

Purbanchal University

St. Xavier's College

Department of Social Work

Maitighar, Kathmandu



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Skills Lab (SWP 114)

Submitted to:

Onuora DANIELS

Submitted by:

Jaya Jung MAHAT

(MSW Ist Year)

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INTRODUCTION:

According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**), the term gender-based violence (**GBV**) is used to distinguish violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violence. It includes any act which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm. GBV includes violent acts such as rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and murder. It also defines threats of these acts as a form of violence.

GBV is commonly used as a means of violence against girls and women. Thus many people describe it by the term violence against women (**VAW**). However, the concept also applies to boys, as particular groups of boys are also affected by violence against their gender. For example, boys are more prone to accident and street violence than girls and they are at greater risk of becoming addicted to drugs and/ or become involved in criminal activities. Factors such as age, caste, social status, ability, religion, and ethnicity also affect the likelihood to face various forms of gender based violence.

BACKGROUND:

The gender perspective to violence is a relatively new trend within the human rights movement as well. Its basic premise is that identities are socially constructed beyond biological sex; therefore, they are negotiable and mutable. It was initially coined to contextualize VAW and identify its causes and consequences that transcend the injury caused to the individual victim. More recently, the term GBV is used with reference to violence encountered by men, such as, for instance, in the sexualized attacks on Iraqi male prisoners in Abu Ghraib or hate attacks on gay men or transgendered persons. Although, this broad application of the term has enabled identifying forms of violence within unequal power hierarchies previously overlooked, since all forms of violence are essentially gendered, if not used with precision, the term GBV may obscure rather than reveal the distinguishing features of diverse experiences of gendered violence.

In this regard, there is sufficient evidence to show that women and girls are the primary victims of gender-based violence simply because they are women. This is a universal, structured and systematic phenomenon, which is

motivated - across ethnic groups, classes and societies - by a common patriarchal culture which through values, laws, and institutions delegate women to a subordinate position.

South Asia is considered the most gender insensitive region in the world and it is one of the few regions where men outnumber women.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NEPAL:

GBV is an acute human rights challenge in many conflict affected areas of Nepal. The 10-year conflict severely exacerbated the unequal power relationships between men and women, increasing women's vulnerability to numerous forms of exploitation including rape, domestic violence, verbal and psychological abuse, and physical and sexual torture. Damage to traditional social and economic networks, loss of male heads of household, forced displacement, and reduced access to health and educational facilities dramatically diminished women's abilities to safeguard their wellbeing and that of their families.

The laws and legal provisions of Nepal fail to keep up with many cases of gender-based violence. While the CEDAW Committee recommended that Nepal change 85 laws and 137 legal provisions that discriminated against women, an analysis of Nepali laws, including the Constitution and Country Code, conducted for the Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (**GSEA**) found 32 provisions that discriminate on the basis of religion, caste and ethnicity, and 176 provisions in 83 pieces of legislation that discriminate against women.

However, on the 21st of April 2009, the majority of the Constituent Assembly members of Nepal had passed a bill on domestic violence, one form of the gender-based violence. Under this law, the victims can lodge a complaint at a police station, National Women's Commission (**NWC**) and local government bodies.

SOCIAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH GBV:

There are numerous social issues which are linked directly or indirectly with GBV either as its causes or its results. However most of the social issues that are associated with GBV can be grouped under following headings to make it easy for understanding some of most important social issues which have link with GBV. They are:

1. Poverty
2. Reproductive Health

3. HIV and AIDS
4. Conflict Situations

SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION NEEDED:

Social Workers will be able to help to increase awareness of gender-based violence and ensure that those affected, including widows, receive critical psychosocial counseling, medical treatment, education and skills training and job placement services to reduce further risk. Some of the best procedures that might be useful to the social workers while dealing with the GBV cases are as follows:

- i. Awareness raising about the existing laws
- ii. Consistent implementation and enforcement of laws to create a change in behavior towards girls and women
- iii. Establishment of strong victims' support channels
- iv. Education and Training
- v. Research and Data Collection

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are also the ever-present issues of deep-rooted and stereotypical attitudes towards gender-based violence. Unless these are changed and more progressive thinking adopted, the battle to eradicate such violence will be lost. This attitudinal change has to begin in the homes and communities of our respective countries by inculcating in the young the values of self-worth and human dignity.

A gender framework to understanding violence starts by recognizing both violence and conflict as gendered activities within a patriarchal system of ideology and institutions. This means as actors, girls and boys-men and women all experience violence and conflict differently, as victims and as perpetrators.

Some of the important duty bearers that should be addressed for preventing and combating GBV include the State Party, parents, community leaders, NGOs, teachers and education authorities, local government, law enforcement bodies, the private sector, media, UN bodies, police, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, training institutes, policy makers, politicians and the international community.

To achieve full and equal rights for girls and boys will result from changes in social values, public policy reforms and practice. When addressing GBV, it is important not only to consider working with individual girls and boys, women and men but also address human rights, discrimination, patriarchal structures and gender socialization. Since unequal power relations between males and females are recognized as a main cause of GBV, women and girls alone cannot be expected to change cultural norms and attitudes that are abusive towards them.

The solution to every problem within our society and in most of the cases the solution lies within a person. So everybody should take initiative to combat this social problem. Therefore every person of a society should work at his/ her level to at least minimize the incidents of GBV. Some of the suggested ways to cop up with this problem are as follows:

At individual level:

Make a pledge to yourself to stop being a perpetrator or a victim of violence and share your resolution with others

1. Be proactive; stop being a silent spectator to violence
2. Recognize and make others aware of the serious and multiple consequences of violence

At organizational level:

1. Address violence from a right-based approach (including power and gender analysis)
2. Increase the knowledge on gender issues among professionals and in the school curriculum
3. Promote programmes for men on parenting and responsible sexual behavior
4. Advocate the government to make laws against GBV and to implement those laws

One person can do something about violence but many people can stop violence!!!!

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