

COVID 19

REPORT ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The **COVID 19** is not only creating tension in economy and food insecurity at home, it is at the same time trigger another area, igniting the Violence Against Women (VAW). The development organizations cannot overlook this due to its attention to COVID 19 response. Half of Bangladesh populations are female. The Bangladesh social construction is weak it is a male dominated society; women are undermined and undervalued players.

The domestic violence in household level is due to the lock down of family members inside a small room or home due to the Covid-19. The COVID-19 pandemic putting girls and women at heightened risk of violence as this cuts them off from essential protection services and social networks they used before. SOHAY strongly suggests both the Government and NGOs working on violence against women program should pass the message to the community that if there is news on women and girls abused or any forms of gender based violence by male household members they will face difficulties getting external support.

Economic stress on families also put children particularly girls, at greater risk of exploitation. The household child labor and gender-based violence has increased. The Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights. Its impact ranges from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls in the community and society. It negatively affects prevents women from fully participating in society. Violence not only has negative consequences for women but also their families, the community and the country at large. Decades of movements of civil society and women's movements have put combating gender-based violence high on national and international agendas. The movements should not slack down due to the other important issue before us, COVID 19.

SOHAY has told its staff to closely monitor the situation, think dynamically what they could do differently under the present situation. SOHAY field staff passed the message through its volunteers to the community and family to stay calm, be considerate and stay together as family at this difficult and critical time. SOHAY is doing this in its working areas in Dhaka urban slums and rural villages in Satkhira District. SOHAY staffs are doing this maintaining social distancing; most of the communications were on mobile phones.

SOHAY employees are keeping their eyes open, ear on the ground. They are seeing very early sign, and vibration on the ground, invisible tears in women eyes. The information SOHAY employees so far have received are worrying, the VAW will not stay at the poor and impoverished communities, it will move up to lower middle class and middle class families in the society as well unless we handle issue differently and creatively.



SOHAY staffs have seen the following:

Poverty-related stress due to uncertain economy: The earning family members inside home couple of weeks. They are not sure when the situation will change; they are worried about family income. This is poverty-related stress and economic insecurity correlate with no knowledge of coping strategies. This creates tension in families lead to increases disagreement between spouses trigger violence. The children are also facing maltreatment at household. The unemployment rates will contribute further the stress lead to more family dispute and violence.

The terrible side of lock down: Those are tied to lock down, are in stressful conditions, and are linked to stress; fear of poor mental health can turn to increase the VAW and Children. Most of the families SOHAY work in the poor and impoverished slums and rural villages in Bangladesh live in 10 ft x 12 ft room. It is impossible for a four or five member family to live inside the room and within the boundary 24/7. At the same time they use common washing place, kitchens and toilets. Logistically, this is impossible for them maintaining social distance. It also creates tension with neighbors as well.

Expose to abuse by partners due to limited mobility by women: In normal time the partners were busy in their work for a considerable hour a day. The women were relaxed then. Due to the lock down women could not escape from their partners due to mobility constrained. The temporary scale back of the legal services expose women from their abusive partners.

SOHAY Suggestions (carrot and stick):

- We should pass the news as widely as possible that women will be included in all response and recovery decisions. This is to support the women.
- Pass the message in the community that women and girls will be at the centre of recovery phase.
- Provide necessary training and skills remotely, if possible, to women to hold the leadership position and to contribute to the decision-making process.
- All future cash and material transfers must focus on women at household.
- The NGOs should contact regularly with their beneficiaries, this will help women. The partners will know they are monitored.
- Discuss with the male household members and inform them that abuse of women at household will not help them in future.
- Keep the hope alive in the community. Those families behave properly with their women family members now will be given priority for all sort of assistance in coming days.
- The family attitude and behavior with the women and girls will be evaluated for any sort of future assistance.

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