

Draft notes from the 9th “Discussion Meeting on the Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan”

Hosted by UNIFEM, Wednesday September 11th, 2004

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 9th meeting was held moderated by Najia Zewari from UNIFEM. There were four items on the agenda; Presentation of Medical Mondiale on Mental health and VAW; Continuation of the discussion and VAW and Health; Report of VAW and Education Subgroup; Discussion on establishment of a sub-committee for Justice and VAW

1. Health and VAW:

Issues:

Misuse of patient:

Some of the participants said that there is a rumor around about the misuse and the harassment of the women patients in Aliabad hospital by the staff including the doctors. This was then refused by the deputy of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs that on the base of the rumor, a team went for monitoring of the women in the hospital. The women there were above 50 years old and that they were in a very bad health. This shows that they are in a really bad condition to be used by anyone.

Psycho due to child Marriages:

Some of the women are married in a very small age to the very old men who are not in good health also. This creates problems to the women in looking after the old husband as well as the children inheriting the father’s disease. A case was mentioned in the meeting that a 13 years old girl was married to a 50 years old man who has a heart disease. The girl has given birth to two kids and both suffering from heart disease. It is really difficult for a teenager to look after the three sick people. This can cause the girl to become sick and be a psycho patient.

Ineffective treatment to women facing violence in family:

There are some cases of women who suffer psycho as a result of violence against them in family. Treating such patients is useless. The reason is that if these women are treated and sent back to home, there they will again face the violence against them which results again in bad psycho condition.

Inadequate space for patients:

The psycho patients need good care and a free atmosphere to get well. Unfortunately the point is not so in Afghanistan Marastoon Hospital. There is only one room for 13 psycho patients. These include drug addicted patients, those with family problems and

economical problems. Each of these patients needs different type of treatments. This is only possible when they are categorized and put in different rooms to be treated differently.

Treatment by drug only:

Those patients suffering psycho can not only be treated by drugs, but there are other ways to entertain them to get well. The problem in the psycho hospitals in Afghanistan is that the doctors and the careers do not try any other ways except the drugs and this is a long term treatment.

Psycho as the result of low economy:

There are some women admitted in the psycho hospitals who haven't been the target of any violence in family or any shocks, but they are sick due to their low economic condition in the family. They think of the ways to feed their children and see the obstacles on their way to get their children fed or that they are widows and are unable to feed their children. These thoughts cause pressure on their minds and at the end it causes them psycho problems. As for those facing violence in family, for the ones facing economy problems, the treatment is useless. As they get sick again as they join their family after treatment.

Ministry of Public Health's improper prioritization:

The participants objected that they are not happy with the prioritization of the activities of the Ministry of Public Health regarding the specific issues. There was an opinion that the MoPH has placed the problems related to women's Mental health in the second priority. No attention is being paid by the MoPH to the women patients suffering psycho problems. If the government bodies are not interested in helping those women, then they have no hope for their better condition and place of living which is the hospital itself for them.

Insufficient doctors in Aliabad:

Another most important issue is the lack of doctors in Aliabad hospital. The reason is that the hospital is far and the doctors are not willing to join the hospital. Another reason is that some of the doctors are not willing at all to work with the Psycho patients. The unwillingness of the doctors to join the hospital may cause in NO IMPROVEMENTS in the health of those women who are psycho and willing to have a helping hand from those who can treat them.

Solutions:

Monitoring to find solutions:

A monitoring should be done in the hospitals from all aspects to check the conditions of the women. Problems are to be recognized as the result of this monitoring that then there should be steps taken by the related organs to find solutions and put an end to problems faced by women in the hospitals.

Commission to be found to follow the issues:

A commission should be formed including UNIFEM, UNHCR, Medical Mondiale shelters, MoWA and MoPH. This commission is meant to find out the condition of women in shelters and hospitals and then to follow up the issues and the solutions for those problems.

Training of women faced violence on income generation:

The patients should be trained on income generations and other skills to let them be free from thinking and pressurizing their minds, Shohada organization has trained 32 women who suffered from family violence. Those patients are now feeling better and busy in their work and are now independent.

Search in NGP for budget:

The organizations should search in the National Gender Program for the budget if allocated for the women. This can help them in setting up some hospitals for those suffering the psycho problems so that their condition gets better and they live a comfortable life.

Medical Mondiale's support to psycho shelters:

The participants asked the Medical Mondiale to establish some shelters for those psycho women who suffer violence in family and train them on different skills so that they get well and they are safe there and away from those suffering psycho for other reason.

Organizations to work and allocate budget for psycho women:

AIHRC, Attorney Office, MoPH and the donor's community should work together and allocate some budget for the betterment of the conditions of psycho women and to help those women economically who suffer psycho as a result of family economy.

Works done in the psycho hospital:

2 years training has been given to the workers of the hospital. Support also given to the psycho problems of women in prison and shelters, but not any direct support has been provided to Marastoon.

2. Establishment of Justice and VAW Sub-Committees:

Sub-committee for Justice and VAW was formed. And its report will be presented in the next meetings.

3. Next Meeting

Wednesday October 3rd, 2004, 01:30 – 04:00 pm at UNDP conference room.

4. Proposed Agenda:

- Report of VAW and Education Subgroup.
- Report of VAW and Research Subgroup.
- Report of VAW and Justice Subgroup.
- Continuation of the discussion and VAW and Health.
- Social Protection Service for women.
- Any other business.

Meeting adjournment: 04:00