

Involving Men Volunteers to Effectively Respond to the Problem of Gender-based Violence in Myanmar: United Nations Population Fund

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence has been regarded as one of the major social public health concerns affecting women from all walks of life across the world. Moreover, the incidence of the problem increases enormously in regions which are facing humanitarian emergencies. In order to respond to the problem of violence against women living in a displacement camp in Myanmar, the United Nations Population Fund started a new initiative to develop a network of male volunteers to prevent violence and adequately respond to assist the victims. To conclude, the problem of gender based violence cannot be eliminated unless men are actively involved in the drive. The current strategy of developing a network of men and involving them to counter this menace is quite an effective approach and the program managers from different parts of the world should aim to take a leaf out of it and replicate the same in their settings for a better and a favorable outcome.

Keywords: Gender-based violence; Men; Myanmar

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence has been regarded as one of the major social public health concerns affecting women from all walks of life across the world [1]. In-fact, the global estimates indicate that almost 35% of the women are being subjected to some form of physical or sexual violence, which is an alarming figure and clearly suggest that their human rights violations have become a norm and is not a rare occurrence [2]. Furthermore, in most of the communities, it is regarded as a private issue and thus very rarely reported due to the associated stigma [1,2].

Distribution and determinants of gender-based violence

The gender-based violence is more of a social concern as the same trend has continued for generations together, where women have been considered inferior to men [1]. Further, almost all grown-up men and women have witnessed the incidents of violence in their past, while they were kids, owing to which every segment of the society believe it to be a part of the lives of women, where men can abuse women, while women are expected to live with the same without thinking that it is something against which they have to raise their voice or seek appropriate attention [1,2]. Moreover, the incidence of the

problem increases enormously in regions which are facing humanitarian emergencies [3-5].

Prevention and control of gender-based violence in Myanmar

Acknowledging the deep roots of the problem in the human society, the impact which it results in the growth and development of a woman, and eventually the progress of a nation, efforts have been taken to neutralize this divide between men & women [1,5-7]. In order to respond to the problem of violence against women living in a displacement camp in Myanmar, the United Nations Population Fund started a new initiative to prevent violence and adequately respond to assist the victims [8]. This initiative has two main aspects, namely developing a network of male volunteers to create awareness about the indispensable need to end violence, and to extend medical care, psychosocial support & legal aid to the survivors of violence [8].

The primary objective of the initiative was to reach out to other men, not only to sensitize them about the ill-effects associated with gender-based violence, but even to intervene and discourage men who indulge in domestic violence by counseling them as

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Received: December 18, 2018, **Accepted:** January 18, 2019, **Published:** January 24, 2019

Citation: Shrivastava SRB, Shrivastava PS (2019) Involving Men Volunteers to Effectively Respond to the Problem of Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: United Nations Population Fund. *Biol Med (Aligarh)* 11:453. doi:10.35248/0974-8369.19.11.453.

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well as by involving local community leaders [8,9]. The initiative has started to show encouraging results, as the incidence of gender-based violence has remarkably declined, and is clearly evident that husbands, fathers, brothers and sons all have started to attend the sensitization sessions, and is even providing a platform for them to discuss their other issues [8].

Moreover, this gives an opportunity for men volunteer to work with female staffs in collaboration and expand the reach of their services [8]. However, before enrolling them as volunteers, men are screened before their recruitment to ensure that they are not themselves the perpetrators [8]. The current strategy of developing a network of men and involving them to counter this menace is quite an effective approach as evidenced in the studies done in Dar es Salaam and other settings [10-13].

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the problem of gender based violence cannot be eliminated unless men are actively involved in the drive. The program managers from different parts of the world should aim to take a leaf out of it and replicate the same in their settings for a better and a favorable outcome.

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