

Draft notes from the 8th “Discussion Meeting on the Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan”

Hosted by UNIFEM, Wednesday August 11th, 2004

Please see attached sheet for the list of participants.

1. Background

Violence against women is not an issue which women have been facing during the 23 years of war, but it has been the issue in the history of Afghanistan. Therefore, UNIFEM has taken the initiative to invite the people from different Governmental and Civil Society organs to find out the causes of violence against women and solutions for these problems so that violence against women is ended in Afghanistan. In the previous meetings the research on VAW by different Organizations was discussed as well as some of the problems faced by women in the justice system and solutions were suggested. To continue the discussion on the other fields in which women face violence, the 8th meeting was held moderated by Najia Zewari from UNIFEM. There were two items on the agenda; presentation of MOPH; discussion on issues of VAW and Health and finding solutions for the specified issues; establishment VAW and Justice sub-committees;

2. Presentation of MOPH:

Dr. Mehr Afzon Mehr gave a presentation on the maternal death “A social injustice” in Afghanistan. According to her it is a major violence against women. She said that the maternal death is not natural. The bleeding after delivery is the cause of deaths which is also not natural. She mentioned the global causes of maternal death, the delays due to which the women die, etc. (Attached is the presentation for more information.)

3. Health and VAW:

Issues:

Transportation and distance of the hospitals:

In most of the far away areas/districts there are no hospitals and no transportation. People are facing too many problems when they want to travel to hospitals in the cities. This is very harmful for women especially the pregnant women to travel on animals and go to the hospitals after they are permitted by families.

Low level of education of people & no decision making right of women:

The low level of education of people is a reason that women are not let to go to hospitals or to be checked by the male doctors. This shows that women are not allowed to go to hospitals without permission in most of the areas of Afghanistan and they don't have the right to make decisions.

Different facilities for treatment in all over the country:

One of the problems that people are facing in the hospitals of the provinces is that there is not as much facility there as in City Hospitals. The lack of the facilities causes many problems which may sometimes lead to death.

Harsh behavior of nurses and peons with the women in the hospitals:

The behavior of the peons and the nurses in the hospitals are too bad with the patients especially with the women. From the door women are facing the harsh behavior till they get to the doctor and even there they have the same problem.

Custom of “No to girls’ birth”:

As some customs are always a reason of violence against women, the custom of “No to girls’ birth” is also a problem for women. Women are not behaved in a good manner if they give birth to a girl.

Uneducated TBAs:

There are too many deaths among the pregnant women in the districts. The reason is that either there are no hospitals there or if there are hospitals may be the women are not let to go there. That is why TBAs are called at home for the delivery of the lady. Most of these TBAs are uneducated and they don’t have the knowledge of hygiene. This unhygienic condition cause infection to women and may lead to death. Sometimes when it is out of the control of the TBAs also, they don’t guide the patients to go to the hospitals.

Registration of cases of women before the cure starts:

Another issue which was raised by the participants was that if patient (someone beaten) goes to the hospital they wait for the registration of the case and do the enquiry. Then they take the patient and start the treatment. It was mentioned that sometimes the injuries are so serious that waiting for the registrations is nonsense. In response to this the representative of Ministry of Public Health said that when we receive those kinds of patients, they are feeling too much pain at that time and tell the truth of who has committed that violence against her. And when they are treated, they refuse and are afraid and don’t tell the truth. To find out the truth it is necessary

Solutions:

Behaviors training:

The staff of the hospital especially the nurses, peons and gaurds should be trained on how to behave with the women patients specially in ladies hospitals.

Health Task force formation:

A health task force has been formed in the Ministry of public Health and the members are from MoPH, Health NGOs, UN Agencies and the Ministries.

Provision of transportation and establishment of hospitals in far away districts:

Hospitals should be built in the areas where people die of lack of hospitals or transportation should be provided in those areas so that deaths are avoided.

Training for the TBAs:

The TBAs should be trained on how to work better and to be a linkage between the ladies and the hospitals. If the work is too hard for the TBA she should take the ladies to the hospital for better treatment, but they don’t do it.

4. Establishment of Justice and VAW Sub-Committees:

The participants agreed to have more justice people in the next meeting and discuss the formation of the subgroup for Justice and VAW.

5. Other discussion points:

Presentation of the VAW and Education sub-committee

As the reporter of the group had left earlier, there was no proper report presented by the subgroup of VAW and Education.

Invitation of the other health organizations

Following organizations were suggested to attend the meetings of VAW:

- Coronary
- Mental hospital

Gender and TB research:

A gender and TB research has been done by WHO.

6. Next Meeting

Wednesday August 25th, 2004, 1:30 - 4pm at UNDP conference room.

Proposed Agenda:

1. Presentation of Medical Mondiale on Mental health and VAW (45 Mins)
2. Continuation of the discussion and VAW and Health (1 Hr)
3. Report of VAW and Education Subgroup (15 Mins)
4. Discussion on establishment of a sub-committee for Justice and VAW (30 Mins)

Other noted agenda topics identified for future meetings -

- Social Protection Service for women.

Meeting adjournment: 04:00

Minutes by: Maryam Shamal Ghalib

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DATE: August 11th, 2004

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