

Can We Tackle Violence Against Women?

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Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a worldwide problem. On an average, one in three women has been battered, or undergone coercion or abuse in some or other way in her lifetime.¹ Tackling violence against women is a challenge faced by all countries of the world, and the efforts are driven as much by health-related and economic reasons as by humanitarian and egalitarian concerns. Women suffer death as a result of violence, either directly in the form of homicide or indirectly through suicide, with 38 per cent of their murders being committed by their intimate partners.² Thousands more die due to maternity related causes or lethal diseases like HIV. Women who experience intimate partner violence are twice as likely

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- 1 L. Heise, et. al., “Ending violence against women”, *Population Reports*, Volume 27, Number 4, 1999.
- 2 “Violence against women”, *World Health Organisation*, November 29, 2017, <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

to have depression and 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV as compared to women who do not undergo partner violence.³ Almost 750 million of the women alive today were married before they turned 18.⁴

The situation is equally dismal on the economic front. Development practitioners are increasingly concerned about the hindrances, violence against women cause to development.⁵ For instance, in India, an incidence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can cost a woman five paid work days, making her receive 25 per cent less salary.⁶ Research indicates that the economic cost of VAWG is ubiquitous in every country. Canada loses \$1.16 billion dollars and Australia faces a loss of \$11.38 billion every year as a result of IPV.⁷ Countries in Middle East, West Africa and South Asia are at equal or perhaps greater risk, though the lack of data makes it difficult for analysts to make country-wide extrapolations.

The global experience of tackling violence against women shows that it is an uphill but not an impossible task. Several non-governmental and governmental organisations have been successful in setting precedents, both in terms of prevention and response.

3 “Facts and figures: Ending violence against women”, *UN Women*, November, 2017, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

4 Ibid.

5 P. Sen, “Development practice and violence against women”, *Gender & Development*, Volume 6, Number 3, 1998, pp. 7-16.

6 Lakshmi Puri, “The economic costs of violence against women”, *UN Women*, 2016, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>.

7 Ibid.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

For decades, the efforts of governmental and non-governmental women's organisations have been focused on meeting the needs of victims of violence. While helping survivors is an essential element of a holistic strategy designed to counter gender-based violence, the focus of a long-term approach has to be on reducing, if not preventing, violence.

Lori L. Heise's ecological model that takes gendered factors occurring across a social ecology as drivers of violence is widely considered as the starting point for any prevention programming and research. From social norms and behaviour that support VAWG to early childhood experiences of violence that increases the likelihood of life-long exposure to violence, the model indicates key drivers of violence against women and girls. The framework also establishes a proportional relation between partner violence and harmful alcohol use and an inversely proportional relation between violence and women's economic empowerment. The model recognises the effectiveness of legal interventions and strongly recommends improving the violence database by using modern data collection methods.⁸

Drawing on the factors highlighted by Heise and adapting the ecological model at various levels (societal, community, interpersonal and individual) can yield a sound framework to prevent violence against women.

SOCIETAL LEVEL: BUILDING INDIGENOUS AND INCLUSIVE FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

At the societal level, change needs to be brought to legal and policy norms. There has to be a widespread unacceptability

⁸ L. Heise, "Violence against women: an integrated, ecological framework", *Violence Against Women*, Volume 4, Number 3, 1998, pp. 262-290.

of violence; advocacy to change discriminatory laws; and a legal and policy infrastructure that ensures an adequate state response to VAWG.⁹ Weldon and Htun (2013) conducted an important study in 70 countries from 1975 to 2005 to find out why some governments have adopted robust measures to counter VAWG and why others lag miles behind. The answer lies in the existence of ‘feminist activism’.¹⁰ Feminist activism plays a decisive role in making governments enact effective policies and infrastructure-related measures to prevent and mitigate violence. The study also reveals that the success of strong indigenous feminist movements lies in using international and regional conventions and agreements as levers to influence policy-making and educating indigenous groups and communities about the value of global norms on women’s rights.¹¹

This, however, is extremely difficult in societies with a strong resistance, and in certain cases abhorrence, towards the feminist and human rights framework on the grounds of religion. Religious scholars influencing legal norms, particularly in the Islamic tradition, project feminism as an instrument for “women’s dominance over men” and human rights as something ‘alien to Islamic tradition’.¹² At the same time, human and women’s rights’ activists consider it futile

9 L. Michau, et. al., “Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice”, *The Lancet*, Volume 385, Number 9978, 2015, pp. 1672-1684.

10 S.L. Weldon and M. Htun, “Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women”, *Gender and Development*, Volume 21, Number, 2, 2013, pp. 231-247.

11 Ibid.

12 Mir-Hosseini, Z. “Criminalising sexuality: Zina laws as violence against women in Muslim contexts”, in Z. Mir-Hosseini and V. Hamzić eds., *Control and Sexuality: The revival of Zina Laws in Muslim contexts*, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, London, 2010, pp. 19-48.

and counter-productive to work within a religious framework.¹³ Mir-Hosseini (2010) asserts that these two blind spots must be removed and that both the Islamic framework and human rights perspectives can be mutually reinforcing, particularly in terms of resisting the ‘revised *Zina* laws’ which deal with ‘unlawful’ sexual relations.¹⁴ *Zina* laws, if viewed historically, had become obsolete in almost all Muslim countries in the early 20th century, only to be revived as a result of the resurgence of Islam as a political force in the late 20th century. This suggests that these laws are based on a patriarchal interpretation of the sacred texts of Islam, and must be critiqued from within the Islamic tradition. The classical jurists’ interpretation of the sacred texts was rooted in the social, economic and political realities of the world they lived in, a world where patriarchy and slavery were part of the fabric of society and were seen as the natural order of things.¹⁵ These laws, therefore, are merely juristic constructions that have their roots in the tribal structures and patriarchal ideology of pre-Islamic Arabia.¹⁶ The interpretation of these laws much evolve with the changes in socio-political reality. Besides, many of these laws, such as stoning to death or punishment for consensual sexual relations, have no roots in the Qur’an. As argued by Asifa Quraishi, “(w)hile the Qur’an condemns extramarital sex as an evil, it authorizes the Muslim legal system to prosecute someone for committing this crime only when the act is performed so openly that four people see them without invading their privacy.”¹⁷ Building a vibrant indigenous feminist movement in order to

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Asifa Quraishi, “Her honour: an Islamic critique of the rape provisions in Pakistan’s ordinance on zina”, *Islamic Studies*, Volume 38, Number 3, 1999, pp. 403-431.

influence governmental action thus seems unlikely without a consistent and effective engagement with clerics and religious bodies, particularly in Muslim countries. Amendment of *Zina* laws in Pakistan and the reformation of Family Law in Morocco are two examples of the success of such an inclusive approach.

National laws, however, must complement regional, provincial, sub-provincial and indigenous laws. This is where the active participation and leadership of local women's rights activists can create a difference. A classic example is that of Ecuador where efforts by women's organisations at the national level "to affect the 2008 national constitution" was supported by indigenous women activists from the Kichwa community. The latter succeeded in translating the national legislation into the indigenous justice system by formulating a set of principles called Regulations for Good Livings (*Reglamentos de Buena Convivencia*).¹⁸

COMMUNITY LEVEL: USING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE WAYS AND ENGAGING LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

While violence against women and girls at the societal level is shaped by law and policy, at the community level it is the social norms about gender and power that can either support or discourage violence.¹⁹ Social norms, created by the interplay of cultural and religious beliefs, are often presented as a justification for gender-based violence. For instance, in a male-dominated society like Pakistan, partner violence is accepted as a cultural norm in many urban and rural settings and viewed as normal behavior within a marriage.²⁰ In communities

18 L. Michau, et. al., op. cit.

19 Ibid.

20 T.S. Ali, et. al., "Intimate partner violence in urban Pakistan: prevalence, frequency, and risk factors", *International Journal of Women's Health*, Volume 3, 2011, pp. 105-115.

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where such attitudes are legitimised by informal social norms, individuals find no incentive to shun violence. In fact, the threat of social condemnation or punishment²¹ strongly *discourages* them from challenging pro-violence norms. Community-level prevention of violence, therefore, must aim to change such violence-inducing social norms by creating an environment that breeds gender-equality and non-violence.

This starts with introducing change in attitudes supporting gender-based violence. Whether it is a prevention programme or a service for assisting victims, the key lies in using culturally and socially relevant ways and matching program delivery to local needs, preferences, and cultural norms.²² The success of the ‘It’s not OK’ campaign in New Zealand, for example, is largely due to the use of culturally pertinent images, language, people, and situations to create a stronger enabling environment for changes in attitudes around intimate partner violence.²³ New Zealand, despite having ratified a number of international and regional treaties, continues to face VAWG, with one in three women having experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.²⁴ The ‘It’s not OK’ campaign, however, has proven to be a model for creating a difference. Aimed at challenging attitudes and behaviour that tolerate violence, this community-driven initiative used a

21 “Changing Cultural and Social Norms that Support Violence”, *World Health Organisation*, 2009, https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/norms.pdf.

22 J. A. Durlak and E.P. DuPre, “Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation”, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Volume 41, Number 3-4, 2008, p. 327.

23 L. Michau, et. al., op. cit.

24 J. Contesse and J. Fenrich, “It’s Not OK: New Zealand’s Efforts to Eliminate Violence against Women”, *Fordham International Law*, Volume 32, Number 6, 2008, pp. 1770-1871.

mix of effective tools such as TV advertisements, engaging family-violence related soap operas, a toll free information helpline, vibrant social media presence, training of journalists and service providers, regular broadcast of personal stories of survivors, and innovative community-led activities backed by a research and evaluation programme.²⁵ A survey regarding the effectiveness of campaign's advertisements reveals that the ads helped 68 per cent of people understand behaviour that should not be tolerated and made 88 per cent of people believe that change was possible. Moreover, the ads helped generate discourse about domestic violence amongst 68 per cent of the viewers, and 22 per cent of the viewers took at least one action in response to the advertisements.²⁶

No attempt to change norms around Gender Based Violence (GBV) is likely to succeed without involving a wide array of local stakeholders. This not only adds a culturally relevant flavour to the project but also intertwines counter-violence efforts with the interests of the stakeholders. SASA! (a Uganda-based non-profit organisation working toward the prevention of violence against women and children), for instance, engages a broad range of stakeholders including “community activists, local governmental and cultural leaders, professionals such as police officers and health care providers, and institutional leaders”.²⁷ In 2014, SASA! undertook a study

25 L. Michau, et. al., op. cit.

26 “Campaign for Action on Family Violence: Reach and retention of the “It’s not OK” television advertisements”, *Centre for Social Research and Evaluation*, March, 2010, <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/campaign-action-violence-tv/index.html>.

27 T. Abramsky, et. al., “Findings from the SASA! Study: a cluster randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilization intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda”, *BMC Medicine*, Volume 12, Number 22, 2014.

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to evaluate the impact of its community mobilisation efforts on prevention of IPV and reduction in HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda. The intervention, they found, lowered the social acceptance of violence significantly, increased the acceptance that women can refuse sex to a great extent and decreased the occurrence of IPV by 52 per cent.²⁸

INTERPERSONAL LEVEL: GET MEN INVOLVED

Most instances of VAWG occur at inter-personal level, with partner violence being the most common form. Preventing violence at this level has, therefore, been the focus of most governmental and non-governmental organisations. Victims normally share the instances of violence with their immediate family members, peers and neighbours, and their response dictates their perceptions of violence and the course they are likely to take. This implies that prevention programs should not be solely directed toward women and girls but also work with their family members and peers, particularly men. Men can be and must be engaged as participants in education programs, as community leaders, as professionals and providers, and as advocates and activists working in alliance with women.²⁹

Entertainment-Education (EE) programs have been gaining quite a lot of significance lately, especially through the initiatives of Breakthrough, a human rights organisation with offices in India and the US. Lapsansky and Chatterjee (2013) undertook Breakthrough's case study in India and found there are five ways in which men can be represented in EE programs: "1) invisible men; 2) men as perpetrators; 3) men as allies; 4) men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and 5) men as agents in

28 Ibid.

29 M. Flood, "Involving men in efforts to end violence against women", *Men and Masculinities*, Volume 14, Number 3, 2011, pp. 358-377.

redefining manhood”.³⁰ EE programs seek to redefine manhood by challenging the notions of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and presenting alternative forms.

One of the most interesting and innovative campaigns involving men as agents of change is the Canadian White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) that started in 1991. Based on the premise that there are scores of men who detest violence against women, the campaign seeks to break the silence of all such men and make them part of the solution. Activists typically wear a white ribbon “from November 25 (the international day for the eradication of VAW) to December 6 (the anniversary of the Montreal massacre in which a man killed 14 women)”³¹ and, thus, pledge publicly that they will neither commit violence against women nor remain silent about it. Apart from working with a wide range of ordinary men across the social and political spectrum, the WRC also involves high-profile men who speak out publicly against violence to inspire change. WRC also attempts to change the traditional notions of fatherhood and encourages men to be more active, nurturing parents. The campaign gives overwhelming importance to education programs and distributes educational materials among boys studying in schools. From providing shelters to local women with the help of men to working with trade unions, and from running an inspiring media campaign to developing sound educational programs, WRC provides a model for giving boys and men the structure, encouragement and tools to work as allies with girls and young women.³²

30 C. Lapsansky and J.S. Chatterjee, “Masculinity matters: using entertainment education to engage men in ending violence against women in India”, *Critical Arts*, Volume 27, Number 1, 2013, pp. 36-55.

31 M. Kaufman, “Building a movement of men working to end violence against women”, *Development*, Volume 44, Number 3, 2001, pp. 9-14.

32 Ibid.

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There are, however, several challenges associated with working with men. Casey et. al. (2013) interviewed 29 representatives of organisations engaging men across continents to prevent violence against women and discovered five core challenges: “(1) negotiating issues of gender, (2) intersectionality, (3) sustainability, (4) legitimacy, and (5) ideological inclusivity”.³³ The authors describe these challenges as “tensions” as they exist within competing priorities and paradigms. These tensions are influenced by two larger themes: the theme of cultural, political, economic and social context and the manifestation of these tensions across ecological layers of analysis. The latter has implications pertaining to both the participation of individual men in programs and the impact of these tensions at organisational, societal and national levels.³⁴

Working with men has been a rewarding experience, demonstrating potential for bringing about change in attitudes associated with violence against women. But the experience has been local in scale and limited in scope.³⁵ Instead of small, scattered and short-lived interventions, efforts involving men ought to be systematic, large-scale, and coordinated.³⁶

Another approach that has drawn the attention of programmers lately is designing the prevention programs on the basis of strong theoretical notions. Increasingly, programmers are moving towards incorporating theories of change that explore how change happens in complex social systems, as opposed to sticking to a linear cause-and-effect knowledge,

33 E.A. Casey, et. al., “Context, challenges, and tensions in global efforts to engage men in the prevention of violence against women: an ecological analysis”, *Men and Masculinities*, Volume 16, Number 2, 2013, pp. 228-251.

34 Ibid.

35 M. Flood, op. cit.

36 Ibid.

attitudes, and practices (KAP) model.³⁷ The Nicaraguan feminist non-governmental organisation Puntos de Encuentro's multi-sectoral program is a classic example. Working in coordination with hundreds of organisations, institutions, media outlets and health and social service providers, Puntos draws on a vast range of social and psychological theories and creates intertwining television storylines that recognise that change is non-linear and often messy.³⁸ Two of their television series, *Sexto Sentido* (Sixth Sense) and *Contracorriente* (Turning the Tide), "have moved millions of viewers to challenge the *status quo* of entrenched machismo and violence".³⁹ Grounded in theories of social change, the series do not tell the audience what to do but present an interesting mix of thought-provoking drama and humour revolving around the power relations and struggles of women and men. Apart from the television series, Puntos broadcasts a radio programme, publishes a feminist magazine and regularly offers training courses to women and youth activists. Surveys evaluating Puntos' impact revealed that the television series brought about significant change, with the majority of viewers talking about issues of violence against women and opposing domestic violence.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: ASPIRATIONAL PROGRAMS MATTER

The individual level reflects the experiences of violence faced by women and girls. This is the level where men hold notions of masculinity including social dominance, aggressive sexuality and feelings of bias and power. Women, on the other hand, adhere to the notions of femininity including "learned submissive roles which lead them to accept violent behaviour

37 L. Michau, et. al., op. cit.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

or feel that they are to blame for the violence that they have experienced".⁴⁰

One of the principles that Michau and colleagues (2015) recommend to prevent violence at this level is aspirational programming, which encourages activism by presenting ideas and concrete examples of the world that we foresee for ourselves.⁴¹ Because the programming aims to inspire activism, the messages conveyed have to be powerful, striking and relatable. Efforts may focus on the men of a particular community, as Breakthrough's *Bell Bajao* (Ring the Bell) campaign is doing in two Indian provinces. *Bell Bajao*, launched in India in 2008, calls on men and boys to ring the bell to stop domestic violence against women. Men or boys, usually neighbours, ring the doorbell after overhearing a man beating his wife, under the pretext of needing something. The campaign is unique in that it shifts the responsibility of activism away from non-governmental organisations, state or victims, onto men in the community.⁴² Impact evaluation surveys of the campaign showed promising results, indicating considerable change, at individual and community level, regarding interpersonal violence.⁴³

BEYOND LEVELS: EDUCATING CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS AND WORKING WITH PARENTS

The continued focus of governmental and non-governmental organisations on educating children and adults about violence against women and girls as part of prevention

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Jael Silliman, "Breakthrough's Bell Bajao!: A Campaign to Bring Domestic Violence to a Halt", 2011, http://breakthrough.tv/wp/wp-content/files_mf/1330816837_BellBajao_Insight.pdf.

programs reflect the effectiveness of such interventions. Education on GBV brings awareness among both children and adults about their gender-related rights and responsibilities, about what constitutes inappropriate behaviour, harassment, sexism, racism and coercion, about the repercussions such criminal acts bring, or must bring, and about what to do and how to respond when violence is perpetrated. Education, both formal and informal, is a “powerful tool for the prevention of violence, especially when combined with other strategies, such as community mobilisation and awareness-raising”.⁴⁴ Schools, in particular, can play a critical role in addressing different gender inequalities and stereotypes leading to violent behaviour.⁴⁵

Domestic violence is one such manifestation of violent behaviour that can be addressed through school-based prevention programs. Hounslow (one of the boroughs in London) reached this conclusion in 2004 and launched a programme ‘Learning to Respect’. The programme revolves around a curriculum focused on improving understanding of healthy and non-abusive relationships. Since 2004, it has engaged 73 schools in the borough, trained over 2000 teachers and equipped thousands of children with awareness regarding domestic violence, in collaboration with a number of agencies.⁴⁶ The success of the programme encourages replication, though the challenges and cultural sensitivities in different regions need to be taken into account.

44 “Through education, youth act to prevent violence against women”, *UN Women*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/10/through-education-youth-act-to-prevent-violence-against-women>.

45 Patte Friend, “Learning to Respect: Domestic Violence Education Programme”, 2014, <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/download/file/fid/3446>.

46 Ibid.

LEAVE THE KIDS ALONE

Sexual violence, including child sexual abuse (CSA), is yet another kind of violence likely to be prevented through education at primary and secondary levels. With over 300,000 children being sexually abused every year,⁴⁷ this is a global problem that needs immediate attention. A research analysing 55 studies conducted between 2002 and 2009 on children aged less than 18 years estimates the prevalence of CSA ranging from 8 to 31 per cent for girls and 3 to 17 per cent for boys.⁴⁸ Dealing with the mental, physical, emotional and social impact of such abuse on a victim's life⁴⁹ requires programs backed by scientific research, applied in an integrated manner.

The lack of age-appropriate sexuality education initiatives at both primary and secondary levels is one of the leading factors increasing vulnerability of sexual abuse, particularly among girls.⁵⁰ Sexuality education can be particularly effective in lowering sexual activity and preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).⁵¹ UNESCO's

47 "Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: Facts about Sexual Abuse and How to Prevent it," *Stop It Now*, 2008, https://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/prevent_child_sexual_abuse.pdf.

48 J. Barth, et. al., "The current prevalence of child sexual abuse worldwide: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *International Journal of Public Health*, Volume 58, Number 3, 2013, pp. 469-483.

49 D. Lisak, "The psychological impact of sexual abuse: Content analysis of interviews with male survivors", *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Volume 7, Number 4, 1994, pp. 525-548; P.K. Trickett, et. al., "The impact of sexual abuse on female development: Lessons from a multigenerational, longitudinal research study" *Development and Psychopathology*, Volume 23, Number 2, 2011, pp. 453-476.

50 D. Finkelhor, et. al., "Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors", *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Volume 14, Number 1, 1990, pp. 19-28.

51 M.L. Vincent, et. al., "Reducing adolescent pregnancy through school and community-based education", *Jama*, Volume 257, Number 24, 1987, pp. 3382-3386; D.B. Kirby, et. al., "Sex and HIV education programs:

2008 report incorporated a number of reviews on the impact of sex, relationships and HIV education. The takeaway is that such programs, if increased substantially in number, can “significantly decrease one or more types of sexual activity”.⁵² The report also debunks the myth that sexuality education increases sexual behaviour. Similar revelations about the absence of relation between sexuality education and increased sexual behaviour have been made by Kirby’s (2002) review of studies. Highlighting the scope and focus of different sexuality education programs, the UNESCO (2008) report unveils that, at present, a vast number of programs seek to either eliminate risk or delay sexual activity, with very few focusing on preventing sexual abuse and violence.⁵³

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), therefore, is the need of the hour. CSE “is a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. It is taught over several years, providing age-appropriate information consistent with the evolving capacities of young people”.⁵⁴ It covers “anatomy, hormones and physiological responses, STIs, birth control, gender identity and gender roles, sexual orientation, development, sexual behaviors and problems, and sexual abuse”.⁵⁵ In

their impact on sexual behaviors of young people throughout the world”, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 40, Number 3, 2007, pp. 206-217; K.F. Stanger-Hall and D.W. Hall, “Abstinence-only education and teen pregnancy rates: why we need comprehensive sex education in the US”, *PloS One*, Volume 6, Number 10, 2011.

52 “Review of sex, relationships and HIV education in schools”, UNESCO, 2008, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000162989>.

53 Ibid.

54 “Comprehensive sexuality education”, UNFPA, 2016, <https://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education>.

55 B.M. King, “The need for school-based comprehensive sexuality education: some reflections after 32 years teaching sexuality to college students”, *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, Volume 7, Number 3, 2012, pp. 181-186.

the industrialised world, particularly in the US, the issue of sexuality education has been politicised with the proponents of abstinence-only education pressuring governments not to embrace CSE. Numerous studies have proved abstinence-only education ineffective,⁵⁶ but a vast majority of American schools continue teaching it.⁵⁷ The result is that over 70 per cent teens have no knowledge about sexuality beyond birth-control, and the epidemic of STIs among the young is growing by the day. The US also has the highest teenage pregnancy and STI rate in the industrialised world.⁵⁸

While there is ample evidence highlighting CSE's effectiveness, very few studies have been conducted evaluating its impact specifically on preventing abuse. Whatley and Trudell (1989), however, have useful recommendations, making up for the lack of research. The authors argue that sexual abuse prevention education needs to "be integrated into a comprehensive, coordinated K-12 (from kindergarten to grade 12) sexuality curriculum".⁵⁹ Such a curriculum would expose students to non-exploitative values – ones that emphasise less on 'my body is my own' and more on 'everyone's bodies are their own'. These values, besides helping children avoid abuse, would be carried through to adulthood "preventing abusive sexual behaviour" among adults. The authors also admit that,

56 J. Santelli, et. al., "Abstinence and abstinence-only education: A review of U.S. policies and programs", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 38, Number 1, 2006, pp. 72–81.

57 B.M. King, op. cit.

58 M.S. Kearney and P.B. Levine, "Why is the teen birth rate in the United States so high and why does it matter?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Volume 26, Number 2, 2012, pp. 141-63; K.F. Stanger-Hall and D.W. Hall, 2011, op. cit.

59 M. Whatley and B. Trudel, "Sexual abuse prevention and sexuality education: Interconnecting issues", *Theory into Practice*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1989, pp. 177-182.

without sustained and quality training of teachers and without bringing in specialists, the likelihood of delivering fruitful programs is low.⁶⁰

Like children and young adults, parents also need to be educated about CSA and sexuality education. Research divulges that programs that include family members of vulnerable youth are likely to be more successful in reducing risk of sexual abuse.⁶¹ Parents need to be trained and exposed to scientific facts about sexuality and the link between CSE and low vulnerability for sexual abuse. Some myths, like sexual abuse is mostly committed by strangers, need to be debunked. Babatsiko's review of studies conducted in North America and Asia, show how "parents throughout the studies thought that strangers posed the greatest threat to their children".⁶² In addition to 'stranger danger', there are several other myths diffusing "perpetrator responsibility" and the extent of harm CSA poses and its prevalence.⁶³

Moreover, teaching children correct names of genital organs is the first step toward sexuality education. A child not aware of the names of sexual organs is likely to find it hard explaining the experience of molestation if it occurred. This would also be a good way to remove shame and stigma associated with discussing sexuality. Research also supports

60 Ibid.

61 F.H. McClure, et. al., "Resilience in Sexually Abused Women: Risk and Protective Factors", *Journal of Family Violence*, Volume 23, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 81-88.

62 G. Babatsikos, "Parents' knowledge, attitudes and practices about preventing child sexual abuse: a literature review", *Child Abuse Review: Journal of the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*, Volume 19, Number 2, 2010, pp.107-129.

63 L. D. Cromer and R.E. Goldsmith, "Child Sexual Abuse Myths: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Individual Differences", *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, Volume 19, Number 6, 2010, pp. 618-647.

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the idea of educating parents and children in tandem with each other as that can encourage family communication about the matter, eventually triggering parent-to-parent discussion within communities.⁶⁴ Similarly, other individuals and personnel involved in the prevention of CSA, from medical providers to clergy and from forensic interviewers to law enforcement officials, can help children to disclose abuse and parents to report to the authorities.⁶⁵

RESPONSE PROGRAMS

USING HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND FIXING THE POWER EQUATION

Tackling violence against women, seemingly a complex job, must be viewed through the correct lens. Research shows that violence against women can be dealt effectively within the human rights framework.⁶⁶ Informed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Istanbul Convention, and other international and regional treaties, the human rights framework seeks to address all the factors impacting women's lives and causing violence. The notion is reinforced by the lessons learnt from work of WOMANKIND, a UK-based women's rights organisation with a focus on Africa. Being principally

64 M.C. Kenny, "Child sexual abuse prevention: Psychoeducational groups for preschoolers and their parents", *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, Volume 34, Number 1, 2009, pp. 24-42.

65 S.K. Wurtele, "Preventing sexual abuse of children in the twenty-first century: Preparing for challenges and opportunities" *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2009, pp.1-18.

66 "The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence", *Victorian Health Promotion Foundation*, State Government Victoria, 2004, [https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/IPV%20BOD%20web%20version.ashx](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/IPV%20BOD%20web%20version.ashx).

interested in the intersection between violence against women and other women's human rights, the organisation reveals that a rights-based analysis can help to provide an understanding of the often-intricate linkages between women's experience of violence and the denial of their social, political, economic and legal rights.⁶⁷ At the heart of violence, it implies, lies the unequal power relations between men and women in societal structures. Men being considered superior to women, particularly in patriarchal societies, get to have the freedom to involve in employment and education and contribute to the community. Women, in contrast, are expected to be agreeable and to follow the expectations of males in their family and/or community. The difference in both the sort and degree of freedom is the difference in power each bloc holds in the social, economic, political and legal spheres in a society. This is where the human rights framework can be instrumental. Once the unequal power relations are addressed, violence will decrease automatically. For instance, economic empowerment interventions such as the microfinance-based intervention in South Africa or the group-based credit programs in Bangladesh have led to significant decrease in domestic violence.⁶⁸ Conditional cash transfers to poor girls in high school in northeast South Africa resulted in a 34 per cent decrease in IPV, also reducing the risk of HIV.⁶⁹

67 Hayes, C., "Tackling violence against women: a worldwide approach", in Geraldine Terry and Joanna Hoare eds. *Gender-based violence*, Oxford, Oxfam, 2007, pp. 1-13.

68 J.C. Kim, "Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in South Africa", *American Journal of Public Health*, Volume 97, Number 10, 2007, pp. 1794-1802; S.R. Schuler, et. al., "Credit programs, patriarchy and men's violence against women in rural Bangladesh", *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 43, Number 12, 1996, pp. 1729-1742.

69 K.N. Kilburn, et. al, "Conditional cash transfers and the reduction in partner violence for young women: an investigation of causal pathways using evidence from a randomized experiment in South Africa (HPTN 068)", *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, Volume 21, 2018, e25043.

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The human rights framework is already successful as it has moved the violence against women from being invisible and a private matter to “being embraced in the human right programs by state parties, human rights organizations and individuals”.⁷⁰ The weakness, however, lies in the implementation, as the rights-based framework “depends on the functionality of the country’s legal system, the country’s judicial and political openness and country’s cultural context”.⁷¹

LEGISLATION: THE STARTING POINT

Legislation, in isolation, cannot prevent and tackle the deep-rooted social problem of violence against women, but the presence of legal instruments is a necessary condition. Besides legal sanctions, legislation can educate people and shape public opinion.

However, despite having enacted legal regulatory mechanisms in areas of domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, cyber violence and forced marriages, Sweden continues to face growing violence against women, with the statistics revealing the prevalence being 13 per cent higher than the EU average.⁷² Interestingly, Sweden appears to be one of the top five countries in the World Economic Forum’s Gender Parity Index, 2018.⁷³ This paradox needs

70 Patience Gulu, “The Usefulness of Human Rights Framework in Addressing Gender Based Violence”, *Peace Woman*, October 1, 2010, <https://www.peacewomen.org/node/90004>.

71 Gaay, F., “Poverty as a failure of entitlement: do rights-based approaches make sense?”, in L. Williams ed., *International Poverty Law: An Emerging Discourse*, Zed Books, London, pp. 34-48.

72 “European Institute for Gender Equality (n.d.). *Combating Violence against Women: Sweden*”, EIGE, 2016, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/combating-violence-against-women-sweden>.

73 “The Global Gender Gap Report”, World Economic Forum, 2018, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf.

to be explored with greater zeal as currently there exists a complete dearth of research in the arena. Surprised by the singular lack of research, Enrique Gracia and Juan Merlo (2016) set out to discover the baffling relation between high rates of gender equality and violence against women in Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), particularly partner violence. They concluded that anger over the equal or, in certain cases relatively high, status of women may be at play, along with factors unrelated to gender equality, such as alcohol abuse.⁷⁴

While these revelations are intriguing and demand further research, countries like Pakistan need not be misled. Legislation continues to be the starting point for any effective intervention programme. Without effective legislative support, victims of violence will not be able to hold perpetrators accountable. This is particularly valid for countries that ought to resist the clergy-dominated institutions and their influence over the formulation of law. Council of Islamic Ideology's (CII's) proposal to sanction 'light beating' of a wife by a husband in 2016;⁷⁵ and UAE's local court's ruling permitting husbands beating their wives if no marks are left,⁷⁶ are two of the manifestations of religion being used as a justification for violence. Pakistan, one of the countries struggling to legally challenge faith-based interpretations of clergy-led institutions, has a very long way to go. The country has enacted several relevant national laws

74 E. Gracia and J. Merlo, "Intimate partner violence against women and the Nordic paradox", *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 157, 2016, pp. 27-30.

75 Raza Khan, "'Lightly beating' wife permissible, says CII's proposed women protection bill", *Dawn*, May 26, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1260803>.

76 "Court in UAE says beating wife, child OK if no marks are left", *CNN*, October 19, 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/10/19/uae.court.ruling/>.

in recent years, but the clergy continues to pose a threat to the safety of women. For instance, when the government of Punjab passed a landmark bill regarding domestic violence in February 2016, 30 religious groups opposed it and threatened to launch country-wide protests, calling the bill “un-Islamic”.⁷⁷ The state faces immense opposition from religious groups, including the CII and mainstream Islamist parties, whenever it takes up bills on violence against women.

EFFECTIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: A MEASURE OF ADEQUATE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Legislation needs to be backed by a holistic framework of implementation in order to truly tackle violence against women. Research suggests the following measures rendering criminal justice system (CJS) effective.

- Training and education for criminal justice professionals: Drafting detailed rules and regulations for the implementation of formulated laws is usually the first step towards implementation. This needs to be followed by rigorous “training and education for criminal justice professionals”⁷⁸ across the CJS and the associated sectors of health and education. From the officer having firsthand interaction with the victim to judges, every one engaged with CJS must be fully aware of the laws and their implications and must be equipped with the skills and attitudes necessary to make

77 Lizzie Dearden, “‘Rampant’ violence against women in Pakistan revealed as groups fight ‘un-Islamic’ law against domestic abuse”, *The Independent*, April 5, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/rampant-violence-against-women-in-pakistan-revealed-as-groups-fight-un-islamic-law-against-domestic-a6969311.html>.

78 Dora M. Y. Tam, et. al., “Comparing criminal justice responses to violence against women in Canada and China”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, Volume 23, Number 2, 2013, pp. 106-120.

responses effective. Making professionals well-versed with the underpinnings of law is relatively easier; the greater challenge lies in changing attitudes rooted in patriarchal cultures.

One of the programs that has been seeking to educate members of the judiciary in India is the Gender and Judges Project run by Sakshi, a grassroots NGO working in the fields of education, health and community development. At the start of the project in 1994, Sakshi surveyed the judicial attitudes to violence against women to find out the degree of judicial bias restricting women's access to justice. The resulting report "confirmed that there is a pervasive gender bias in the attitudes of judges to violence against women".⁷⁹ Besides India, the project has reverberated well in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, catalysing "local groups to start independent work on these issues".⁸⁰

A study by Deborah Epstein (1999) also points to the existence of widely prevalent 'anti-victim bias' amongst judges in the US. Informed by a biased perception of domestic violence, most "judges and clerks tend to be easily frustrated with battered women" and perceive them as liars.⁸¹ The solution according to Epstein is judicial education. Care, however, must be taken while formulating any judicial training programme, in that it may lead to 'anti-perpetrator bias' if driven too far in one direction.

79 Aanchal Kapur, "I am witness to...": A profile of Sakshi Violence Intervention Centre in New Delhi, India", *Gender & Development*, Volume 6, Issue 3, 1998, pp. 42-47.

80 Ibid.

81 Deborah Epstein, "Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence Cases: Rethinking the Roles of Prosecutors, Judges, and the Court System", *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, Volume 11, Number 3, 1999, pp. 3-50.

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- Improving the responsiveness of the CJS to survivors: This should be an integral part of the state's policy of implementation of laws. This means increasing the representation of women at all levels of the CJS (female judges, prosecutors and police officers). Numbers alone, however, do not make the difference. Pakistan, for instance, holds over one third representation of female judges in the family courts, but there's no substantial evidence suggesting that the phenomenon has led to improved decision-making.⁸² Another study by Hunter (2015) suggests that increased number of female judges is not always likely to result in "substantively different decision-making".⁸³ Instead it will only occur under conditions of "a combination of opportunity (in terms of both subject matter and legal space), plus personal commitment and/or external encouragement".⁸⁴ As long as these conditions are met, women judges are highly likely to bring "gendered sensibility to the process of decision-making" and "engage in active mentoring", besides offering numerous symbolic effects and civilising their male colleagues behind the scenes.⁸⁵
- Specialised tribunals, specialised prosecutors, women police stations and state-owned and alternative all-women courts are some of the other measures likely to improve responsiveness of CJS.

82 L. Holden, "Women Judges and Women's Rights in Pakistan", *Oñati Socio-legal Series*, Volume 7, Number 4, 2017, pp. 752-769.

83 Rosemary Hunter, "More than Just a Different Face? Judicial Diversity and Decision-Making", *Current Legal Problems*, Volume 68, Number 1, 2015, pp. 119-141.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

- *Specialised courts and tribunals*: In response to the gravity and prevalence of gender-based violence, creating specialised tribunals and courts is an expression of the willingness to deal with the urgency of the situation. Apart from having enormous symbolic value, there are numerous concrete implications of such actions. For instance, in 2009, judicial officials from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in collaboration with the Open Society Justice Initiative and the Open Society Institute for Southern Africa (OSISA) launched the mobile gender courts initiative for the victims of sexual violence. The driving force behind the initiative was the prevalence of mass sexual abuse of women at the hands of Congolese Army, terrorists and rebels, lasting for over a decade in the eastern parts of DRC. Staffed with officials specially trained in the area of sexual violence, the courts found several army officers and other armed groups guilty of rape and sexual abuse against women. Between October 2009 and May 2011, the courts heard 250 cases during a series of multiple short sessions and handed out “195 convictions – 75 per cent for sexual crimes, and 25 per cent for other crimes”.⁸⁶ The mobile courts, in addition to speeding up the proceedings, turned out to be a model to replicate for delivering justice to the victims of sexual crimes.

Similar specialised courts, Sexual Offences Courts, were created in South Africa in 1993 to deliver justice to women and child survivors of sexual assault. The creation of these courts led to an increased conviction

86 “Fact Sheet: DRC Mobile Gender Courts”, *Open Society Justice Initiative*, 2018, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/mobile-court-20110725.pdf>.

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rate of 70 per cent, well above the national average. Another result was the reduction of duration of cases from 3-5 years to less than 6 months. Moreover, these courts are viewed positively by not just the legal personnel involved but also the survivors and their families.⁸⁷

- *All-women courts*: While the research thoroughly supports the idea of state-sanctioned specialised courts aimed at reducing violence against women, the findings about the impact of ‘non-state’ all-women courts are mixed. Such courts are particularly prevalent in India, where they primarily broker matters concerning marital disputes. *Mahila Panchayats* (all-women courts) are backed by NGOs, with the leading role of arbitration being played by specially trained women personnel as well as female members of the community versed with the woes faced by fellow women. Although widely popular, their decisions are not officially recognised by the Indian judicial system. Women who approach these courts normally enter into a voluntary agreement informally binding their spouses not to recommit violence. But in case the perpetrators break the agreement, these alternative arrangements cannot do anything beyond suggesting the parties to come again for discussion or recommending that the victim file a criminal charge against the perpetrator. Another question that scholars raise is regarding the precedent of compromise these courts end up setting. Because these courts aim to reconcile disputing couples, women are “often sent back into the marriages they were trying

87 Cheryl Thomas, et. al., “Working with the Justice Sector to End Violence Against Women and Girls”, 2011, <http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/modules/pdf/1325624043.pdf>.

to escape from,”⁸⁸ eventually validating the same patriarchal values they are fighting against. However, in the context of India, and for that matter Pakistan too, amongst several other countries from the Global South, the implications of divorce are cataclysmic. Most of the women being uneducated, unskilled or semi-skilled find it hard to earn their living besides being vulnerable to sexual abuse after being divorced. This unfortunate reality of women not having any viable alternative makes the agenda of reconciliation seem more plausible.

At the same time, what women experience in professional courts as opposed to these informal arrangements needs to be considered: from standing before the courtroom dominated by men to undergoing male stares, which may turn into harassment at times, there is a lot that women face during a court hearing. Alternative fast-track courts, on the other hand, provide them with the environment where they not only feel comfortable but also believe that the women in charge of the matter would relate to their particularities and propose solutions specific to their circumstances.

In countries like India, where legal pluralism being practiced on a large scale seems unlikely, alternative all-women courts might seem like a reasonable option despite their limitations, if they develop a repute for fairness and even-handed conduct for both men and women, and trust on social pressure and persuasion, to ensure that their decisions are complied with, just like

88 S. Vatak, “The “women’s court” in India: an alternative dispute resolution body for women in distress”, *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, Volume 45, Number 1, 2013, pp. 76-103.

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the male-led clan, caste and village panchayats upon which they model themselves.⁸⁹

- *Women's police stations*: Like specialised courts, the 20th century also saw specialised police stations dealing with specific set of crimes. Women's police stations, generally considered as a manifestation of the success of the women's movement, are one such set of an unusual component of the criminal justice system. Brazil was the first country to create a women's police station in Sao Paulo in 1985.⁹⁰ This, in turn, led to dozens of similar police stations or units within regular police stations being created in Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, Spain, Portugal and India amongst other countries.

Brazil offers an interesting case study of the effectiveness of such “machineries” and the complex interaction among policewomen, feminists and complainants. Commonly known as *delegacia da mulher* (women's police station, or DDMs), their creation was a direct answer to the feminist critique that policemen in regular police stations were sexist and did not take women's complaints of violence against them seriously.⁹¹ These sexist attitudes in Brazil have been historically shaped by patriarchal socio-legal structures developed as a result of tyrannical colonial and post-colonial experiences. The Portuguese

89 Ibid.

90 “Women's Police Stations in Latin America Case Study: An Entry Point for Stopping Violence and Gaining Access to Justice”, *UN Women*, 2011, https://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/security_wps_case_study.pdf.

91 C. M. Santos, *Women's Police Stations: Gender, Violence, and Justice in São Paulo, Brazil*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

colonial law that prevailed until the independence of Brazil in 1822 “allowed a man to kill his adulterous wife and her lover but did not allow the wife to kill her adulterous husband”⁹². Even after the law was repealed in 1830, “the belief that a man could legitimately kill his adulterous wife remained accepted by the dominant culture”⁹³, the extent of which can be measured by the fact that the pop song “Dá Nela” (“let her have it” or “beat her up”) turned out to be one the most popular songs in the early 1930s, winning multiple awards. In this cultural backdrop coupled with the twenty years period (1964-1984) of military dictatorship, the birth of the world’s first police station on August 6, 1985, as an example of “state-institutionalised feminism”,⁹⁴ is “a significant advance in the field of women’s rights”.⁹⁵ The experiment was replicated in other states of Brazil and by 1990, the country had 74 DDMs.⁹⁶ Over the years, the number of complaints increased significantly because of the ease offered by DDMs, with 310,058 complaints being registered in Sao Paulo alone in 2010.⁹⁷

However, there are several challenges that the aspiration of creating a feminist organ within a

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 S. Hautzinger, “Criminalising Male Violence in Brazil’s Women’s Police Stations: From flawed essentialism to imagined communities”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 3, 2002, pp. 243-251.

95 C.M. Santos, op. cit.

96 Thomas, D.Q., “In Search of Solutions: Women’s Police Stations in Brazil” in M. Davies ed., *Women and Violence: Realities and Responses Worldwide*, Zed Books, London, 1994.

97 C.M. Santos, “En-Gendering the Police: Women’s Police Stations and Feminism in Sao Paulo”, *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 39, Number 3, 2004, pp. 29-55.

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patriarchal state is faced with. First, it's important to mention that some of the expectations regarding the potential of DDMs to bring substantial change in isolation were exaggerated. Most of the DDMs are staffed with policewomen not trained in domestic and other kinds of violence against women. Moreover, the DDMs are discriminated against by the state police department, not just in Brazil but in other countries as well. More importantly, many of the policewomen do not align themselves with the agenda of feminists and behave more like the police officers found in regular police stations, signifying the existence of lack of coordination between policewomen, feminists and complainants. Policewomen generally assume one of three positions regarding feminists: "explicit alliance, opposition, and ambiguous alliance".⁹⁸ According to Nelson (1996), they hold these divergent positions because DDMs lie within the coercive and masculinist arm of the state.⁹⁹ Their conflicting interests have also been shaped "by the legal principle of neutrality"¹⁰⁰. Couple it with a lack of "gender-based training" in the curriculum of police academies for both policemen and policewomen, and a high likelihood of the masculinist culture is created within the institutional spheres of police in general and DDMs in particular.

Nonetheless, despite their limitations, DDMs have been successful in bringing notable changes to the lives of women in Brazil. From opening up a job market

98 Ibid.

99 S. Nelson, "Constructing and Negotiating Gender in Women's Police Stations in Brazil", *Latin American Perspectives*, Volume 23, Number 1, 1996, pp. 131-148.

100 C.M. Santos, op. cit.

for women to helping increase reporting of violence, DDMs have been at the forefront of offering services to survivors. Surprisingly, even after three decades of their inception, there are very few studies conducted on their impact. One such study undertaken by Perova and Reynolds (2017) reveals that DDMs in metropolises are highly effective in decreasing the homicide rate, particularly among young women. Establishing DDMs in metropolises, the authors conclude, is likely to reduce occurrences of homicide by “5.57 deaths per 100,000 women” ages 15-24 years.¹⁰¹ Similar effects have been observed in Patiala, India, where a study conducted on an all-female police station tasked with the responsibility of attending to and rescuing the women tortured by their husbands/relatives showed that such a quasi-legal arrangement “can save much time, psychological trauma and litigation”.¹⁰²

Another criticism levelled against DDMs lies in the low punishment of violent crimes against women. For instance, only one-third of the cases of violence registered in the first half of year 1994 resulted in police investigation, with the number of cases resulting in conviction being even lower. Academics, however, warn against evaluating DDMs on the grounds of prosecution rates alone. DDMs are not given the same kind of importance given to specialised police units tackling homicide, theft, or drugs, yet they

101 E. Perova and S.A. Reynolds, “Women’s police stations and intimate partner violence: Evidence from Brazil”, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 174, 2017, pp. 188-196.

102 A.R. Sarin, et.al., “Women’s police station—A women-in-distress cell”, *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, Volume 70, Issue S1, 2003.

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have been successful in bringing to light a problem that had hitherto been considered ‘private’, and their contribution toward sensitising the population to this issue cannot be denied. But there’s an enormous need for gender-training courses within the police academy for all personnel, irrespective of gender.¹⁰³

One of the recommendations likely to render all-female police stations more effective, as learned through Brazil’s experience, includes granting these police stations a greater mandate and authority, one that would not just increase the number of registered cases going to trial, but also enhance the confidence of both the complainants and policewomen. But this calls for rigorous training of women personnel, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and perspectives needed to deal with crimes of violence against women. This needs to be accompanied by the overhauling of the police as an institution that continues to discriminate against policewomen and squeeze their chances of career-related mobility, in turn lowering their morale and, subsequently, causing poor job performance.¹⁰⁴ In addition to these decisive factors, the story of “one of the best” police stations in Brazil – located in the capital Brasilia – unveils that collaborating with other services such as health and housing and liaising with local feminist organisations are some of the pre-requisites for women’s police stations to deliver successfully.¹⁰⁵ Concerns have also been raised about the low number of women’s police stations even in Brazil, which seems

103 S. Nelson, op.cit.

104 Ibid.

105 S. Jacobs, et. al., (eds.), *States of conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2000.

to host the greatest number of them, let alone countries like Pakistan that only have 14 of them, many of which are either dysfunctional or functioning marginally.

- *Collecting more and better data for policy-making:* Research, data collection and analysis are the starting points for any policy-making, implementation and monitoring initiative. The process of collecting quantitative and qualitative data systematically and its subsequent analysis helps evidence-based policy making.

Within the realm of the CJS, there are a number of elements on which data can be collected. This may include, but is not limited to, the prevalence of violence in a particular region; the economic repercussions of VAWG; the amount and quality of help needed by the survivors; the evaluation of the effectiveness of adopted policy; and the monitoring of progress, among many others. Despite astounding efforts made by states, international and regional organisations and civil society groups, availability of data regarding violence against women remains weak in many countries, particularly in the Global South.

Globally, comprehensive data on violence against women is available only in a few nations. Data on IPV, in particular, is missing in 90 per cent of Arab countries, 70 per cent of Latin American and Caribbean states and 56 per cent of countries from South Asia.¹⁰⁶ While some countries, mostly from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), have made

106 “Violence against women: Unacceptable and unmeasured”, *UNDP*, 2017, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/violence-against-women-unacceptable-and-unmeasured>.

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progress in addressing the problem and increased the availability of sex-disaggregated data, countries from Asia and Africa are still largely under-researched.

One of the factors behind lack of availability and accessibility of sex-disaggregated data is under-reporting. In India, for instance, only 45,536 rapes were formally reported in 2019.¹⁰⁷ Comparing this with the national rate of 5.7 per 100,000 implies that millions of rapes are unreported annually.¹⁰⁸ Dutton (2011) reveals that only one in six women worldwide report physical assault to police. With such degree of under-reporting, measuring the extent and depth of violence becomes unlikely.¹⁰⁹ Global reports, therefore, “still inevitably rely on well-informed estimates and extrapolations of partial data”¹¹⁰. Underreporting, besides causing serious challenges for researchers, analysts and policy-makers, also imposes a limit “on criminal justice effectiveness as a solution to wife assault”¹¹¹. The CJS cannot operate and function fully when the crimes are unreported.

Absence of standardised definitions is another major reason making availability of sex-disaggregated data difficult. Apart from a few forms of violence against

107 *Crime in India*, 2020, National Crime Records Bureau, Government of India, <https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/CII%202019%20Volume%201.pdf>.

108 “Unheard and Uncounted: Violence against Women in India”, *Small Arms Survey*, 2015, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/G-Issue-briefs/IAVA-IB5-unheard-and-uncounted.pdf>.

109 Donald G. Dutton, *The Domestic Assault of Women: Psychological and Criminal Justice Perspectives*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2001.

110 “The Role of Data in Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls”, *UNFPA*, 2013, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/finalUNFPA_CSW_Book_20130221_Data.pdf.

111 Donald G. Dutton, op. cit.

women, understanding of definitions vary within and among states worldwide.¹¹² Lack of common understanding of definitions ultimately poses serious limitations on comparability of data across states. The dearth of analogous data across Europe, for example, “is a major challenge in dealing with questions concerning the extent and nature of VAW”¹¹³. Comparability of data is also affected by the differences in sources and methods used to obtain data at national, regional and international levels.¹¹⁴

Limited availability of data also stems from poor reporting practices and insufficient resources for training and data collection. Field researchers need to undergo rigorous training in order to be able to carry out research effectively on sensitive topic areas. Researchers should also be trained to understand the ethical dynamics associated with research and must take into account the anonymity and protection of the interviewees. International organisations continue developing new statistical standards and methods for data collection, and there are ample guidelines available for researchers and analysts such as the Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women created by UN in 2014. In terms of data collection, efforts should be in line with the standards set by the World Health Organisation. However, without

112 “Administrative data collection on violence against women: Good practices”, *EIGE*, 2016, <https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/mh0416095enn.pdf>.

113 Ibid.

114 “The World’s Women, 2015: Trends and Statistics”, *United Nations*, 2015, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/worldswomen2015_report.pdf.

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effective training programs and sufficient resources, the quality and volume of data collection is unlikely to improve.

While it is clear that concerted and systematic efforts need to be made to make the availability of sex-disaggregated data possible, highlighting some specific areas of study is important. A UN Expert Group Meeting in October, 2007 on *Indicators to Measure Violence Against Women* listed 12 forms of violence requiring more research. This includes homicide by intimate partners; female infanticide; threats of violence; economic and psychological violence as part of IPV; dowry deaths; honour killings; forced marriage; conflict-related violence against women; sexual exploitation; trafficking; femicide; and sexual harassment. International and regional organisations are working hard to gather more evidence and are publishing reports year after year, highlighting not just areas in need of more study, but also protection indicators and multiple dimensions of women's rights violations. However, "more systematic data collection, dissemination and analysis are needed"¹¹⁵ to create appropriate designs of programs aimed at responding to victims.

MEASURING THE IMPACT

While there are a number of intervention and response programs of varying degrees at work in all countries of the world, very few of them have monitored their progress closely and evaluated their impact neutrally. One major challenge in

115 "Violence against women: Unacceptable and unmeasured", *UNDP*, 2017, op. cit.

doing so is that counter-violence efforts are about bringing change to attitudes and cultural norms, which is something that cannot be measured in the short-run. Unfortunately, most programs operate for only a few years, implying that adequate evaluation of their impact is unlikely. This is also the reason why donors hesitate in funding such projects as they need to see concrete effects of their donations. Tackling violence is a long, complex and patience-demanding job, and it takes longer than a few years to quantify the impact on values, attitudes and norms. It is, therefore, essential for both governmental and nongovernmental organisations working in the arena to advocate “improved funding structure” and develop improved understanding of the complexity of evaluation among governmental and private donor agencies.¹¹⁶

Second, while organisations like Breakthrough and WOMANKIND have developed innovative methods of evaluation, most small and medium scale organisations have not. WOMANKIND’s partner organisations in Peru, for instance, “have developed a set of Minimum Standards on Violence Against Women”¹¹⁷ after redefining rights in the light of national, regional and international laws. Although the efforts are at a pilot stage at the moment, the organisation hopes to be able to adequately track progress against this baseline.

Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation have been based on linear cause-effect models, which seek to logically connect inputs and activities to outputs and outcomes and, thus, link the change to the intervention. While applicable to a vast range of interventions, these models might fail when it comes to violence against women. This is because they fail to reflect the complexities involved in the problem and fall short in

116 Hayes, C., in Geraldine Terry and Joanna Hoare eds., *op. cit.*

117 *Ibid.*

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gauging varying contributions made by different stakeholders. Alternative approaches that focus on the ‘influence’ one has exercised for a change might be worth-pursuing. Instead of attributing change to a contribution, they consider the possibility of the role played by other contributors while also remaining “flexible in measuring the impacts achieved”.¹¹⁸

As most organisations do not have the capacity and resources to build modern monitoring and evaluation methods, their problem of presenting a sound record of impact to donors persists. While NGOs like WOMANKIND, which have the capacity and willingness to innovate, plan to disseminate the takeaways of their learning among other organisations, it is not sufficient. Unless states, private donor agencies and NGOs work together to sustain small and medium scale projects, and unless chaotic and scattered mechanisms get replaced by cohesive and coordinated efforts, large scale change seems unlikely.

118 “Strengthening Health System Responses to Gender-based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A Resource Package”, *UNFPA and Wave*, 2014, <http://www.health-genderviolence.org/sites/default/files/download/WAVE-UNFPA%20English.pdf>.

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6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of total capital. Ajai Sahni
Suite 58 & 70,
India International Centre,
Max Mueller Marg,
New Delhi 110003.

I, Ajai Sahni, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

July, 2021

(Sd) Ajai Sahni
Signature of Publisher