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The Prevention of Domestic Violence through Changing the Permissive Environment Surrounding Alcohol Use

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What is Domestic Violence or Gender Based Violence?

- **Gender based violence (GBV) is a form of violence committed against an individual on the basis of his/her gender. It is most often seen in the form of acts of physical or mental abuse committed by a male against a female .**
- **GBV occurs most often within households. The terms “Domestic Violence” and “Wife Battering” are also often used alternately in reference to GBV**
- **GBV is a consequence of the socio-cultural understanding on gender which places men and women in an unequal power relationship within the same society.**

GBV/Domestic Violence in Sri Lanka

- Though some estimates show the percentage of women falling victim to GBV to be 30 – 40% annually, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs in 2006 shows this number to be as high as 60% (Munasinghe, 2012).
- Approximately 44% of pregnant women being subjected to harassment annually (Munasinghe, 2012).
- It has been reported that up to of 8,000 – 10,000 cases of domestic violence occur throughout the country annually (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2012).
- Alcohol use has been identified as a crucial factor in the occurrence of GBV/Domestic violence.

What are the main determinants of GBV ?

- Social approval or social encouragement of such violence
- Absence of any deterrent to violence
- Women on average being physically weaker than men
- Preventive efforts being undermined by a few
- Emphasis being mainly on helping victims and not on prevention
- Emphasis being mainly on punishing perpetrators and not on prevention
- Prevention efforts focusing only on one segment of the population
- The feeling among others in a community or neighbourhood that they may not intrude in a private or family matter
- The reluctance of those subject to violence to report it because of shame
- Active pressure or threats that prevent violence being report
- Continued pressure on those subject to violence to accept it, to give the perpetrator yet another chance or to compromise repeatedly

What are the main determinants of GBV

Cont...

- **Accepting the excuse that alcohol use has led to the violent behaviour**
- **Perpetrators openly reporting or boasting about previous instances of abusing others – for example in drinking settings**
- **The perception that violence is commonplace or the norm**
- **Some individuals who are subject to violence colluding by provoking known abusive persons**
- **Blaming the person who is subject to violence as having provoked the abuser**
- **Lack of local social reprimands for individuals who are abusive**
- **Failure to recognize the extent of violence**
- **Failure to recognize the severity of trauma and suffering that violence inflicts**

Addressing the Perpetration of GBV

1. Why does GBV persist?

- Analyze the contributors to Gender Based violence

2. Selecting determinants to address

- Which of the contributors can be modified?
- Which of the contributors are useful to address?
- Activities should remain within the resources
- time energy and interest of the people concern
- Relative importance or size of the contributor

Addressing the Perpetration of GBV

Cont...

3. Addressing selected determinants

- Generating discussion within ourselves
- Generating discussion within the community
- Changing the selected determinant
- Establish indicators
- Monitoring and evaluating to guide the actions
- Working for change

Addressing the Perpetration of GBV

Cont...

Learn about the contributors that promote GBV



Influence the environment to change towards being good for the community

- **Community understand the magnitude of the problem of GBV**
- **Community understand how contributors influence /Promote GBV**
- **Community understands why they should counteract these influences**
- **Community understands how to counteract these influences**
- **Community takes action**
- **Measure progress with indicators**



Research on Alcohol Use and Violent Behaviour

- Alcohol consumption is a significant risk factor for violent perpetration and violence victimization (Abbey, 2011; Chermack and Giancola, 1997; Leonard, 2008).
- Drinking at the time of committing an act of violence may contribute to the severity of the aggression (Wells et al, 2011).
- Those who report a relatively high alcohol intake and/or frequent heavy drinking occasions are more likely to have been involved in violent acts (Rossow, 1996, 2000; Wells and Graham, 2003).
- Alcohol limits cognitive capacity such that intoxicated individuals tend to focus on cues in the environment that are most salient (Steele and Joseph, 1990).

Research on Alcohol Use and Violent Behaviour

Cont...

- Mere belief that one has consumed alcohol can lead to altered psychological and behavioural outcomes including increased aggression (Lang, Goeckner, Adesso, & Marlatt, 1975; Marlatt and Rohsenow, 1980; Rohsenow & Bachorowski, 1984).
- Drinkers Also simply expect others to tolerate abnormal behaviour if it can be attributed to alcohol (Critchlow, 1986).
- Expectancies significantly increased aggressive behaviour, whereas the actual quantity of alcohol ingested was unrelated to aggression (Bègue et al, 2009).

Alcohol & violence

- Alcohol consumption is a common factor in violence incidents, and an important risk factor for committing violent acts and for victimization
- Violent incidents are associated frequently with alcohol use by the perpetrator.
- The mechanisms underlying the Alcohol-Violence relationship are complex.
- Increase in alcohol consumption is followed by an increase in rates of violence and vice versa
- Reducing unfair privileges attached to alcohol reduces violence as well as alcohol consumption.

Alcohol & violence

Cont...

- Alcohol increases the inhibitory activity of the neurotransmitter GABA receptors and decreases the excitatory activity of glutamate receptor (Ticku 1981).
- Alcohol acts as a depressant.
- Alcohol reduces activity of the central nervous system.
- Therefore alcohol creates drowsiness and other sedating effects (Harison & Venturelli, 1995).
- Real chemical effect of alcohol is unpleasant.

Observations by the Community

- An alcohol user shouting obscenities while walking along the road after drinking immediately becomes sober and speaks normally when faced with a policeman.
- Even though a man behaves aggressively at home with his wife following alcohol use, he becomes calm and changes the subject immediately should her brother or any other relative pay them a visit.
- An alcohol user is aware of the amount of money he has with him, despite having consumed a large quantity of alcohol. If a family member takes certain amount money out of his pocket while he is under the influence of alcohol, on the following day he is able to ask the very same family member for the exact amount s/he took.
- No matter how much alcohol they have consumed, alcohol users are able to find their way back home from the bar. Even those whose homes are located far away from the bar are able to do so. The alcohol user knows how to avoid the dangerous places on the road while walking home to his destination under the influence of alcohol. The alcohol user is careful when walking on a risky footbridge no matter how unsteadily he walks on a regular road.
- When an alcohol user, following the consumption of alcohol, sets off to take revenge on an enemy, he is able to locate the exact person he wishes to take revenge on even if the latter is in the midst of many others. Those who consume alcohol in order to inflict serious injury on another know the most vulnerable places to stab such as the chest or abdomen, and would stab the area accurately and those who commit murders following the use of alcohol are careful to hide the murder weapon immediately afterwards so as to escape blame.

Observations by the Community

Cont...

- When an alcohol user behaves aggressively in his home and destroys furniture and other objects to frighten his wife and children, he is very selective about which objects he chooses to destroy. He avoids things he uses regularly, such as the TV, and other objects that are of personal value to him such as heirlooms inherited from his ancestors.
- No matter aggressively an alcohol user behaves with his family, he becomes sober immediately when faced with a police officer or a thug.
- A man who drinks at a party and drinks and jokes freely with his boss is careful to avoid mentioning incidents that might put him or his job in jeopardy afterwards. For instance, he would not confess to misappropriating company money or stealing goods from the company if he is guilty of these acts. When shouting insults or any other seemingly thoughtless statements at friends and family, alcohol users are careful to avoid making statements that they would cause major irreversible damage.
- An alcohol user who makes indecent advances at other women behaves normally before a police woman who stops him for a breath analyzer test.
- At the bar, no matter how much alcohol he has consumed, the alcohol user is able to pay the bartender the correct amount of money and is able to ask for the correct balance he is due.
- Despite behaving as though he is completely unaware of his actions following a bout of drinking, if given food he would otherwise avoid, an alcohol user would avoid eating it.
- The alcohol user is able to locate his own bed when he is tired and he is able to find the toilet and use it no matter how much alcohol he has consumed.

Observations by the Community

Cont...

- When the alcohol user feels he has reached his full capacity, he is able to make an excuse and leave the drinking circle.
- The alcohol user only displays difficulty and inappropriate behaviour before those whom he knows will assist him or react according to his expectations. Alcohol users who expose themselves indecently to girls choose the more vulnerable looking girls to expose himself to.
- The user can drive a vehicle or ride a bike and go home by himself and if he feels he has consumed a very large quantity of alcohol, he is able to choose somebody who hasn't drunk as much and ask that person to drive him home.
- The alcohol user can avoid going to shop for groceries because he knows how he will be received. He is able to send another family member to shop for groceries.
- The alcohol users tend to reject what their wives say more when they are under the influence of alcohol because they know that their wives will not call them to task for it once they are sober.
- The alcohol user knows exactly what he should ask for to ease his discomfort.

Observations by the Community

Cont...

- If the alcohol user vomits while lying down in bed, he keeps one of his wife's clothing with him to clean himself up. This is because he is sure that she would wash the clothes afterwards whereas she would refuse to do so with his clothes.
- The alcohol user is able to read road signs and shop signs. When traveling in the bus, the alcohol user is careful to lean on those who appear least likely to fight back. The alcohol user knows which bus to take and where to get off the bus. When traveling in the bus, if there are no seats available the alcohol user leans on others or uses other tactics to get a seat.
- The alcohol user is aware of the law and is careful to avoid breaking it. The alcohol user understands the extent of the punishment for violators of the law under the influence of alcohol and if caught is able to negotiate with the police officer and try to get away with a fine to avoid having to go to courts. The alcohol user knows how to avoid police check points on the way home.
- Alcohol users are careful when climbing down stairs. They are careful with the way they dress themselves when leaving the home.
- The alcohol user avoids telling the police or his family where he went to drink. When asked, he says he doesn't remember.
- The alcohol user knows how much alcohol is left in his bottle and if it is taken away from him while he is drunk, he can ask for it later on.

Observations by the Community

Cont...

- The alcohol user can react to the programmes on TV and respond to what's being said. He is also able to choose the programmes he prefers watching and to support the politicians with whom he agrees. He is able to recognize songs and to name the singers even under the influence of alcohol. The children of the alcohol user are aware that when their father is at home, even if he is drunk they can only watch the programmes he likes to watch on TV.
- If they get injured while drunk, alcohol users know how to treat the wound. They are careful to avoid those who are more likely to attack them.
- Some alcohol users tell their wives of the harm they did to others while drunk expecting the wives to apologize on behalf of them the next day. They are careful to tell only the wrongs that would later work in their favour and that they could avoid getting into trouble for.
- At a wedding or a party, no matter how much alcohol the user has consumed, he continuously finds out what his wife and children are doing.

Strategies Used by the Community

- Responding to the obscenities shouted under the influence of alcohol with statements showing that she (the wife) was aware that the user was shouting not as a result of the alcohol but due to his lack of decency.
- Questioning the husband (who uses alcohol under the excuse that he does so as a form of relaxation after a hard day's work) pointing out that women also work hard on a daily basis and asking them if it is justifiable if women too consumed alcohol for the same reason.
- Calculating the daily, monthly and annual cost of alcohol (as guided by FISSD/HLAD volunteers) and discussing these costs with the husband pointing out the ways in which the same amount of money could have been spent more profitably.
- Refraining from serving alcohol at weddings, parties, and other special occasions hosted in their homes and making.

Strategies Used by the Community

Cont...

- Making their as well as members of their immediate and extended families aware that serving alcohol at special occasions not only served to promote alcohol use to children and other nonusers, but the aggressive behaviour of users afterwards serves to spoil the festive nature of the events for others. It is reported that the number of special occasions at which alcohol is served has decreased significantly in all communities.
- Discussing the expectancies and consequences of alcohol use with their husbands when the latter are sober.
- Exploring the reasons as to why the husband throws a temper tantrum following alcohol use and gradually eliminating those reasons.
- Assigning responsibilities within the home such as household chores, and outside the home such as shopping for groceries, attending parent – teacher meetings at the children’s schools, and community projects.

Strategies Used by the Community

Cont...

- Explaining to their husbands the consequences of alcohol use on other family members as a result of their permissiveness.
- Refraining from preparing bites (savory snacks) for the husband when he brought alcohol to be consumed at home and explaining that bites are only eaten with alcohol to disguise the unpleasant taste of the alcohol.
- Making an effort to listen to the husband's problems (in the case of a husband who claimed to drink alcohol because he faced many problems especially in his workplace), and show him that many of those problems have simple solutions.
- Making an effort to understand the husband's alcohol use and explaining it to him.
- Making it clear to friends and relatives that alcohol would no longer be allowed in their homes, and that gifts of alcohol would not be accepted.
- Not paying attention to the husband's requests and instructions and ignoring him when he is under the influence of alcohol.

Strategies Used by the Community

Cont...

- **Not preparing any of the foods that the husband enjoys when he returns home intoxicated.**
- **Reminding the husband of the problems in the home and family more when he is intoxicated.**
- **Openly challenging and confronting the husband's unacceptable behaviour thereby making him aware that the other family members are aware that his behaviour is no more than a pretense.**
- **Instead of taking pity when the husband complains of his discomfort following alcohol use, pointing out to him that alcohol causes physical discomfort and that it is therefore natural that he should be suffering.**
- **Discussing with the husband, the performances put on by other alcohol users and pointing out their absurdity by way of making him aware that the community is aware that alcohol induced misbehaviour is a false pretense and that that alcohol does not impair the ability to think rationally.**

Strategies Used by the Community

Cont...

- Not paying special attention to the husband and not making an effort to relieve his discomfort when he returns home intoxicated.
- Ridiculing and laughing at the husband along with other family members, whenever he behaves in a manner in which he expects will evoke sympathy (such as pretending to have forgotten the amount of money he has with him or forgetting the words to a song).
- Not tolerating the husband's breaking of furniture and other household items when under the influence of alcohol; handing him his personal belongings and other objects that he values and challenging him to break them as well.
- Pointing out the husband's misbehaviour to him immediately instead of waiting until he is sober to do so.
- Expressing dissatisfaction in sexual relations or not allowing sexual contact while the husband is under the influence of alcohol.

Strategies Used by the Community

Cont...

- Challenging the husband to confront the more outspoken family members with his aggressive behaviour rather than targeting the more vulnerable family members alone.
- Pretending to make a phone call to the police or their mothers in law to complain about the husband's behaviour. (Those wives who tried this tactic reported that their husbands ceased to be aggressive immediately.)
- Discouraging or dismissing scornfully, the husband's displays of heroism while under the influence of alcohol.
- Refusing to apologize on behalf of her husband for his misbehaviour with other community members while he was under the influence of alcohol and making him take responsibility for his actions instead.
- Pointing out scenes in TV programmes that show men behaving abusively after having consumed alcohol and telling the husband that his behaviour when intoxicated is very similar.

Conclusion

- It has been observed that alcohol induced misbehaviour decreases when the permissive environment changes.
- A decrease in alcohol induced misbehaviour of up to 60% has been reported from many communities.
- While in some communities, though there is little change in the amount of alcohol consumed, acts of GBV following alcohol use have decreased, in many other communities there has been a decrease in alcohol consumption as well.