



# SOUTH ASIA Gender Initiative

Issue 4 –March 2014

Applying a gender lens to the Bank's work in South Asia

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH ASIA

**G**ender-Based Violence (GBV) is the leading cause of death of women aged 19 to 44 worldwide—more than war, cancer or car accidents. As in all regions, certain types of GBV, like domestic violence, are prevalent in South Asia. In Bangladesh, for example, it is estimated that 47 percent of women are the victims of physical violence from their intimate partners. Yet, GBV takes idiosyncratic forms in South Asia as well. Between 2001 and 2012, the National Crime Records Bureau of India recorded 91,202 dowry-related deaths; in Pakistan, more than 1,000 girls and women die in honor killings each year; in Sri Lanka, 3-5 children are raped every day; and at least 200,000 Nepali women and girls are thought to be working in the sex industry in India, many of them likely having been trafficked into the country.<sup>1</sup>

While such statistics are daunting, it was the high-profile media coverage of the “Delhi gang rape” in December 2012 and other incidents of violence against women (VAW) in South Asia over the past year which brought the realities of GBV to the forefront of the international community's attention. Non-traditional practitioners in the public, media and private sectors institutions have already begun responding—complementing the longstand-

ing work of researchers and local NGOs—with law makers and the public pledging to challenge the status-quo.

In January 2013, the World Bank Group's South Asia Region (SAR) launched a multi-faceted program to address VAW in its operations, analytics and collaborative work to address gender-based violence.

<sup>1</sup> Towards Ending Violence Against Women in South Asia, Oxfam Briefing Paper. August 2004 <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/violence.pdf>; <http://world.time.com/2013/08/13/sri-lanka-struggles-to-contain-a-growing-epidemic-of-child-abuse/>

### SAR Event Highlights

April 18, 2013: *Breaking the Silence* panel at the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings in Washington, DC

June 16, 2013: *Violence Against Women Hackathon* in Kathmandu, Nepal

June 17, 2013: *Joining Forces to Overcome Violence Against Women* regional conference in Kathmandu, Nepal

October 11, 2013: *Tackling Gender-Based Violence After 2015* panel at the World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings in Washington, DC

October 28, 2013: *Men, Peace & Security: Agents of Change* symposium at U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington, DC

January 31-February 2, 2014: *Peshawar Civic Hackathon* in Peshawar, Pakistan

May, 2014: World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings events to launch the regional report, *Violence Against Women and Girls in South Asia*.

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- Technical and Financial Support to Address Gender Based Violence
- The Promise of Expanding One-Stop Crisis Centers in Bangladesh



## HARNESSING ICT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NEPAL

On June 16, 2013, the World Bank's South Asia Region (SAR) brought together more than 100 tech-savvy youth and representatives from the public and private sectors for the Violence Against Women Hackathon in Kathmandu, Nepal, where participants rapidly developed ICT solutions for GBV victims and the agencies that work to support them.

Working collaboratively in 18 teams, participants spent the day developing new software applications from start to finish, diligently moving from brainstorming sessions to programming and developing fully-functional prototypes.

Throughout the process, teams were attentive to the hackathon's overarching design philosophy: to develop products which aid domestic violence victims and the numerous agencies which support them. At the conclusion of the day, teams presented their resulting projects before a panel of judges which included Isabel Guerrero (then Vice President, SAR), Maria Correia (Sector Manager, Social Development, SAR) and Minakshi Seth (Head of Communications, IFC South Asia).

The jury selected three winning applications: Your Voice Our Support, Mero Katha and Self-Help. Additionally, all applications are being incorporated into a comprehensive system to Fight Violence Against Women.

The system is built not only on the three winning apps, but also features other applications and the full development of a fourth app—Vaw Repo and Social Campaigner—that were created during the hackathon. All these independent applications will be components of a single system piloted in coordination and collaboration with CSO partners in Nepal. Self-Help and Your Voice Our Support will be primarily used to gather complaints and

information from victims of VAW, whereas the other two, Mero Katha and Vaw Repo, will be used as a dissemination portal.

All complaints from the Self-Help and Your Voice Our Support will be listed on the [www.fightvaw.org](http://www.fightvaw.org) site. Only authorized users will have access to the system and will be able to follow-up on the complaints and information collected.

In collaboration with Nepali civil society organizations and private sector firms, all of the winning teams will continue to receive technical support to finalize and pilot their applications.

The hackathon was followed on June 17-18, 2013 by a regional conference in Kathmandu entitled Joining Forces to Overcome Violence Against Women. The event, co-sponsored with Oxfam, convened a diverse group of more than 150 stakeholders to discuss the agenda for further mitigating GBV in South Asia.

Conference sessions covered legal perspectives, evidence on what works, the challenge of changing social attitudes in South Asia, and engaging the public and private sectors, including policy makers, government officials, academics, researchers, opinion leaders, donors, NGOs and media, to address the complexity of gender violence. Participants affirmed that the gravity of the issue calls for collective regional action focused on a comprehensive approach.

SAR continues to support the implementation of this exciting hackathon initiative and held the next hackathon, Peshawar Civic Hackathon, January 31- February 2, 2014, which crowd sourced solutions to civic issues in Pakistan.



One may immediately call into question whether the World Bank Group (WBG) should in fact have a role in addressing gender-based violence in South Asia: why should a multilateral financial institution be concerned with GBV? Quite simply stated, in addition to GBV being a human rights issue, gender-based violence has dire economic costs, which are undoubtedly counterproductive to the institution's core goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

*"Gender equality is smart economics. It has a multiplier effect on impacts across a spectrum of development outcomes. A country can't grow if it doesn't give opportunity to half of its population."*

*"We must address human capital issues, such as excess deaths of girls and women and gender gaps in education where these persist, closing earning and productivity gaps between women and men; giving women greater voice in households and society; and limiting the perpetuation of gender inequality across generations."*

~Philippe Le Houérou,  
World Bank Vice President for South Asia Region

For instance, in Bangladesh alone, CARE International has estimated that in 2010, a total of Taka 14,071 crore was lost as a result of domestic violence, the equivalent of 2.05 percent of the GDP.<sup>2</sup> In light of such realities, how can an institution so thoroughly invested in ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity stand on the sidelines? The realities of GBV simply cannot be ignored.

SAR, having thoroughly acknowledged GBV as an issue, and comprehensively responding to the matter, also brings into question the role of GBV in the wider context of international development, particularly in regard to the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The third MDG aims to "promote gender equality and empower women," and encompasses four key indicators, none of which directly reference GBV.

<sup>2</sup> Summary of Domestic Violence Against Women: Cost to the Nation Report. Original report by Dr. Kaniz Siddique. CARE Bangladesh, 2012. [http://www.carebangladesh.org/publication/Publication\\_1010212.pdf](http://www.carebangladesh.org/publication/Publication_1010212.pdf)



While the current indicators are certainly essential for achieving global gender equality, can men and women in a given country be equal if one gender is disproportionately subjected to domestic assault, rape, acid attacks, forced and child marriages, and honor killings? To what extent can women truly be economically empowered, and exercise their own agency if they must face such forms of violence on a daily basis?

Historically, WBG has invested relatively little to address sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). A strategic review conducted in October 2013, *Sexual and Gender Based Violence: What is the World Bank Doing and What Have We Learned*, revealed that SAR was in second- to-last place compared to other regions, with SAR only having two projects with some focus on GBV.

However, attention to SGBV is growing within the Bank portfolio and diversifying to new financial instruments. Since 2012, 12 new WBG projects with an exclusive or priority focus on SGBV, totaling \$18.6 million, have been approved.

On April 18, 2013, SAR hosted a panel, *Breaking the Silence*, in Washington, DC at the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings. The panel featured attorneys and activists from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan who questioned the effectiveness of tougher sentencing laws on perpetrators of VAW and argued that the solution lies in changing attitudes toward women.

On October 11, 2013, the World Bank's Poverty Reduction & Economic Management Network, Gender and Development (PRMGE) hosted a panel, Tackling Gender-Based Violence After 2015. Panelists explored why gender, specifically gender-based violence, should be a standalone goal in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. WBG work has been ramping up significantly given that GBV is an important barrier to poverty reduction and shared prosperity.

WBG has also used its convening power to host conferences and panels on SGBV, raising awareness of the issue amongst development agencies and other partners. On October 28, 2013, the World Bank co-hosted a symposium, Men, Peace & Security: Agents of Change, with U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) – North America, Women in International Security (WIIS), Promundo – US, and Sonke Gender Justice.

The symposium brought together scholars, policymakers, practitioners and military and security personnel from around the world to explore the dynamic and complex roles of men during violent conflict and post-conflict, including their roles as combatants, perpetrators, victims, witnesses and survivors of sexual violence, and as agents of potential positive change.

Following the symposium, USIP published a special report The Other Side of Gender: Men as Critical Agents of Change, which provides an understanding how the ascribed roles of men and women and masculine and feminine identities contribute to and can help mitigate violence in conflict and postconflict settings.

WBG is also leveraging its institutional strengths to mitigate violence in South Asia by providing technical and financial support across a wide array of sectors. The World Bank's South Asia Region is addressing GBV in the region.

SAR is developing an upcoming regional report to be published in May 2014, Violence Against Women and Girls in South Asia. The report will explore the different types of violence that women may face throughout their lives, as well as the associated perpetrators (male and female), risk and protective factors for both victims and perpetrators, and interventions to address violence across all life cycle stages. The report will also analyze the societal factors that drive the primarily male — but also female — perpetrators to commit violence against women in the region. For each stage and type of violence, the report will critically review existing research from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, supplemented by original analysis and select literature from outside the region. Policies and programs that address violence against women and girls

will be analyzed in order to highlight key actors and promising interventions. The report will identify critical gaps in research, program evaluations, and interventions in order to provide strategic recommendations for policy makers, civil society, and other stakeholders working to mitigate violence against women in South Asia.

To support additional development of the GBV program, SAR is receiving grant funding from the **Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE)**. These funds will focus on (i) increasing the availability of data and evidence on GBV; (ii) engaging donors, regional government partners, civil society and other groups to increase the effectiveness of GBV programs in the region; and (iii) learning from innovative programs that pay special attention to all three dimensions of GBV—in the home, work place and public spaces—to change social norms and address views on masculinity in the region. The funds will result in continued activities in the area of *gender, ICT and youth* and the formation of a new **SAR Gender Innovation Lab**.

The sheer principle of gender equality aside, GBV in all of its forms are directly detrimental to development. It reduces women's access to education, healthcare and other essential services, lowering productivity and access to economic opportunities, which underpin all of the other MDGs, as well as wider development efforts. With 2015 on the horizon, the MDGs will likely be re-assessed, providing an opportunity for the development community to voice the matter as an issue of prime concern.



## The Promise of Expanding One-Stop Crisis Centers in Bangladesh

It has been largely observed that women across the globe are reluctant to approach formal agencies or authorities for assistance following incidents of gender-based violence. More specifically, a [multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women conducted by the WHO](#) observed that there was a tendency for women to first approach members of their informal social networks (which include family, friends, and neighbors) regarding their experiences, rather than immediately informing individuals in positions of authority (including religious or traditional leaders, health personnel, police, counselors, or staff from women's NGOs).<sup>3</sup> More specifically, in the case of Bangladesh, the report revealed that the country ranked amongst the sample countries in which women were *least likely* to have contact with, and seek assistance from official agencies and authorities regarding an experience of domestic violence.

There are several theories to explain why these women may be reluctant to approach official agencies and authorities for support, including cultural norms, familial duties, or a sheer lack of access to services. The breadth and complexity of services required by victims may also cause an individual to simply feel overwhelmed, and unsure of where or how to begin addressing their needs. They often require a comprehensive combination of medical attention, counseling, and legal support, amongst other services, are often needed by victims; procuring all of these services is a difficult and time consuming endeavor.

Recognizing the multi-dimensional needs of the victims of GBV, the Government of Bangladesh, in partnership with the Government of Denmark, developed the [Multi-Sectoral Program on Violence Against Women \(MSP-VAW\)](#), which has established eight [One-Stop Crisis Centers \(OCCs\)](#) to assist women victims of domestic and public violence. The centers provide health care, police assistance, social services,



legal assistance, psychological counseling, and shelter services; they coordinate with local NGOs to provide additional support services. Due to their comprehensive nature, of the OCCs will greatly simplify access to a wide array of individual support services, thereby reducing much of the strain and difficulty required to procure them individually.

The World Bank is currently providing the MSP-VAW with the technical assistance needed to rapidly expand the national presence of OCCs. With continued support from the Bank, the MSP-VAW anticipates that all 60 planned locations will be operational this year. In building upon the success of the current OCCs, it may indeed be possible to stem the culture of reluctance amongst victims of gender based violence in Bangladesh to seek support services.



3 Summary Report: WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses.



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