

Peeling the Layers of Darkness Away



Our Approach and Best Practices

Learnt Under Project on
Local Support Mechanism Strengthened to
Correspond Issues of Violence against Women through 'Capacity Building'
In Tehsil Sohawa, District Jehlum of Pakistan



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About This Paper

Civil Society Human and Institutional Development Programme (CHIP), active in development since 1993, was initially a programme of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) functioning under the name of Swiss NGO Program Office (SNPO). In July of 2004, it was decided that SNPO should be incorporated as a local company and as such, in October 2004 CHIP came into being and started functioning as an independent organization from January 2005.

Human Rights is one of the sectors of CHIP's focus, and as such keen attention is given to the issue of Violence against Women (VAW). CHIP regularly reviews the current approaches to address violence against women in order to analyze best practices. Recent analysis highlighted that the use of negative terminology and propaganda based approaches are aggravating the situation instead of reducing the problem. In this regard, we have evolved a approach for reducing violence against women with an inbuilt positive terminology and a holistic vision of happy family.

CHIP has been working in Tehsil Sohawa on an integrated development and local resource mobilization since 2004. Under this initiative communities are organized and mobilized to analyze their communal issues for joint community development activities. Drinking water, household latrines, community based schools, vocational training centers, training on live stock and farm management are used an entry point activities for mobilizing communities. These types of interventions have helped CHIP in earning a good name and establishing trust with communities over the last four years in Tehsil Sohawa. During our close working with the communities, it has been realized that Tehsil Sohawa is a highly underdeveloped area, where women's rights are ignored and the support system remains largely inactive.

In view of the above situation, CHIP has designed a pilot project in partnership with the Gender Justice & Protection (GJP) Project. The GJP Project is a key initiative of UNDP's Gender Support Program funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The project focuses on strengthening the local community and the support network at the levels of village, Tehsil, union council and district to interlink and work together in creating a community that is free of violence and geared towards a 'happy family' in 10 villages of Tehsil Sohawa. The support network is being made aware, trained and sensitized regarding the issue of VILENCE AGAINST WOMEN and women of the locality are being empowered with an awareness of their rights and the laws that uphold them. This project is benefiting all the stakeholders and enabling them to rectify the issue of violence against women in a holistic manner.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how the approach and practices of this project are different from the conventional approaches for reducing violence and what is the value addition of our approach for scaling up to a larger scale and to be further implemented by other like minded organizations within the sector.

1. Current Situation Regarding Violence against Women in Tehsil Sohawa – District Jehlum

The term ‘violence against women’ is one which the masses in rural Pakistan are usually hesitant to address. What happens behind closed doors should strictly remain behind closed doors, and thus the issue is usually swept under the carpet by both the victim and the abuser. A majority of the organizations working in the field of violence against women have worked with the women victims exclusively. Limited attempt has been made to reach out and sensitize the support system, and as such women victims are unable to receive adequate guidance and assistance in their time of need.

Due to a lack of awareness and sensitization, the support mechanism does not live up to its name since it is neither coordinated nor responsive to victims of violence.

In order to assess the current trends in the local communities regarding violence against women, a baseline study was conducted in **10 villages of Tehsil Sohawa**. It was imperative to gauge the local perceptions of the community and various stakeholders in order to arrive at a better understanding of the intensity of violence against women in the area prior to implementing any work in the field.

The baseline study highlighted the type and extent of violence in Sohawa. Some of the major types of violence that exist in Sohawa are Slapping, Verbal abuse, Divorce, Beating with stick, Murder, Mobility restriction, Financial restrictions, Forced marriage, Burn, Not providing property rights, Second marriage, Bone fracture and Child snatching.

Existing types of violence	%
Slapping	33
Verbal abuse	25
Divorce	9
Beating with stick	7
Murder	6
Mobility restriction	4
Financial restrictions	4
Forced marriage	4
Burn	2
Not providing property rights	2
Second marriage	1
Bone fracture	1
Child snatching	1
Any other	1

It was during this study that the local knowledge, attitude and practices regarding violence against women came to light and 90 survivors were identified. The extent of violence in Sohawa is very high¹. Despite different constraints, an average of 10.1 persons per village was reported during the survey. This situation is very alarming as these are the reported cases and mostly people shared that the number of unreported cases is even higher. Most cases are unregistered and untold by many survivors due to an unfavorable and asphyxiated environment and the unwelcoming attitude of society, where mostly women are suppressed by their male family members. It’s also unacceptable for the villagers to accept that violence exists in their village. It’s a matter of honour and dignity of their village for them. The Baseline study also brought to light the hesitancy and reluctance of the local community to discuss or even acknowledge violence against women and as such it was imperative to instigate some form of work in the area which could potentially diminish violence against women.

Villages	% Survivors
Dhok Bagh	26
Srai Syedan	20
Gunda Paik	17
Arnial Phulan	11
Bhit Sher Ali	9
Gaggi Pakhral	5
Gurrah Uttam Singh	4
Bhitmast	3
Kandyari	3
Maddan Sharif	3

¹ See Annexure 16: Extent of Violence that Exists in Villages of Tehsil Sohawa

2. Current Approaches to Reduce Violence against Women

Some of the major approaches to reduce violence against women being practiced by other NGOs are as follow:

- Formation of women groups within the communities where violence against women is being practiced. These women groups are made aware, empowered and advocated to voice their concerns against violence (Aurat Foundation forms women action forums in villages and work towards women empowerment in rural areas of Pakistan).
- Develop human rights activists from within the communities to talk about women rights and raise communities' awareness (Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD) develops human rights activists in villages and built their capacity to talk about different types of rights including women rights in the communities).
- Counseling of women who are victim of violence (Rozan programme for women emotial health).
- Establishment of crises centers where survivors are provided shelter and security (Aurat Foundation and Sach have crises centers for support).
- Establishment of legal aid centers to extend free legal aid to women victims (LHRLA and PAWLA have established legal aid centers for extending free legal aid to women victims).
- Advocacy movements where violence cases are highlighted through media (Strengthening Participatory Organizations (SPO).
- Stand alone projects are designed and implemented on women rights in unaware and illiterate communities (Pirbhat Women Development Society in Shahdad kot-Sindh)

2.1 Pitfalls in Current approaches to reduce Violence against Women

2.1.1 Imbalance Approach

Focus exclusively on women (Aurat Foundation and Shirkat Gah) thereby creating insecurities among men hence unable to secure support from communities as a whole. Local human rights activists are trained to highlight rights of women among communities and raising concerns regarding violence against women. Under this approach focus again is only on raising awareness for promoting women rights hence creating rivalries among men and women. None of the above approaches have addressed issues of violence against women holistically in a positive manner.

Use of Negative Terms

All the existing approaches are geared towards condemning violence by using negative terms such as anger, suicide, attack, revenge, abuse, intolerance, protest. Use of such terms creates a feeling of dejection among communities (Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah, SPO, PWDS). For example see figure 1 in which all slogans are formulated by using negative terminology.

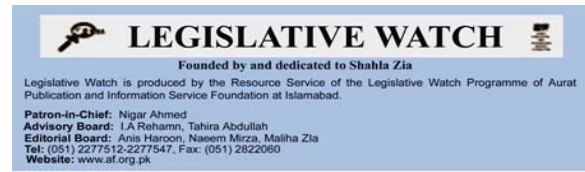
2.1.3 Less Focus on Causes of Violence

The focus of existing approaches is more on violence cases and less on its causes (HRCP).

2.1.4 Less Focus on Implications of Violence on Family

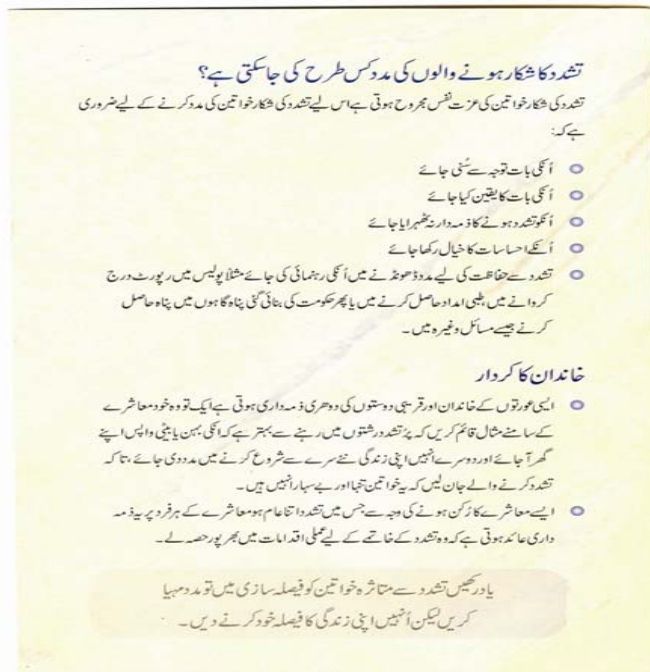
Limited discussions on implications of violence for example broken families and psychological problems for family members (HRCP, DCHD, LHRLA, PAWLA). For example see figure 2 from a booklet of ROZAN, it talks about how one family should support survivors and not the importance of family.

Figure 1: News clip from Aurat Foundation Newsletter



A candle-light vigil in Lahore of activism. Banners with f slogans on gender-based violence were also displayed in different important places of the Quetta city for awareness.

Figure 2: An extract from the Booklet of Rozan



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2.1.5 No Referral System between Survivors/Victims & Support Structure

The existing approaches talk more about women empowerment and create limited links between survivors and support structure as a remedial (Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah)

2.1.6 Advocacy Based Approach

Focus more on advocacy movements through processions against individual violence cases. Limited focus on partnerships with support structure by sensitizing them for joint effort for the reduction of violence (SPO and SAP-PK).

Figure 3: A News clip from Newsletter of Aurat Foundation



3. Our Approach

Having established an adequate means of addressing the issue of violence against women within the local community, a pilot project was initiated with the aim of strengthening the local support mechanism through capacity building and developing an alive link between communities and these support structure. It was found that the dormant mechanism consisting of Masalehti Anjuman, Police, Lawyers, Medico Legal, health workers, Skilled Birth Attendants and teachers could only evolve into a support mechanism once it had been strengthened by

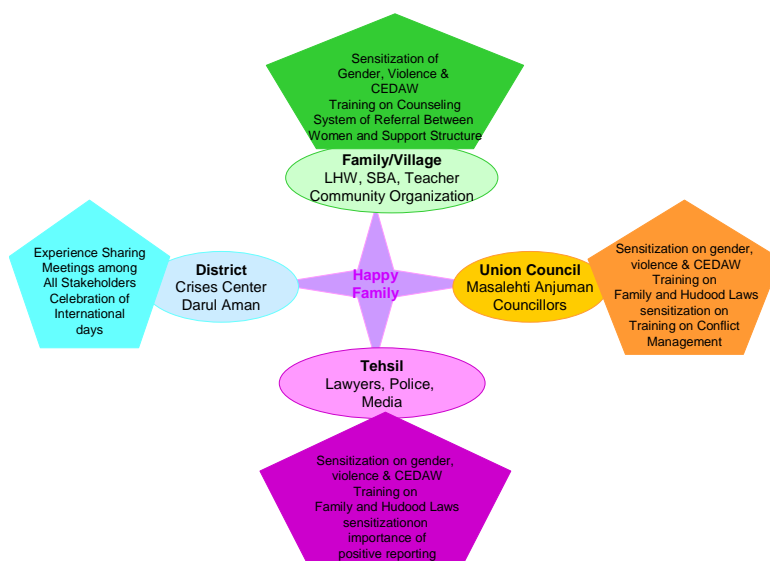
"Prior to this project no one had created awareness with the Masalehti Anjuman regarding their responsibilities and role towards the community."

Member of Masalehti Anjuman

sensitization and equipping with tools to manage the issue of violence cases. Some of the salient features of our approach are as follow:

Figure 1: Approach to Address Violence against Women

- The interventions are designed at four levels i.e. family/village, union council, Tehsil and district.
- Communities and stakeholders under support structure are facilitated to develop a positive vision of happy family at all levels.
- The factors contributing towards a happy family are discussed and consensus is developed to work towards achieving those Factors which lead towards happy family.



- All interventions are linked with the positive vision and factors leading toward the positive vision.
- Four types of interventions are being implemented i.e. (A) sensitization sessions on gender, violence and CEDAW through multiple mediums (b) Need based trainings on Self Growth, Para counseling, conflict management and mediation, family and hudood laws (c) Referral system between village, UC and Tehsil (d) experience sharing between stakeholders.

4. Design and Types of Interventions

4.1 Sensitization Sessions on Gender, Violence & CEDAW through different Mediums

The mediums deployed to spread awareness amongst the local community were simple and easy to understand yet at the same time were selected for their ability to attract an audience and convey a powerful and memorable message in a positive manner to promote the concept of a 'Happy Family'.

4.1.1 Puppet Show

One such interactive tool chosen was the puppet show. The local community poured forth with excitement, innovative ideas and healthy participation. Members of the CCB and WO's were trained in this art and have already staged 2 puppet shows in which they themselves were the scriptwriters. They utilized their local folk lore and music which climaxed into a successful event. The puppets attracted men, women and children. The message was grasped and discussed for implications.

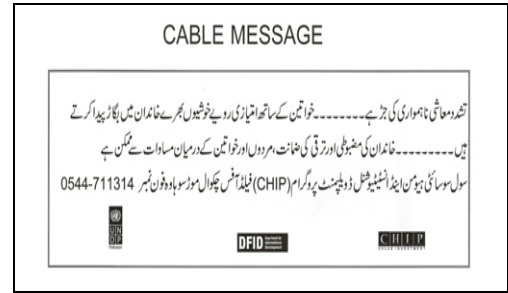
4.1.2 Interactive Theatre

Selected girls and boys were imparted training of trainers in designing and performing an interactive theatre based on real life issues of violence in a positive manner. The medium enabled separate sessions with men and women with minimum technology.

Figure 4: Messages which are run on Cable TV

4.1.3 Messages on Cable Network

Likewise cable network has been deployed to relay messages of awareness about violence against women and create a community which is gender sensitive. Cable T.V in Tehsil Sohawa now airs a running strip at the bottom of the screen imparting messages of violence against women awareness and gender sensitization.



4.1.4 Posters and Newsletter

Posters and Newsletter in local language have been designed and posted at the public places. The posters and newsletters depict the positive side i.e. how would society and family be if there was no violence.

Figure 5: Messages Mentioned on Our Awareness Raising Posters



4.1.5 Significantly Commemorated Days

Notably commemorated days on the calendar are celebrated within the community now that the community has been made aware of their significance and importance.

4.2 Need based Trainings

In order to instigate a healthy change in the support mechanism at all levels, trainings were conducted in order to create awareness and sensitization after project introduction meetings.

Phase I of these trainings is successfully complete. The topics addressed were

- Gender
- Violence
- CEDAW
- Self Growth

Phase II which is to commence in June constitutes of the following:

- Para-counseling
- Conflict Management
- Mediation
- Family Laws

4.3 Referral System between Villages, Union Council and Tehsil Level

A referral system has been established between villages, Union Council and Tehsil Level. As a first step, the community has started referring cases of domestic disputes and conflict to CCB's, WO's, teachers, TBA's and health workers since they find them to now be a reliable source of mediation and assistance. 10 CCB's and WO's now have the capacity to monitor and report cases of violence against women.

One of the major indicators is the reporting of cases and an effort by our trained activist to solve the cases (See case studies solved by Masehlehti Anjuman, Activists of women and men organizations)

4.4 Experience Sharing Meetings among Stakeholders:

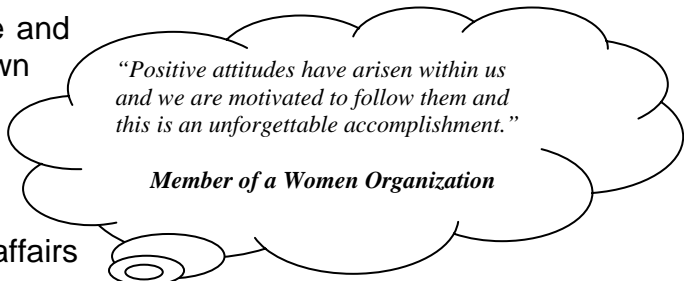
In order to encourage learning and maintain rapport among the stakeholders, CHIP arranges quarterly experience sharing meetings where all are invited. In these meetings the participants discuss their various experiences with a keen focus on challenges, successes and future plans. These meetings have proved to be a sustainable means of interlinking the stakeholders with each other.

5. Achievements

Although the project is yet only half way into reaching full term, notable progress has thus far been witnessed.

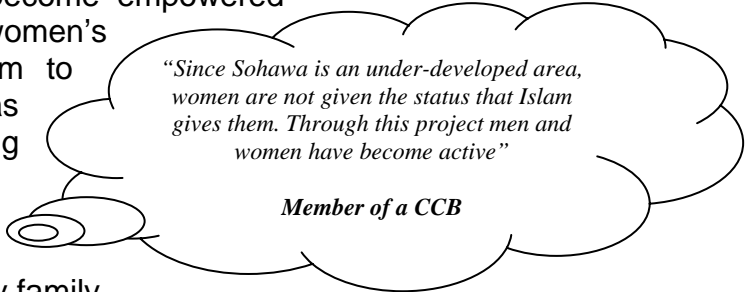
5.1 Community/Village Level

- Couples have started to become aware and have started to pay attention to their own negative attitudes. They are now voicing phrases like “we should aim to think positive and be more patient”
- CCB and WO members do not feel hesitant in discussing their domestic affairs and problems.
- Local youth have started become active in development issues
- Women in the community have become empowered due to discussions based on women’s rights. This has encouraged them to become stronger which in turn has led to the local WO’s becoming stronger.
- 203 men have joined hands as a member of gender sensitive group and work for the promotion of happy family.
- The positive message of happy family and its contributing factors especially our positive attitudes as opposed to violence towards each other is conveyed to approximately 360 men, women and children.
- 15 CCB’s and 18 WO’s have been trained in the art of theater and puppet shows as a tool for discussing positive message of happy family and its contributing factors.
- All the stakeholders are interlinking with each other for example our men organizations and women organizations have started contacting Masalehti Anjamn for discussing reported cases..
- 10 CCB’s and WO’s now have the capacity to monitor and report violence.



“Positive attitudes have arisen within us and we are motivated to follow them and this is an unforgettable accomplishment.”

Member of a Women Organization

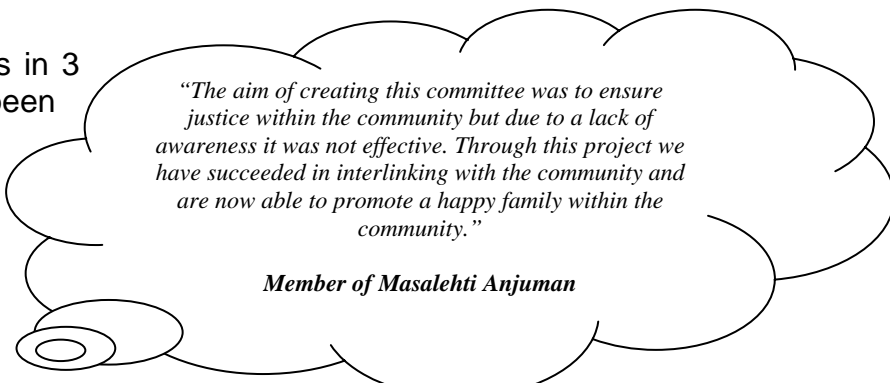


“Since Sohawa is an under-developed area, women are not given the status that Islam gives them. Through this project men and women have become active”

Member of a CCB

5.2 Union Council Level

- 3 Masalehti Anjumans in 3 union councils have been reactivated and are now considered to be active reconciliation bodies. Their capacity is reflected from their proactive ness towards solving violence cases e.g. the Masalehti Anjuman has resolved two cases of violence against women.
- Cases of violence against women occurring within the community have started to directly reach the support mechanism.
- Referral cards listing the names, phone numbers and addresses of the police, Masalehti Anjuman, medico, lawyers and councilors have been designed as hands on directory for victims.



“The aim of creating this committee was to ensure justice within the community but due to a lack of awareness it was not effective. Through this project we have succeeded in interlinking with the community and are now able to promote a happy family within the community.”

Member of Masalehti Anjuman

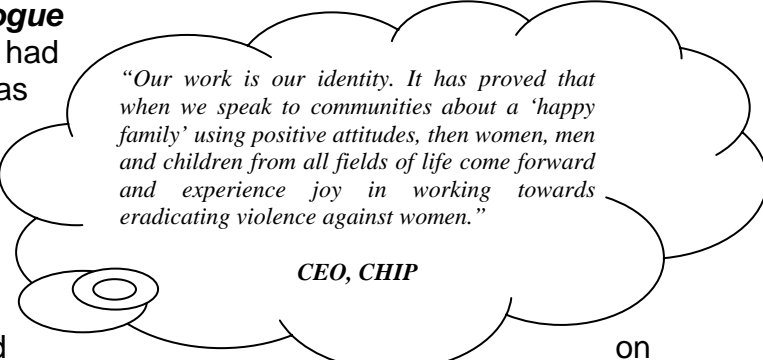
5.3 Tehsil Level

- Local T.V. relays a constant running information strip with messages promoting concept of happy family and its contributing factors.
- FM 95, a radio channel is being utilized to create awareness about happy family and implications of violence against women
- Local newspapers – Universal Azkaar and Ahsaas are covering our events regularly which have become another medium for raising awareness.
- The staff operating at the criminal justice level has been versed in Family and Haddood Laws.
- Health Service Providers who are working towards reducing violence against women are now available.

6. Best Practices/Lessons

6.1 Established Trust Eases Dialogue

The greatest asset that the CHIP team had when embarking upon this project was an established rapport and trust with the local community. Due to the fact that CHIP had undertaken projects for water supply, education and health, the local community viewed the members of the organization as trustworthy, reliable and helpful. Based on this sound relationship the field workers were able to gently reach out to the community and initiate discussions related to such a highly sensitive and fragile topic



“Our work is our identity. It has proved that when we speak to communities about a ‘happy family’ using positive attitudes, then women, men and children from all fields of life come forward and experience joy in working towards eradicating violence against women.”

CEO, CHIP

6.2 Addressing the term 'Happy Family' as opposed to 'Violence against Women'

Since one of the crucial pillars for a successful project is open and healthy communication, an informal meeting was held with the team of CHIP and members of the local CCB's and WO's in order to identify an approach by which violence against women could be addressed in an appropriate and manner. An innovative concept evolved from perceived that a gentle un-intrusive means of

"Thinking of oneself as superior can only end once we stop our negative attitude. Then and only then can violence against women come to an end."

Social Organizer of CHIP

adequate the meetings and it was addressing a volatile and taboo topic would produce desired results – thus by stepping away from the term 'violence' and moving towards the concept of a 'happy home', the lines of communication were established, and the participants were forthcoming with their views that a home free of violence was what constituted a happy family. A happy home leads to a happy village which in turn leads to a happy district and the final result is a happy Pakistan.

By adopting the phrase 'happy family', instead of 'violence' – CHIP was able to break the ice and address the taboo issue of violence against women. It proved to be a gentle and un-intrusive means of encouraging dialogue with all the stakeholders.

6.3 Joint Meetings

Joint meetings with CCBs assisted in the evolution of conceptual issues. Here came to light their knowledge, attitude and practices regarding a positive, progressive and developed family. Linkages between CCBs / WOs and the women of the community were established in order to enable their mobility and participation.

6.4 Puppet Show Attracts More People

Utilizing the puppet show as a means of outreach in order to sensitize the local community yielded healthy results. The participants instill their own scripts, music and style culminating in a show that is entertaining yet powerful.

Figure 6: Puppet Show



6.5 Referral System at All Levels

Referral system for violence cases is a first initiative of its kind. So far referral system was generally used for health care services. Establishment of referral system at village, Union Council, Tehsil and district level with hands on list addresses and guidance is an available support to victims and survivors and is being utilized by communities even for minor conflicts.

6.6 Engagement of Youth

It has been learnt that if girls and boys youth are engaged in human rights activities with a positive vision, then it is very easy to get acceptability in the communities.

6.7 Balanced Approach

The act of violence against women has a perpetrator and a victim/survivor. One has to analyze the causes and the type of perpetrator behind the violence so that all

efforts to reduce violence against women are designed in a holistic manner. Awareness raising campaigns for promoting rights of women should be combined with the concept of happy family and its contributing factors. The blanket approach will help seeking confidence of men and creating solidarity in the communities.

6.8 Use of Positive Terminology in Communication

Use of positive terminology builds confidence and open ways for communication. Communication on positive attitudes can then be turned towards importance of happy family and its main actors.

6.9 Focus on Causes and Implications of Violence

It is important to discuss causes and Implications of violence so that strategies and awareness raising campaigns can be designed accordingly.

6.10 Time Bound Stand Alone Projects

Major causes of violence against women require changes in our attitudes which are directly linked with our mind sets and belief system. It is difficult to change attitudes, mind sets and belief system of people through stand alone time bound projects. Therefore rights based projects should be combined with some tangible activities to earn credibility and acceptance of community as a whole. Another option can be that all rights based projects are initiated in areas where implementing organization has already achieved credibility through their other development activities.

7. Challenges That Require a Constant Struggle, Time & Patience

Despite the success of our approach, there are many factors which are external and require quite some time to turn into positive to reduce violence against women. As part of our constant learning process we would like to highlight these challenges so that we constantly struggle to overcome these challenges with the support of all our colleagues and partners. Some of these challenges are given below. We look forward to the support of our colleagues and partners to join hands with us to overcome these challenges to achieve a world full of peace, happiness and harmony.

Difficult to Break Culturally Distributed Roles and Powers: CCB members refused to play the role of women in the theater due to embarrassment.

Short Time Frame: The CHIP team has to work with some difficulty due to the short time duration of 18 months. A community had to be sensitized towards an issue that has never been acknowledged let alone rectified – it is indeed too short a time to change the attitude of people.

Limitations on Women's Mobility: Cultural norms limit the mobility of women and as such they are unable to establish linkages with the Police and Maslehati Anjuman.

Stigma hinders Publicizing: Due to the stigma attached to violence against women the team finds it difficult to publicize case studies since victims are hesitant to give their names or allow the CHIP office staff to meet them.

Limited Legal Assistance: Although there are 2 women lawyers in Sohawa, neither of them is currently active.

Politics: Since the office of the Maslehati Anjuman lies in the Nazim Unit, as such CCBs belonging to other political parties are reluctant to contact them.

Lack Of Consistency By Stakeholders: Project stakeholders are not able to give much time to project activities.

Snap Shot of Project

Strengthening the Local Support Mechanism to Respond to Issues of Violence against Women through Capacity Building.

Goal:

Awareness raised regarding violence against women in Tehsil Sohawa, District Jehlum, Pakistan

Purpose:

Local support mechanism for reducing violence against women strengthened in Tehsil Sohawa, district Jehlum of Pakistan.

Outputs:

1. 10 CCBs/women Organizations have capacity to monitor and report violence against women and promote women rights in their village;
2. Entities involved in criminal justice system at Tehsil level are versed in elementary forms and interpretation of Family and Hudood Laws;
3. Social service providers working for reducing violence against women available;
4. *Masaliati* (reconciliation) committees at union councils are available to provide legal guidance to victims of women violence;

Location:

Tehsil Sohawa, District Jehlum, Punjab Province, Pakistan.

Time Frame:

July 2008 – December 2009

Target Group:

Village:

Union Council

Tehsil

District

Project Partners:

GJP – UNDP Pakistan, DFID & CHIP

Case Studies of Women Survivors

Case 1: *My Daughter-In-Law Is Just Like My Daughter*

Son's pleasant married life prevents stress. Is it true?

I am Razia Begum of Amraal, a village of Tehsil Sohawa, District. I am also an active member of Quaid Development Committee for Women. I prayed and waited for my son's marriage for years. Never did I think of being in a role of traditional mother-in-law. What I used to imagine my daughter-in-law was in fact my actual daughter. It did not happen; what happened was entirely different. My daughter-in-law used to make a lot of commotion over trifles and started instigating him against other people around. She became angry with me when I tried to resolve misunderstandings. She talked ill of me with her parents. I was fed up with all that was happening around me. My obedient son started evading me. Out of tension I started quarreling with everybody, and lying depressed when alone. I suffered hypertension and did not know what to do. No body was ready to listen to me. One day I participated in a meeting of the village organization for women and learned about "Negative Behaviour, their causes and solutions." I talked about my problem to the president of the organization. The members of the organization then decided to help me by talking to my daughter-in-law who was then living with her parents. They went to her and told her about negative behaviour and the damages they can cause, and succeeded in convincing her. She got the point and returned to her husband. I feel a very positive change in her behavior. My joy feels no bounds at the sight of my son's pleasant and happy married life. Now I am convinced that son's pleasant and happy married life prevents tension.

Case 2: Domestic Violence Makes Life Wretched.....

For many people marriage is a source of bliss and lasting pleasure but for Nazia it appeared to be the harbinger of incessant tormenting woes. Nazia Bibi lives in a small village, Amral of Tehsil Sohawa. Soon after getting married she experienced physical torture by her husband even on small things which continued to occur for over ten years. “I had been living with my husband for ten years. I didn’t remember even a single day when I was not beaten or abused by my husband;” sobbed Nazia. “Even after getting a beating every day, I was determined to live with my husband for the sake of my children. The days were passing and I continued to sacrifice myself. Even my in-laws never made a desperate effort to stop my husband from beating me.”

Soniya Bibi serve in Amral as a Traditional birth attendant (TBA). She participated in different trainings on gender, self growth, para counseling and conflict resolution conducted by CHIP under the GJP project. At this point Sonia entered in aiming at helping the burnt Nazia. She helped Nazia to come out of this miserable situation and arranged both for her treatment and marriage. Soniya stated that after solving this case she feels very happy and said that I really feel pleasure when one woman in our village asked that “Soniya you are so young how you managed to solve this issue” at that very moment I decided to devote myself for the sake of happiness for the women living in my village Amral

“One day, my husband started with his usual verbal abuse then started beating me severely. However, with every whip and slap on my body his anger kept on escalating. Suddenly he got hold of kerosene oil and threw it on my face and neck and then put fire on me. On that occasion I actually experienced being inside an inferno. I was badly burnt. My parental family came to know about the incident and I was taken back to my parent’s home. After some time I got a divorce from my husband.

However, the divorce opened up other kind of afflictions and woes for me. One side of my face and half of my neck were completely burnt. Being poor my parents couldn’t help me get proper treatment. I have grown to accept that from now onwards I will look like this - scarred, torn and ugly – and will spend the rest of my life alone.

One day luck knocked upon my door when local Traditional Birth Attendant Soniya came and asked me about the problems that I had faced. I shared my painful plight with her. I was so happy to hear that I can undergo a surgery with a small amount in Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Islamabad. Ms. Sonia further facilitated me with the linkages for undergoing the surgery. Some philanthropists of village helped me and I received my treatment.

After having three surgeries and three months treatment my face and neck looked better. I am so happy to see my improved condition. The other remarkable thing that happened to me was that Sonia arranged my marriage in Tehsil Diena. One month has passed of my new marriage. **Now I am living a happy and smooth life only because of a woman who came into my life like an angel.**”

Case 3: Resolution of Tension between Two Families Means Their Prosperity Guaranteed

The peaceful and serene life of Shamim Bibi was suddenly disrupted when her loving husband died. Shamim Bibi lives in village Bagh of Tehsil Sohawa, District Jehlum. She has three daughters and a son. Her husband Ehtasham used to take her good care of her and loved her. However, their joyful marital life suddenly got disturbed badly when she learnt that her husband was suffering from cancer. "I did what I could but all my efforts for the cure ended in smoke and he died leaving us all alone," told Shamim in a melancholic voice. She came back to her mother's house along with her four kids.

She decided that she would live the rest of her life with the sweet memories of her husband. However, life took a new turn when her family elders decided about her second marriage with her husband's younger brother, Ikraam. Ikram was never willing for this marriage but somehow yielded to the family pressure. "Everybody knew that I and Ikraam got married under social pressure. My husband's behavior was very cold towards me. He used to remain apathic to my emotional and physical needs. He never even cared about any financial support for the domestic expenses of Shamim.

With such mental torture by my husband my physical condition was started deteriorating day by day. One day after his usual verbal abuse he started beating me severely. With an aching mind and body I returned to my parents' home along with my children. No body in my in-laws paid any heed towards my plight nor did my husband come to fetch me. None of the family elders was ready to resolve the tension between us. I often fell ill and remained depressed. I was helpless and didn't know how to come out of this trouble.

It is in this context that Ms. Samina, finance secretary of Ujala (light) Development Council; a community based women organization, came to me and asked about my problem. After learning about my woeful account she engaged some community influential to counsel with my husband. With the persuasion of the community influential and Ms. Samina my husband agreed to take care of me properly. He promised not torture me. He also promised that he would provide financial support for domestic expenses.

After that my husband came to see me and expressed his responsibilities regarding me and my kids. I again returned to my husband's house. I started living happily with my husband and I pray for the member of Ujala Development Council who felt for my broken family and made tangible efforts for reuniting it.

The finance secretary Samina feels great after the training and resolves to make her village violence-free and a peaceful, pleasant paradise to live in.