies, in ending violence against women, by changing their personal behavior and or intervening to confront the problematic behavior of other men, we need to examine such an approach in terms of it’s potentials and limits.

With this objective, a community based study was conducted in 35 villages spread over four districts. In a random sample, 506 rural married women were interviewed to understand their individual perspective on the issue of violence. The data gathered from women was supplemented with Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with rural men from the same communities. The aim was to elicit information on factors that determine male behavior in committing violence against women and can become the basis for devising a long term campaign strategy for involving men in combating violence against women. Twenty two FGDs were carried out with 410 men from seven social groups selected on the basis of their level of representation in the population.

As per the study Men are aware of VAW as an issue and could describe the forms of violence in great detail, including its emotional and mental dimensions. However men do not always perceive violence as unjust unless it is extreme in nature or culturally unacceptable (sexual demands by father-in-law). All men in the study justified violence against women for a reason. The reasons could range from not giving a glass of water to refusal of sex. It is very clear from the discussions with men that they oscillate between an awareness of the injustice being done to women and a mindset that is shaped by a culture that legitimizes this power as their ‘natural right’ and privilege. They tend to condemn violence only in culturally acceptable frameworks. They also tend to appreciate women who suffer in silence as compared to those who protest.

It was a group of lower caste men lower caste men who acknowledge their frustration as a cause for violence. Women become targets of male frustration because they do not retaliate. Another group of backward caste men said that women have to suffer because of superstition, because of lack of education and because they have endurance (because they do not complaint).

The solution offered for ending VAW was once again telling of the male mindset. Counseling the 'man' was the most common solution. None of the groups talk of changing the cultural norms that perpetuate the violence. The men tended to move from denial of the issue of VAW to saying it is a non issue to being help less as it is the society that is to blame.

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1 Poonam Kathuria is director of Society for Womens Action and Training Initiatives-SWATI
The men are not in favor of doing away with the role divide. Are threatened - if this role divide particularly in the economic sphere is challenged. When it comes to issues of power and control the men were again not so willing.

Male violence against women is as old as patriarchy itself. The roots of this exploitative ideology are so deep that it seems in the natural scheme of things, that men have power over women, to exploit them and their potential, in a manner that adds to their material, physical and social well being and worth. The equation between men and woman is one of power in which male violence against women perpetuates and is tolerated by women because of the unequal power relation between the two. Calling upon men to be allies in combating violence against women is essentially an appeal to men’s sense of justice and egalitarianism. It does not really challenge and change the power equation. On the contrary by inviting the patriarch to become a patron, it actually further strengthens the unequal power relation.

The question than is, why do, we, men and women want to pursue such an approach. I say that it is for two reasons. a) The success of the male involvement approach is linked to our belief in changing the world, of the human ability to transform one’s reality and the world around us. b) It is important to us as human beings, and as women to think of (most) men as allies so as to keep our faith and hope in this synergistic relationship alive.

The faith is not misplaced. But can work only under conditions when it is matched with other contributory factors of equality and mutuality between men and women. In the context of the men in this study, men feel unsupported in their role as providers, of their roles outside the home and a woman feels unsupported in her role within. Both feel isolated and alone. While one (women) feels dependent and helpless the other (men) feels the pressure to perform to live up to the expectations of masculinity/maleness.

Both men and women have to understand the working of this phenomena and its impact on the self and their relationship. On the other hand women, have to also to be equipped to challenge and act on their mindset defined by the same socio-cultural norms as for men. Empowering women through education, exposure and an ability to deal with the external world is the way to equip women.

But last but not the least changing the power equation between men and woman is the deciding factor to Combating Violence against Women. In a vast majority of the Indian social context this means working on two core issues of son preference and women’s right to inheritance in the natal as well as the marital home. Unless this is done women will continue to be treated as the ‘other’, the outsider, the inferior and a man’s property and their fore, vulnerable to abuse.

Note: This study was conducted in 2004 by Saurashtra-kachchh group of Agencies on Violence Against Women and is part of a larger research on prevalence of violence against women in 4 districts of Gujarat state in India.

For more information regarding the study contact: Poonam Kathuria, email: pswati@sify.com
Developing communication materials on Men, masculinities and risk taking in the context of HIV/AIDS:
A strategy to address issues of men and risk taking with college-going young men in Pune colleges, India

Background

With an estimated 5.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS, India has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world, according to UNAIDS. Among 15-49 year olds, an estimated 5.2 million are living with the disease, according to India's National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), which is an increase by 35% since 2000. It has been relatively stable for the past two years, increasing by 2% between 2003 and 2005. NFHS-III (National Family Health Survey III, 2005-2006) reports increasing prevalence of HIV by the age groups of young men. It shows urgent need to work with the age group of 15 to 24 to address various causes exposing them to vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS.

It was noticed over these years of our interaction with youth on the issues of men and masculinities that no effective communication materials are available to address issues of gender construction of men and masculinities and it's inter linkages with different kind of risks that they take. During our interaction with the college youths from July 2008, it was collectively decided to have communication materials that could appeal young men both in content and design. Following two types of materials were conceptualised:

A. A poster
B. Three monthly newsletters

Process of material development

A. Poster:

i. Listing of key risks -

Key words for the poster were listed in a collective group work with college youth during one of the workshops. Young men listed various risks that they take. Speeding the bike, teasing/proposing girls and betting for that, spending money for friends, do or die for your love, drinking beer at one run, finishing a packet of cigarette in one sitting, bullying college professors are some of the risks that young men listed in this workshop. The most common risks were ranked and decided to be included in poster in the form of messages.

ii. Text and design -

Text and visuals messages were planned during a group work session with the young men and a rough draft sketch of poster was prepared. Two of the young men volunteers worked on this rough draft in Corel Draw and designed it.

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iii. **Pretesting of the poster** -

Pretesting of the poster was done randomly with youth when visited informally at different point of time. Poster was pretested to understand its comprehension, visuals and relevance of key message of the poster. Few changes in design were made whereas text remained the same.

iv. **Production** -

Poster design was finalised by a professional designer and changes were made on the basis of results of pretesting. 500 copies of the poster were printed.

v. **Dissemination** -

Various strategies were adapted for dissemination of this poster. Poster was published by a group of young men in one of the colleges participating in this programme. Posters were widely disseminated in colleges like Marathwada Mitra Mandal’s College of Commerce, Modern College, S. P. College, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Karve Institute, S. V. Union’s College of Commerce (Evening) and Shahu College. Places for dissemination were plotted with the youth. Youth gathering and hangout places were identified along with the formal spaces like notice boards and student’s boards and boy’s common rooms. Poster also was disseminated through poster exhibition along with other posters from ‘Alochana’, a resource centre on women in Pune.

**Other special disseminations:**

**FEM national meeting:** FEM (Forum to Engage Men) national meeting was held in Lucknow on 23 and 24 March 2009. FEM is a national alliance of civil society groups, media, academicians, national and international aid agencies in India and individuals. National meeting was attended by over 40 participants across the states of India. Poster has been specially disseminated in this meeting that has reached to organisations in 12 states of India.

**Global Symposium on Working with Men and Boys:** SAMYAK attended a global symposium on working with men and boys for gender equality held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from March 30 to April 3, 2009. Poster was disseminated in Global Village, a space at the symposium for dissemination of educational materials from all over the world. Poster was very well received and appreciated by the global community working with men and boys and has reached to 80 countries through this event.
B. Newsletters

i. Why newsletters?

Newsletter was used as the medium to reinforce some of the key messages of the workshops on gender and HIV/AIDS with the participants of the workshop and to reach out to larger youth audiences in various colleges through the participants. It also provided space for youth to write about their experiences of workshops and learning.

ii. Planning process -

Newsletters were planned during the workshops with the young men. An editorial committee of five members, with four youth representatives was set up to oversee the planning, production and dissemination of newsletters. A broader outline of the content was designed along with men and responsibilities were taken for the sections of each newsletter.

iii. Production of newsletters -

Process involved was collecting draft of materials, review of materials, editorial changes, design and printing. Editorial committee met only once to review the materials received. Various designs were tested for the title of the newsletter. Name of the newsletter was decided as U-We (Yuvi=Youth) that talks about togetherness and also depicts its relevance with youth.

iv. Dissemination of newsletters -

Dissemination plan was discussed in groups and finalised as follows:

- General distribution on campuses and libraries
- Distribution to peer groups
- Production of newsletters
- SAMYAK office
- Dissemination team of colleges

Dissemination of newsletter was done at two levels. A wide dissemination was done to the general students especially young boys and other strategy used was distribution of newsletters to specific peer groups and keeping copies in libraries.
We also tried to keep few copies in the canteens and hang-out places but this strategy did not work and few copies of first newsletter were wasted.

Readability of the newsletter was not monitored or evaluated. We tried to get informal feedback from some of the young men, which show that comprehension of text information was good but a suggestion was made regarding more use of pictures or line drawings.

a) Newsletter 1 - Content
   • Risk perception of young men and its linkage with risk of HIV infection
   • Introduction to the project
   • What is gender? What is masculinity? (What is Boy and What is Girl, Kamala Bhasin)
   • Why work with young boys on issues of masculinities and HIV/AIDS? Gender-based violence
   • Few definitions to understand gender.

b) Newsletter 2 - Content
   • Why men should join processes for gender equality, what we can do?
   • Issues of sexual health: question-answers
   • Poster addressing notion of masculinities and risk taking
   • Pictures of film festival and other events.

Learnings
1. Involvement of youth at all stages of development of materials helps increase the effectiveness of materials and acceptance of messages by youth.
2. Through the process of development of materials young men involved also gone through the process of perspective development.
3. Youth friendly design has increased effectiveness of the poster.
4. Readability of newsletter need to be assessed and number of pages needs to be reduced. Format of newsletter also can be changed.
5. Dissemination strategies worked well as those were planned with the youth.
6. E-based communication materials might increase access of materials by the college youth.
On Aakar

Aakar is a registered Trust with its office in New Delhi. The Trust was set up in 1992 to produce documentaries and videos on developmental themes but has since expanded its area of interest to research, activism and interventions in the area of culture and knowledge production.

The principle areas of interest of those who are part of Aakar are: gender, masculinities, labour, conflict and religion. Aakar functions as a collective with people who constitute the group working in different areas of interest.

Aakar’s interventions in the area of masculinities started in 1997 when it conceived and organised a South Asian video project under which four films on masculinities were produced in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The project was supported by Save The Children (UK) and UNICEF. The films produced under this project kick started a discussion on masculinities in the region and have been used extensively by civil society groups, researchers, academic institutions. These films continue to be used even after almost a decade of being produced by activists all over the region and in other parts of the globe.

From 2000 onwards Aakar has been conducting workshops with groups in different parts of South Asia to generate a better understanding of masculinities and design interventions on gender with men.

In 2002 Aakar initiated a major university based programme to facilitate more research on the theme of masculinities. UNIFEM supported a travelling seminar on masculinities that visited six universities across India. The second round of the series was extended to South Asia and the seminar series was held at ten universities in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and India. The series has now travelled to 16 universities across South Asia. It has collaborated with more than 40 departments (and several women’s groups), approximately 4000 students and faculty have attended the two day seminars and more than 120 presenters have travelled with the seminar. The series was conceived with the idea that over a period of time with some amount of perseverance we will be able to create a body of knowledge and more importantly set up a structure for it to be disseminated and thereby contribute to creating a public discourse around masculinities. The seminar constitutes of twelve presentations made over two days. These presentations are a mix of academic papers, personal and activist narratives and films. A volume with papers from the seminars is to be published by Routledge.

Aakar has produced several documentaries on the theme of gender and masculinities. These have been screened extensively in South Asia and internationally. They have won several awards at film festivals. When Four Friends Meet, Majma (Performance), The City Beautiful have been widely distributed and used by activists, academics and researchers.

Aakar continues to work towards generating a public discourse on masculinities through innovative projects.

We believe that the culture of violence that masculinities injects in our body social can be best addressed by a cultural response.

For more information: www.southasianmasculinities.org
Exploring Masculinities: A Travelling Seminar

The concept of ‘masculinities’, informed by recent feminist thought and the women’s movement, has emerged as a means of renewing feminist discourse by encouraging a more relational approach to masculinity and femininity. This allows for the investigation, problematisation and interrogation of masculinity, equally with femininity. Notwithstanding these enabling possibilities, however, ‘gender’ is still essentially deployed in contemporary social science discourse as a synonym for ‘women’, its relational aspect obscured and the invitation to interrogate masculinities largely ignored.

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An important aspect of the seminar series has been to examine masculinities in the context of the rapidly transforming economic, social and cultural environment in South Asia and the range of conflicts that characterize the region. The contexts of momentous changes and practices of conflict are related, with gender being a significant suturing principle. To put it another way, masculinities are central to an understanding of the various ways in which a rapidly transforming present affects the lives of men and women, as they grapple with new circumstances and opportunities. So, for example, change simultaneously provides the grounds for violence as a response to perceptions of threats to masculine identities, as well as opportunities for altered senses of the gendered self. Either way, it would appear that men are the central actors within the entire spectrum of violence. Why do men invariably find themselves at the centre of violence, both as victims and perpetrators? Notwithstanding the grim reality of such a situation, emerging research on masculinities in South Asia and other parts of the globe suggests that men are not only guarantors for the representational claims of state power, but are also made in the image of such power. Alternatives in the form of gaps, openings and fissures do exist where ideas of gender equality and non-violence can find the space to breathe within the suffocating structures of masculinities.

The current series concluded with an online seminar where four papers were put out to an online community of researchers and activists who subscribed to the seminar and responded to the papers.

For more information: www.southasianmasculinities.org
Research @ Aakar

to generate more knowledge on masculinities and dissemination of this to different stakeholders is a core activity at Aakar.

We have worked on research projects with several organisations and developed a range of material that have taken the form of papers, graphic book, posters, playing cards, etc.

A graphic book titled - The Little Book on Men - has been published by Yoda Press and is now in its third edition.

We are currently working on designing a South Asian research project that will focus on issues of violence, conflict, religion, ethnicity and politics.

We have also initiated a South Asian network of researchers on masculinities that will kick off with an international conference in 2010.

Films @ Aakar

Documentaries are an important mode of communication at Aakar. Please find below a select list of films produced at Aakar:

**The Other Song, 120 mins, 2009**

In 1935 Rasoolan Bai the well known singer from Varanasi, India, recorded for the gramaphone a love song that she would never sing again - My breasts are wounded, don't throw flowers at me. A variation of her more famous song - My heart is wounded, don't throw flowers at me, the 1935 recording, never to be repeated, faded from public memory and eventually got lost.

More than seventy years later the film travels through Varanasi and its neighbouring areas to search for the forgotten song. It brings the film face to face with the enigmatic tawaifs or the courtesans who till a century back were amongst the most educated and privileged section of Indian women. Today they stand recast as deviant, their arts, obscene; their story and that of the lost song linked to the making of modern India and the transitions around the control and censorship of female sexualities and cultural expression.

**Naach (The Dance), 84 mins, 2008**

The Sonpur cattle fair in rural Bihar comes alive every evening when more than fifty girls take to the stage and dance for an all male audience. A barbed wire fence separates the performers from the spectators. It is a dance charged with sexual energy. The girls dance, make eye contact, beckon, gesticulate and even abuse a highly responsive all male audience.

What meanings related to contemporary construction and practice of gender, sexuality, labour and popular culture can we read in the dance of the female performer?

**Delhi –Mumbai-Delhi, 63 mins, 2006**

Riya dances in the beer bars of Mumbai to make a living. The documentary follows her from her home in Delhi to Mumbai where hundreds of working class girls come in search of work and a future. Riya’s future is unpredictable and the present is marked with its own difficulties. The police harass her family in Delhi, there is constant pressure from her agent in Mumbai to attract more tips and the work itself is demanding. However, there are other girls to have fun with, there is money to dress well and then there are men admirers promising the moon. The documentary is an intimate portrait of the everyday in the life of the girls, their agents and their neighbourhoods.
Delhi-Mumbai-Delhi, shot in the backdrop of the Maharashtra Governments’ controversial move to ban girls from dancing in beer bars, interweaves stories of gender, labour, sexuality and popular culture within an increasingly globalized economy.

**The City Beautiful, 78 minutes, 2004**

Sunder Nagri (Beautiful City) is a small working class colony on the margins of India’s capital city, Delhi. Most families residing here come from a community of weavers. The last ten years have seen a gradual disintegration of the handloom tradition of this community under the globalisation regime. The families have to cope with change as well as reinvent themselves to eke out a living.

The City Beautiful is the story of two families struggling to make sense of a world, which keeps pushing them to the margins. Radha and Bal Krishan are at a critical point in their relationship. Bal Krishan is underemployed and constantly cheated. They are in disagreement about Radha going out to work. However, through all their ups and downs they retain the ability to laugh.

Shakuntla and Hira Lal hardly communicate. They live under one roof with their children but are locked in their own sense of personal tragedies.

**MAJMA (PERFORMANCE), 54 minutes, 2001**

Aslam sells medicines for sexual problems on the pavements of Meena Bazaar in near Jama Masjid in Delhi... Khalifa Barkat presides over an akhara in the adjacent park and puts a group of young men through the moral and physical grind of wrestling. Through the park and the market pass hundreds of men every day Majma explores the instability and insecurity of working class lives and its impact on male sexuality and gender relations.

**WHEN FOUR FRIENDS MEET, 54 mins, 2000**

When four friends meet... they share with the camera their secrets... sex and girls; youthful dreams and failures; frustrations and triumphs. Bunty, Kamal, Sanjay and Sanju, best of friends and residents of Jehangirpuri, a working class colony on the outskirts of Delhi are young and trying to make their lives in an environment which is changing rapidly... girls seem to be very bold... stable jobs are not easy to come by... sex is a strange mix of guilt and pleasure... families are claustrophobic... and the blur of television the only sounding board.

The documentary was part of South Asian package under which four films were made in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The project was supported by Save The Children(UK) and UNICEF.
In the past few years SWISSAID have been experimenting different strategies to engage men for stopping violence against women and bringing Gender Equality. These experiments include creating spaces for boys and men for positive sharing, men campaigning against the sex selective abortions, Implementation of domestic violence act through men, gender sensitization of youth through youth groups, gender sensitization of media students and trainee teachers. While experimenting all this we have avoided planning exclusive programs for men and have planned the programs in such manner that men and women are working together. Based on the successes and failure of these experiments, we have reached the conclusion that a comprehensive approach is required to engage men for promotion of gender equality and stopping violence against women. This approach is reflected in our beliefs which are based on our experiences, successes, challenges we have faced as well as on our observations of the other processes going on around us.

**SW Believes**

- That there are considerable number of sensitive men in our society, who are challenging the patriarchal norms in their own way. If their energies are channelized in proper direction, they can play significant role in stopping violence against women and promotion of gender equality.
- That working exclusively with men for Gender equality and stopping violence against women will not bring the desired results because without women’s empowerment, women won’t be able to take over the spaces and opportunities created by sensitized men. Therefore, to ensure gender equality and stopping violence against women, men should come ahead and work for women’s empowerment.
- That women’s empowerment is incomplete if not combined with building social capital and creating enabling environment. Therefore, encouraging women to build fallback social capital outside family and relatives and encouraging men and women to be a fall-back social capital for women in crisis.
- That patriarchal construction of masculinities and femininities is the main cause of widespread violence against women and deep rooted gender unequal norms in the society. This mandates us to keep primary focus on the activities that challenge the patriarchal construction of masculinities and femininities.
- That patriarchal and gendered discourses (verbal or visual) are the key to maintain and nurture the unjust gender relations, transfer the values and norms to the next generations and to transform it into practice. There is need to analyze and address gender discourses for long term strategic changes in the perception and mindset of the society. Without addressing them any other effort will harvest only temporary results; change in favour of gender justice will be insignificant.
- That we need to work from curative as well as preventive approach for addressing the issue of violence against women. As a preventive measure we need to engage men to sensitize men and promote construction of a human who is a balance of positive masculine...
and feminine traits. However, as a curative measure we also need to encourage men to take-up the cases of violence with support from women activists by using the existing legislations like PWDVA.

- There is a dearth of positive non-patriarchal space available for men (young or old) to communicate, explore their own thoughts, introspect and ventilate and thus grow and mature. Hence, the need for creating spaces for men for positive and non-patriarchal sharing. In the long term the focus will be on collective sharing of men and women.

- Majority of cases of violence within marriage is a displaced reaction of men’s own (so called) “inadequacies”, “failures” and confusions about sexuality and sexual performance. Therefore the need for men to unlearn the patriarchal socialization of their masculinity and sexuality.

- That there is limit of existing women’s movements in terms of reaching out to the women victims of violence in each and every corner of the country, thus there is need for men to work together with women’s movements for supporting and complementing the existing activities of women’s movements and building women’s movements with support from the existing one’s in those areas where they have not reached.

Strategies

- Gender sensitization of male NGO leaders and Staff for mainstreaming the issue of engaging men for stopping violence against women and gender equality in the agenda of NGOs.

- Designing comprehensive and inclusive basic training programs as well as TOTs together with feminists groups for developing trainers for advance level trainings and promoting the men engage campaign.

- Use of existing networks of people’s organizations for sensitization of men. i.e. Reaching out to men through women’s groups (SHGs, Mitanin network, women farmer’s groups etc.) and working for women’s empowerment through men’s groups (community organizations in adivasi areas of Chhattisgarh, male farmer’s groups)

- Using already existing institutional platforms e.g. educational institutions and rural institutions like panchayats, cooperatives etc.

- Implementation of policies and legislations through men volunteers.

- Sensitizing, empowering and training boys to challenge the patriarchy by creating spaces for positive sharing in a non-patriarchal environment. Reaching out to youth through youth action groups.

- Working with rural cultural groups of men and women for promoting gender sensitization.

- Developing adivasi men leaders to stop violence against women within adivasi community.

Activities

With Partner organizations:

- Introducing the concept through raining workshops and specifically one to one discussions with NGO heads.

- Formulation of Action Plans.

In Adivasi areas:

- Gender Training of Men and Women communicators from 6 different indigenous communities.

- Preparation of plays on issue of violence against women within the communities
• Community level cultural programs on violence against women.

Program with School and Colleges:
• Gender trainings of college teachers (from media and teacher’s training colleges) 80% of them are male.
• Development of course curriculum for college students and primary school students.
• Sensitization activities with school students

Program with Farmer’s groups:
• Gender Training of Men’s cultural troupes as well as Women’s cultural troupes
• Preparation of songs and cultural programs on gender equality and stopping violence against women
• Cultural groups are performing at all the community platforms

Program with Dalit movement:
• Gender Training of trainers
• Gender Training of campaigners through trainers
• Campaign against VAW and sex selective abortions in 9 districts of Marathwada.

Program on Domestic Violence Act:
• Training of campaigners/ case workers in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.
• Promoting village level male support groups for women victims of violence.
• Publication of training, campaign and reference material

Youth Action Groups:
• Trainings and exposure visits on gender, human rights and constitutional rights
• Internship program for youth
• Developing of Youth Action Groups in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

Working with women’s groups:
• Promoting and strengthening women’s Institutions for participation in PRI and for rights over house, family property,
• Gender trainings and counseling skills trainings of members of Women’s Institutions, Counseling and case work by the volunteer female counselors.
• Promoting and sensitizing boys groups through women’s Institutions.

Successes

• Internalization of men engage issue in the agenda of almost all the partner organization. More importantly the leaders and the staff of many of the NGO partners have developed ownership of the issue. Due to ownership they initiate and experiment diverse and unique programs and activities based on their own experiences and expertise. E.g. Some men volunteers made their action plans around Right to information for implementation of the Domestic violence Act. Some men volunteers work with Women Panchayat Leaders and some men are promoting gender equality through farmers etc.
• The adoption of the issue by the mass based movements have resulted in strong and widespread impact in the area of domestic violence e.g. campaigns by Dalit movement, network of panchayat leaders, farmer’s networks.
• 25 men grassroots level trainers have been developed.
• 4 Already sensitized media students are now teaching in different media colleges and sensitizing the media students.
• 20 Communicators are actively working against the gender based violence through cultural programs from existing community level platforms.
• 22 youth groups are actively involved in sensitization of other youth to promote more youth groups for working on the issue.
• 20 male volunteers are campaigning on Domestic Violence Act and using it successfully for dealing with the cases of domestic violence.

Challenges
• Documenting the quality changes in the attitude, behavior and relationships of the men volunteers is a challenge.
• Providing reference material in local language.
• Dearth of male gender trainers to provide advance level training of trainers.
• Lack of enough expertise within SW and partner organizations because of issue being new to us.
Men Engage- Through Women’s Empowerment

Society for Women’s Actions and Training Initiatives (SWATI) works in a rights approach for the empowerment of women and marginalized in Gujarat, India. Working to combat Violence against Women is a primary agenda of SWATI. We believe that Violence against Women (VAW hence forth) has such vast dimensions- to succeed in combating it, the effort needs to be equally vast and broad based. A primary requirement for fulfilling this is to place VAW on the agenda of organizations working for women’s development, bringing the issue of VAW out of the culture of silence that surrounds it and bring it into the public domain for debate. Towards this end SWATI has been instrumental in bringing together a group of agencies in a network based initiative that works together to combat VAW in five districts of Gujarat.

Empowering women to involving men as allies, in ‘Combating Violence Against Women’, is a network based initiative being implemented by Saurashtra Kachchh group of agencies on Violence against Women (SK-VAW) in the Saurashtra kachchh region (covering five districts) of Gujarat state, India. Strengthening women to combat VAW through building women’s leadership and capacities, set up alternate redress mechanism -in the form of Women’s Nyaya Samitis -the women justice committees, that are community based, women led forums that function in a socio-legal and gender just framework. The initiative has taken up for advocacy, the implementation of Domestic Violence Act, 2005 as well as government recognition of paralegals as associates of the justice giving mechanism.

The initiative recognizes that women are not single gendered and men’s subjectivity is central to gender domination. The program, works extensively with men and youth in building male partnership and community opinion against VAW. It has critically examined through systematic research the extent and forms of violence against Women, in the region and the limits and potential of working with men in partnering to prevent VAW and shaped our interventions based on the understanding.

The focus of the intervention is women, the general community, women victims of violence and men and youth. The program has its basis in large scale women’s collectives which are membership based forums. Together the membership of these collectives in five districts is toady over 25,000. The program reaches out to the target population through these collectives, community out reach workers, campaigns, training programs, publicity, helpline phones and the women Nyaya samitis forums.

Through posters and pamphlets the initiative creates awareness on VAW and changing community attitudes and behavior. The group publishes a newsletter ‘Paraspar’ meaning mutuality which reaches out to over 4000 families, civil society groups and NGOs.

The program intervenes and impacts through offering holistic support including legal aid, counseling, couple counseling, gender and VAW orientation trainings for men, involving students, youth and community leaders as change makers in VAW, mass based campaigns for building public opinion against VAW, influencing the media and policy advocacy on implementation of legislation on violence against women, work with key stakeholders such as the law enforcement agencies, village Panchayats (local self governance bodies) and health functionaries on VAW. A large part of our work is also beginning to entail research, policy level intervention, wider network building and capacity building of other civil society organizations.
The Men Engage through women’s empowerment program marks a shift from the pure service delivery model approach of providing support to women victims of violence, to building a multi pronged strategy approach that involves support to women victims, but also at the same time addressing the root cause i.e. the social acceptance of violence against women in the family and the structural nature of women’s secondary status that forces them to stay in exploitative relationships.

The program thus focuses on creating awareness and bringing about attitudinal changes in the community, men in particular on VAW. The initiative of women’s justice committees, is an extra legal strategy provides an alternate platform that is proving much more effective in aiding women in their quest for justice. Rooted in cultural and community norms, the alternatives, actively engage the women and the community in a dialogue on what is just and right. Such a process manages to take the discourse to a higher level and challenges and changes community norms. Born out of a process of empowerment and a consciousness of rights among women the Nyaya Samiti’s are quasi legal platforms that are proving to be fitting alternatives to violence against women.

The program has established partner ships at four levels;

a) Those that strengthen our grass roots and community advocacy on VAW: Grass root level governance bodies the village Panchayats, the local youth groups and community leaders

b) Those that help strengthen and build capacity: Research and capacity building Institutes, Other networks etc. Examples of these are, The Gujarat Institute for Development research (Our research on VAW was conducted with their support), Indian Institute for Para Legal Studies (IIPLS), Aeikal Nari Sangathan- a collective working on social security concerns of single women, Women and land rights network. HIVOS, OXFAM, Community Aid Abroad are the long term donors that support the program.

c) Those that help us to network, broaden our vision and make the micro to macro linkages: The Men Engage coalition – a global alliance committed to working with men on VAW, UNFPA, UNIFEM, and the women’s movement, WE CAN (end all violence Against Women) Campaign by OXFAM, National Alliance of Women (NAWO)

d) And finally those that strengthen our objective of strengthening the policy and it’s implementation: department of women and Child, The Judiciary, National Women’s Commission, The National Human Rights Commission

**Impact:** Some of the concrete outcomes of the program have been:

The SK-VAW, began their work in 2002 from a point where: we felt that few groups worked on VAW their was lack of acceptance of VAW as a key issue VAW was rampant in the region.

Through sustained activities, SK-VAW today has successfully placed the issue of violence on the agenda of several NGOs and many more today are in agreement that Violence against Women is a key concern in the Saurashtra Kachchh region. At the government level too, the Gender Equity Policy document, prepared through a multi-stakeholder dialogue process has a thematic section on VAW and VAW also figures prominently in its legal section. We are today taking the lead in advocacy for effective and efficient implementation of the DVA, 2005 (DVA was passed by the Government of India in 2005 and has come into force in October 2006). We have succeeded in engaging in this dialogue over fifty women’s groups from all over the state of Gujarat.
Set up alternate, gender just, redressal mechanisms – the Mahila Nyaya Samitis, to address the issue of VAW. The Nyaya samitis altogether in five districts resolved directly or through litigation 30-to 35 cases of domestic violence per month, i.e over 1800 cases. Over 6000 people were counseled. Nine cases of rape were supported through police and court. In four cases perpetrators have been punished with imprisonment.

Involvement of men and youth in combating VAW. Workshops with men on the issue of Violence Against Women. Together the group has so far trained over 2000 youth in training programs and involved at least 1,00,000 men and women through campaigns.

A campaign on zero violence zones has led to individuals, families and groups taking the non violence pledge. The campaign was carried out in 700 villages, of eight districts in Gujarat, India. Over 3000 persons and 200 families and six village communities (representing 15,000 people) took a pledge to become non violent. (taking a pledge means a responsibility and involves wearing a badge by an individual, putting a plaque outside their house by a family and placing of a board by a village of working towards becoming a zero violence zone) Thirty five village Panchayats (village level governance bodies) passed a resolution on VAW and pledged to make their village a zero violence zone.

The challenge lies in bringing about wide spread attitudinal changes where men have to give up the patriarchal powers and privileges that are bestowed on them by virtue of being men. In a world that is increasingly becoming violent, where extremism of all kinds including violence by state agencies is at an all time high how do we create a culture of non-violence. Similarly at one level women’s empowerment is the buzz world, governments are showcasing laws and policies that promote gender equality, while refusing to allocate resources for implementing laws and policies that ensure this.

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SAHAJ Shishu Milap has been working in Vadodara Urban in 14 slums on the issues of Education, Health and Community Development since past 22 years. SAHAJ Shishu Milap started working with the boys since last four year under the programme called “Adolescents At The Margin”.

Objective of the intervention programme/campaign

- To develop self-confidence, awareness, and leadership skills among boys to make them a better citizen of tomorrow.
- To equip them with basic knowledge and skills related to gender and clear their misconceptions and change their views related to gender discrimination.
- To address specific needs of the boys related to economic situation and educational status and help them to become self reliant.

With Whom and Where

The intervention programme was carried out in 14 slum areas of Urban Vadodara with the boys from 12 to 21 years. The boys were divided in two groups:

- Group-I: School going group (12-15 years - Regular activities)
- Group-II: Engaged in jobs, business etc (16-21 years - Periodic activities)

Activities/Methodologies adopted

- Film shows
- Sessions [Self-confidence, Team Building, Communication, Addictions, Important Documents, Rights & Duties, HIV/AIDS, Early Marriage Early Pregnancy etc]
- Debate
- Focus Group Discussions
- Competitions [Essay writing, Drawing, Rangoli]
- Theatre Group [This group comprises of 15 members (7 boys and 8 girls). They perform various skits to generate awareness among the community and youth.
- Sports Day & Annual Day
- Institutional visits [Police Station, Employment Department]
- Sessions on Gender sensitization in two semi-government schools.
- Computer education
- Drop in centre

Impact of the programme

The organization has been working with the boys since last four years. Various activities and programme were carried out by the team. The team members found positive impact of the programme. These impacts and achievements are mentioned below:

- A strong core group of boys formed.
- 25 boys trained as Peer Educators
- 5 boys selected as Science Peer Educators [Two boys are actively working at present]
- 5 boys are associated with the Theatre Group actively.
- Around 500 boys came together for the cricket tournament.
- The boys from “Shiv-Shakti Nagar” formed Adolescent Committee through which they solved the problems of water tax, Hand Pump, Street light etc.
- The adolescents from “Sanjaynagar” shut down the “Gambling Places”.
- The boys from “Rampura” helped the community members to fill up the JNURM forms.
- The boys from “Shankarnagar” participated in the rally against the basti demolition.
- 30 boys got jobs with good salaries at various places like companies, mall, shops etc.
- 6 boys are in the editorial group of the adolescent’s newsletter “Jagrut Yuva Sarjan”. 23 boys wrote their own stories “Perceptions of Masculinity”.
Challenges faced

- The boys could not give sufficient time for the activities conducted by SAHAJ as many of these boys were working.
- It was challenging for us to take these working class boys for the training and residential workshops. Many times the youth used to leave the programme in between.
- Boys are more interested in sports.
- Many times during the training/workshop and celebration they used to argue on their views.
- Difficult to keep them as a team.

Future strategies for sustainability of the intervention

- **Youth Forum:** Based on the experiences of the programme “Youth Forum” will be formed. The forum will be managed and handled by the youth and who will work with the issues of the youth.
Experience On Working with Men and Boys on Gender Equality and Eliminating Violence against Women

Manisha Tokle, Secretary, SPMM**-INDIA

Introduction

Indian society is known to have one of the oldest civilizations in the world. It is claimed that it has a rich culture and heritage in the world. As far as Indian context is concern, Indian caste system is world’s longest survived form of slavery in the world. Indian civilization is marked with its unique caste culture. The basis of caste system is heredity, restriction on inter-dining; intermingling, and strict norms of endogamy. To protect the caste system, through endogamy gender discrimination, violence against women is originated.

Culturally, women irrespective of their caste status are considered equivalent to servants and untouchables. Religious norms also affirm secondary status of women. She is merely treated as an instrument to create a progeny and serve her husband. They are totally dependent on their men counterpart for their basic needs.

Amongst victims of the culture, women in India, especially Dalit women are still in the shackles of social, religious, cultural, political and mental slavery, in other words, in absolute slavery. They are not only victimized due to oppressive social structure but at the same time they have to face the patriarchal and economic slavery. Dalit women undergo three kinds of oppression as caste, gender and class. The forms of violence are perpetual because of Dalit women’s social status, given by the caste system.

Women have poor access to and control over means of livelihoods like land, property, and animal wealth. Also, there is poor awareness of human rights and issues. Her contribution is still largely worthless in the society. Her voice is still needs to be reached to followers of patriarchy.

Savitribai Phule Mahila Mandal (SPMM) is part of Campaign for Human Rights (CHR) movement (pioneered by Adv. Eknath Awad), which is famous for handling Dalit Rights issues. CHR acts as an umbrella for 10 organizations. To develop women leadership, SPMM was created. In its 20 years’ work, SPMM has mobilized and organized women to speak against violence. SPMM’s work has ignited minds of women and helped them to be self confident. But any problem needs multidimensional approach. Though the work with women were giving better results in terms of curbing violence against women; still majority of another half of the society is ignorant and unskillful in dealing with / treating women.

Women are ready to fight against injustice but main query was how to reduce down source of injustice. It threw light upon to work with men and boys, their thoughts on masculinity, womanhood. It was important to pay attention on why and when men come in their typical masculine role and exercise their power against women. Upbringing of men was also needed scrutiny. Though men become victim of the patriarchy system, they tend to neglect it as they are in power.

Pioneer of Indian social revolution Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule took multidimensional approach and sensitized men to participate them to fight against injustices on women. Modern history of India is also largely influenced by Dr. Ambedkar who took same approach as Mahatma Phule advocated. Thus it covered both the sides’ oppressor and oppressed to bring on common understanding. Same approach is followed by SPMM in dealing with gender issues.
Process of Gender Construction

As seen in the above figure, gender is influenced by all above systems. To reduce down the violence against women, SPMM is working on all the systems step by step. Caste system has been taken at the core for struggle as it is the main basis of gender construction.

Objectives

- To encourage and motivate the village level CHR activists to inculcate gender sensitized behaviour.
- Advance training of the CHR Core Committee of Gender equity and initiate process of internalization
- Conscientization and awareness involving wider village community

Activities

1. CHR Core Committee training on Gender equity:
CHR core committee members are from the vertical decision making structure comprising village level committees, cluster level committees, block and district level committees. The members of the district level committee and state level committee is apex body of the CHR. This body is instrumental in designing the CHR strategic plans and action programs.

Initially 30 Core Committee members were trained in inequality and patriarchal systems, gaps in upbringing of the girl child and misconceptions about girl child, societal attitudes and values, awareness in own upbringing as a man and as a woman. It helped them to make personal level changes and strengthen CHR commitment, mandate and support to work for gender equality.

The main task was to open their mind to correlate the pain of the Dalits and pain of the women. As the activists were already fighting against caste discrimination and hierarchy, it was relatively easy for them grasp the concept that men should not discriminate or use power, violence against
women; same as the Caste Hindus should not discriminate or use power, violence against Dalits.

2. Village level CHR committee Training:

There are village level micro institutions existing in the villages but they are not active enough to take up the gender issues. SPMM chose the chief functionaries of schools, Panchayats, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and youth groups to create mass awareness and spread the social campaign Gender sensitization and oriented them about discriminatory practices and gender equality.

In schools gender issues were discussed through debates, drawings competitions, essay competitions, role plays and camps. In youth groups’ training values like cultural homogeneity and secularism, violence against women, property rights, role of women in agriculture sector, practice of dowry, sati and selective sex abortion were taken through songs and dramas, role plays etc.

In Panchayat members training the process of good governance in relation to the gender, consideration the best gender practices in implementation of the schemes were oriented.

3. Oath by Village committee - “We swear an oath for---”:

The trained cadre took an oath in a public meeting to ensure their commitment to gender equality. The oath has following main contents -

- Involving women in the decision making,
- Taking self responsibility at domestic level, Help in domestic work
- Non discrimination between girl children in terms of food, education and health,
- Stopping of the abortion of female fetus
- Fight against domestic violence

Besides, campaign, programmes, intensive awareness were organized by village women on 8th March (till 31st March) - Women’s Day, 14th April (till 30th April) - birth anniversary of architect of modern India Dr. Ambedkar, 3rd January (till 31st January) birth anniversary of pioneer of Indian social revolution Savitribai Phule.

Impact

- Activists are now in position to empathize with women and their pain.
- As far as impact is concern, at activists’ level, men have started respecting women. From family to Panchayat level women's dignity is maintained.
- Initially it was hard for both men and women to negate stereotype role due to family and social pressure but slowly they are experimenting on themselves and making desired behavioural changes in self as well as family structure.
- Men activists have genuinely accepted role of women in all sphere of life. They are taking initiative to entitle the property on the name of wife, mother and sister.
- At societal level men role model can be observed. It is also observed that there is less domestic violence or fights, abuses where men have accepted equal role of women. There is more peace in such houses as compare to other houses.
- Before taking any decisions, CHR activists are discussing with their mother, wife. And women are also taking part in decision making process from family to societal level.
- There are very few cases of domestic violence in the houses where men were trained in gender sensitization. At least men are giving thoughts before taking any such violent step.
- Selective sex abortion tradition has gone down in those villages where campaigns on violence against women are conducted. Such informal controlling mechanism is voluntarily created by village level men and
women. These are the villages where SPMM’s men activists are residing.

- Men are ready and followed the property rights of women. Few of them entitled their home, land on the name of wife. The property rights are also accepted by government and such GR is circulated among offices.

Challenges

Challenges at broader level:

1. As far as Indian culture is concern, one of the major factors of secondary status of women is a caste system. Basis of caste system is endogamy i.e. women are not allowed to take decision about choosing life partner as well as forced not to marry outside the caste. To curtail exogamy, supporters of caste systems have reduced status of women and forced them to bear violence. Such violence is also rationalized through scripture. But this fact needs to discuss on different platforms. To end the violence against women, caste system needs to be dealt unanimously.

2. General sensitivity is very less about violence against women. It is considered that violence against women is daily chore of the life. Cases of dowry deaths, rapes are considered very normal by the public in general. Sympathy is shown than empathy.

Challenges at personal level:

1. Persons who have accepted gender sensitized role are less in number. There is need of lot of introspection and experimentation with the self behaviour. Such can be carried out by very few persons. Intensive programmes with respect to each stakeholder and wider reach out are needed to bring possible psychological and behavioural changes.

2. Patriarchy is so deep rooted that in many cases, changes are accepted superficially by men as well as women.

3. In few cases though the visible changes are accepted and followed (viz. property rights) innate behavioural changes are lacking.

Challenges at government and media level:

1. It is observed that people, who are protectors of legal and constitutional rights (viz. police, advocates), are still play gender biased role. The violence against women cases are either rejected by them or not handled properly. It is tried by these officers not to register the case and de-motivate women from launching cases of violence. There is less awareness among police, and judiciary system about Acts which protects women’s rights viz. Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Domestic Violence Act 2005.

2. As most of the key personnel at government offices are men, programmes which are meant for women are not given proper attention.

3. Majority of media is also playing crucial role where women is portrayed as a commodity. Media is more influential and is considered as a scale of measuring behavioural standard. Though organizations work hard towards gender sensitization, media can lessen the effects through TV serials, advertisement, etc.

4. Indian TV serials are also projecting that women is an enemy of women, which is strengthening the popular myth.

Neo-patriarchy:

- It is expected that education brings conscientization but instead of that stereotype roles are hammered in the name of education.

- Under the disguise of liberalism, women are conditioned and / or forced to act as a commodity.
- Women are given restricted liberty but ultimate decision power remains in the hands of men. So men are ready to ‘give’ liberty and glorify it but not ready to accept that freedom is human right of women.
- In few so called Women Cells women are counseled in coping with the violence to save the family instead of empowering her to fight against violence.

**Future strategies**

- Till date the gender sensitization training and programmes were taken jointly for men and women. There is need of separate trainings for men so that at initial stage they can ventilate themselves openly.
- There is need to highlight model behaviour shown by men.
- It will encourage other men to choose gender sensitized path.
- To the SPMM’s observation, comparing, correlating and highlighting dalit and women’s pain is an effective strategy. It brings effective changes at conceptual level and facilitates the process of introspection.
- Stakeholder wise customized training programmes for community in general, college youths, adolescents, media, children, parents, doctors, lawyers are needed. And proper follow-up system needs to create.
- Customized training programmes for CBO and NGO workers of Marathwada region of Maharashtra will be focused initially.
- Policy advocacy in educational syllabus of children adolescent is needed.

**Case Study**

(This is the case study of Mr. Mahadeo Umap, a 35 year old activist of Campaign for Human Rights. He resides in Bhopa village of Dharur Block of Beed District - India. During the review meeting he narrated his experiments, experiences about changes taken place in him.)

“When I came to know about gender sensitization training through SPMM, I was doubtful to attend it. I was busy in fighting injustices and atrocities against dalit. I was looking gender sensitization training as a waste exercise. I thought that there are many important and relevant problems in the community than women’s issues. After all women doesn’t face any problem. She just stays back at home and does her daily chores, which needs not much energy, the way men do. And whatever woman does, it is her traditional duty and she should not complain about it.

In the first session, we (men) were asked about Dalit atrocities. We forcefully and fiercely ventilated and spoke about caste Hindus who commits atrocities on us. We also become angry when caste Hindus abuses our women. Then we were asked about injustices done by us on our mother, sisters and wife. But we didn’t feel that we were doing any injustices to them. Step by step with daily life examples we were asked about verbal abuses, or violence done at home. How we restrict movement of our mother, sisters and wife. We were asked to observe type of work and amount of work done by our mother, wife and sisters. We were asked to observe how women sit in the kitchen while having meal. One day I personally observed it and saw that my wife and mother keep their one foot near to stomach and other foot is on the ground. While eating, one foot presses their stomach. I could not understand the reason. When I was peeping in the kitchen, my father abused me for peeping. But their sitting posture was pricking in my mind. I discussed this matter in the training. I came to know that due to such posture women is unable to eat properly. I also observed that sometimes there is no vegetable to eat with rotis. I never thought that just because of us, my wife and mother eat less but they never complained about it. They had accepted it as their tradition. Before this incidence I have never seen my
mother and wife as a human being. This training enlightened me to think about women empathetically. After that I asked all family members to have meal together. Initially my idea was rejected by my parents and wife. But slowly they accepted it.

After few days, I tried to fetch water from village well. Villagers were ridiculing me. But I tried to know the pain of my wife while fetching the water. I also started to do my own work like cleaning my plate, taking water in bathroom for bath etc. Later on, once I tried to collect cotton from the farm. Traditionally it is done by women. I used to think that there is not much energy required to do such petty jobs. To collect the cotton, a certain posture is required to maintain. One can neither sits nor stand. The position is half standing. I tried it and got tired within 10 minutes. My legs started paining. I could not withstand the pain and suddenly sat down. At that moment, I was wonderstruck how women can do such work continuously for hours. It has changed my total perception of their amount of hard work.

In one of the sessions, we (men) were asked to go to weekly bazaar with wife and bring vegetables needed for the week. We were asked to carry 3 kg watermelon while other vegetables were taken by wife. Next day we shared our experiences. We were asked if any pain was felt by us while carrying 3 kg watermelon. The response was negative. When trainer asked to narrate the way of carrying the watermelon, I told them initially I took it in left hand, afterwards I took it in right hand and then after crossing some distance I took it on my head. For some time I was carrying watermelon on my back. Suddenly I realized that just because of pain I could not carry watermelon in one hand. There was pain but I was not looking at it consciously. Then trainer told us, if men cannot carry watermelon in one hand and keep on doing other work then how can a pregnant women carry a child in one place and still does all kinds of work without single complaint.

I was shocked to correlate it. This was point of total realization for me. I was feeling bad that how much a woman can take load of work as compare to man. From that day onwards, I totally accepted that woman is also human being. I am treating my wife and mother with respect and dignity. I am also helping them in kitchen work. Since that day there are very less quarrels in the home. I am now trying my friend circle should also accept this path.”

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Beyond Bridges: Migration, Masculinities and Risk Behaviour
An educational intervention in Southern and Eastern UP
- Abhijit Das, Diptanil Ray, Ravi Jeena, Manideep Guha, Satish K Singh

Context: SAHAYOG is a non-profit voluntary organization working as a technical support organisation on issues like gender, women’s health, and women’s participation in Uttar Pradesh, in India. Considering the widespread prevalence of violence against women within an extremely patriarchal society SAHAYOG chose to specifically address men and boys. SAHAYOG has been supporting a network called Men’s Action for Stopping Violence against Women (MASVAW). MASVAW believes that violence against women in not only women’s issue but also a larger social issue and a human rights violation. MASVAW attempts to provide men with a space to explore a different way of being masculine, and to understand how equitable gender relations can benefit both men and women. Members of MASVAW, especially those working in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand became alert when they noticed that there was a steady stream of young men who were coming back their villages from their place of work carrying a serious illness, and the threat of HIV was discussed. At this point SAHAYOG became interested in exploring the linkages between male out-migration, masculinities, HIV/AIDS and gender in Uttar Pradesh. The strategy was to first build understanding on the linkages among gender equality, masculinity, HIV/AIDS and gender equitable responsible relationships, and then to develop an appropriate curriculum for field level intervention. Centre for Health and Social Justice supported SAHAYOG in developing the field intervention and to test its effectiveness.

Key Questions on HIV, Masculinity and Migration
Literature on HIV/AIDS recognises the importance of gender as well as migration. The ‘gendered risk’ that women face is being increasingly understood, however men, who are the main migrants are often seen only as agents who transmit the infection, and are often referred to as a ‘bridge population’. Some of the key questions which remain unanswered are:

- Are Men only Vectors and Bridges?
- How do Masculinities affect risks?
- Do gender norms only increase risks and vulnerabilities of women?
- Are condom based ‘post migration’ interventions adequate?
- Do potential migrants realise their risks?

Situational Analysis
An extensive literature review supplemented with field study in three eastern UP district was done as part of the situational analysis. Forty three focus group discussions were on HIV/AIDS and related issues, in 3 districts. Twelve PLHA, of whom seven were women, were interviewed, all of whom, had first-hand experience of migration in the recent past. Most of the male PLHAs interviewed said that they had been migrants to Mumbai, while the women said that they were ‘widows’ of now-dead migrants who had migrated to Mumbai. The findings are summarized below.

HIV and Migration in Eastern and Southern Uttar Pradesh:

- UP has the highest population and the highest population and proportion of migrants in India
- UP is a high vulnerable but low prevalence state
- Surveillance mechanisms not robust
- UP provides the highest proportion of out of state migrants in Mumbai (29%). Maharashtra is among 6 high prevalence states
- Knowledge about HIV and AIDS not very high
- Condom knowledge high (81%) usage low (4.7%) in the state
- Districts from Eastern and Southern UP are very poor and report very high migration – sex ratio of some districts is positive

Migration and HIV Vulnerability

- Poverty links Migration to HIV vulnerability
- Migration is a means of survival in resource starved regions
- Cheap mobile labour is necessary for economic liberalisation and growth in India
- Labour laws, health facilities and other social security are not available for migrants
- Young males are vulnerable to sexual exploitation during transit and at destination – apprentice based professions
- Male only living environments contribute to HIV vulnerability
- Loneliness and Isolation – individually, socio-culturally

Masculinity Migration and HIV

- Lack of economic opportunity and increased respectability of an outside ‘naukri’ job
- Aspirations – economic, social, self esteem
- Economic and social compulsion to start earning as soon as possible
- Returnee tales of glamour – flashy lifestyle
- Perception that going out will help youth not to get ‘spoilt’ – gambling, alcoholism, gangs
- Societal pressure to marry back home and have children (even when HIV +ve; unable to use condoms; fear of disclosure)
- Social stigma and isolation of the HIV +ve – leave them in the fields to die, prohibit use of water sources, refusal to cremate etc.

(Secondary literature, NACO reports, Field Investigation)
Intervention

Considering the findings of the situational analysis an educational intervention was designed to work as a pre-departure strategy for in-school/institutions and out of school youth. Field activists of SAHAYOG’s partner NGO’s from eastern UP and Bundelkhand were trained as facilitators for using this educational strategy among the youth in the project area. A rigorous evaluation of the field intervention methodology was carried out in three locations and the results of this intervention are described below.

Pre – Departure Group and Individual Education:

Gender and HIV Awareness Education among Youth

Issues Addressed

- HIV and Gender,
- HIV and Masculinity,
- Migration,
- Power and Vulnerability in the context of Migration,
- Sexuality and Responsibility and
- Violence and Rights.

Educational Strategy

The educational intervention comprised of the following steps and materials

A. Training Intervention for Facilitators
   - Facilitators Manual

B. Group Training intervention with youth with Facilitated Learning Materials
   - Game
   - Flash Card Set

C. Educational intervention at individual level through Unfacilitated Learning Material
   - Illustrated Story Book
   - Poster and Stickers

Field Testing the intervention

The Intervention was tried out in seven districts in Eastern UP and Bundelkhand with in-school and out of school rural and urban youth. A comparative estimate was conducted in three locations as follows:

1. In one district in eastern UP the students at a intercollege who had undergone the educational intervention were compared with a students of a similar intercollege where the intervention was not conducted
2. In two districts of Southern UP (Bundelkhand) youth in the community were given a pre and post intervention questionnaire to understand the changes.

Objectives of the Field Test: Did the use of educational material developed by SAHAYOG have an impact on the understanding of male student youth regarding the possibility of HIV infections during migration into urban areas?

The test questionnaire used for the intervention contained a series of questions which broadly covered the following themes:

- HIV Knowledge
- Gender Attitudes
- Masculinity Attitudes
- HIV Threat Perception

Results of the field test

The Field test of the curriculum was conducted in two locations at two different points in time. The first field test took place in 2007 in Eastern UP while the second test took place a year later in 2008 in Bundelkhand.

A. Location – Eastern UP where 41 students in one inter-college were provided with the intervention and compared with a group of 53 students in another inter-college where the educational intervention was not carried out.

Results 1: HIV Knowledge – a set of seven questions were included in the questionnaire for understanding this aspect. The participants were scored on their responses to these seven questions.

Results 2: Gender Related Attitude - a set of six statements were included to understand the participants gender related attitude.

Difference between intervention institution (RDITI) and non-intervention institution was not statistically significant with an outcome score of 5 (at p 0.5)

Difference between intervention institution (RDITI) and non-intervention institution was statistically significant with an outcome score of 3. The Odds Ratio of the difference was 6.72 (CI - 2.68-17.05) at p 0.5
**Results 3: Masculinity Attitudes** – a set of five statements were included for understanding the participants understanding of masculinities.

Difference between intervention institution (RDITI) and non-intervention institution was statistically significant with an outcome score of 3. The Odds Ratio of the difference was 12.3 (CI: 4.48 – 37.76) at p 0.5

**Results 4: HIV Threat Perception** – a set of eight questions relating to both men’s and women’s vulnerability to HIV infection were included in the questionnaire.

Difference between intervention institution (RDITI) and non-intervention institution was statistically significant with an outcome score of 6. The Odds Ratio of the difference was 5.17 (1.06-24.51) at p 0.5

**B. Location – Southern UP (Bundelkhand)**

In both Lalitpur and Banda districts 5 villages were selected where intervention was carried out and 127 youth from Lalitpur and 150 youth from Banda were involved in the process. A total of 140 participants were included in the pre-test and 102 were included in the post test.

**Result 1 - HIV Knowledge** – a set of seven questions were included in the questionnaire for understanding this aspect. The participants who had given a correct knowledge response of each of these statements were compared and the results are shown in the bar chart. The bar chart shows an increase in correct responses after the intervention, however the difference is not statistically significant.

**Results 2: Gender Related Attitude** – a set of seven statements were included to understand the participants gender related attitude. The participants from the pre-test and post test who had given a gender equitable response of each of these statements were compared and the results are shown in the bar chart below.

The bar chart shows that in all seven statements the proportion of gender equitable responses is higher in the post test group with the difference being many times in six of the seven statements. The chi-square test showed the difference to the considerable. A score for each individual was also developed adding all the gender responsive answers. Using a cut off score of 4 the Odds Ratio is 4.9 (CI 2.5 – 9.7) at p 0.05

**Results 3: Masculinity Attitudes** – a set of five statements were included for understanding the participants understanding of masculinities.
In four out of five of these statements the percentage of gender equitable answers is much higher among the post test group. When the scores for individuals were tallied and using a cut of score of 3 the Odds ratio was 8.6 with Confidence interval of 4.6 – 15.9 at p 0.05.

**Results 4 : HIV Threat Perception** – a set of eight questions relating to both men’s and women’s vulnerability to HIV infection were included in the questionnaire. A comparison of the pretest and post test correct answers is given in the bar chart below. The chart shows that while in six of the statements there is hardly any difference between the pre and post test correct answers, two statements show a sharp difference in the correct answer among the post test group. When statistical tests were applied to the results no significant differences were seen between the two groups.

**Feedback on the Curriculum**
A total of 99 youth who had participated in the intervention in two areas of Bundelkhand provided feedback on the curriculum. Their feedback is summarized below:

A. **Feedback on Methods** - Story Book – 72/ 89 ; Board Game – 66/ 96 and Flash card based discussion – 72 / 96 found it very useful
B. **Importance of the different topics**
   - HIV / AIDS knowledge – 70/ 99
   - Women and HIV / AIDS-  66/99
   - Masculinity and HIV/ AIDS – 63/99
   - Migration and HIV/AIDS – 69 /
   - HIV / AIDS and Stigma- 38/ 99
C. **Did you share your learning with others?**
   - Yes – 95 / 99 ;
   - With Friends – 60 / 99; With Brother – 11/ 99
   - With more than one person – 18/99
D. **Suggestions**
   - Such programmes should be carried out in Schools and Colleges – 99/99
   - Such programmes should be carried out in villages/ in the community – 45/99
   - Such programmes should be carried in more than one place – 43/99
   - Youth should be involved in carrying out such programmes – 29/ 99

**Conclusions and Recommendations**:
The curriculum was tried out in three different location and at two different points in time in Uttar Pradesh, in both in-school and out of school situations. The field test of the curriculum show that there are differences/changes which may be attributed to the intervention in both field test locations.

1. The changes in gender related and masculinity attitudes are the most significant across both groups.
2. HIV related knowledge was high to begin with in both groups and the change/difference was less and not statistically significant
3. HIV threat perception increased/was different among the non intervention and intervention groups, however the difference was not statistically significant.

The difference in the results or extent of change between the four domains and between the locations may be explained through the following - The second set of intervention took place a year after the first intervention, which meant that the facilitators had been trained a year earlier before they participated in the second intervention. These facilitators were associated with MASVAW so there own knowledge and understanding of gender and masculinity issues was more than their knowledge and understanding of HIV related issues and one can assume that there may have been some decline in this aspect.

Considering the response of the out of school youth who participated in this intervention it can be recommended that all the content areas were found to be useful with issues related to migration, sexuality and gender in the context of HIV being seen as most useful. The methodology was also found to be useful by most participants. It is also heartening to learn that a large proportion of the participants shared this information among their siblings and especially among their peers.

**Acknowledgments**
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