Formal versus Informal Help: Impact of SAFE on Help Seeking by Physically Abused Women in Dhaka Slums

Kausar Parvin
Tabassum Rahman
Ruchira Tabassum Naved

Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum
Stellenbosch, Cape Town
16 September, 2015
Background

- 15% - 71% of ever-partnered women experience physical or sexual violence worldwide (WHO, 2005)

- Disclosure is generally low (21-66%) (WHO, 2005)

- Though formal sources of support are emphasized and promoted use of these sources are lower than that of informal sources

- Evidence is thin on how interventions effect help seeking
The context

• Physical IPV in Bangladesh:
  - National rate 49%  (BDHS, 2007)
  - Rate in urban slums 62%  (UHS, 2006)

• 66% never disclosed their experience

• Only 7% ever sought help from any sources

• 2% sought help from a formal source  (Naved et al., 2006)
Objective

This paper aims to explore the help seeking pattern of physically abused women and see the impact of SAFE on help seeking.
SAFE is an integrated multi-sectoral, multi-tier intervention addressing sexual & reproductive health & rights & VAWG in Dhaka slums.

Project partners:

- icddr,b (lead)
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
- Marie Stopes Clinic Society
- Nari Maitree (We Can Alliance)
- Population Council
SAFE’s theory of change

**Core intervention activities**
- Interactive group session with females and males
- Community campaign
- SAFE health and legal services

**Level 1 outcomes**
Changes among group members

- **Awareness** regarding gender/rights/VAWG/law/services
- **Communication and negotiation skills**
- **Isolation**
- **Self-confidence**
  - ↑ Help seeking
  - ↑ Activism

**Level 2 outcomes**
Changes at the community level

- **Awareness** regarding gender/rights/VAWG/laws/services
- **Help seeking**
- **Gender inequitable and violence condoning attitudes**

**Impact**
- Reduced spousal VAWG
Basic approaches in SAFE

• Rights-based

• Multi-sectoral involving
  - Health and
  - Legal sectors

• Multi-tier involving
  - Individuals and Groups
  - Communities
  - Society

• Integration of prevention & response
Study site and target group

- Study site – 19 slums within 2km from Marie Stopes Clinics in three areas of Dhaka city

- Target groups -
  Females aged 10-29
  Males aged 18-35
  Community leaders
  Different stakeholders (e.g., judiciary, police, health sector, line ministries, society at large)
## Intervention components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Level (600 groups)</th>
<th>Community Level</th>
<th>Societal Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 two-hour participatory group sessions over 20 months on:</td>
<td>• Community orientation and orientation of community leaders</td>
<td>• Sensitization lawyers, judges, prosecutors, police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gender, rights &amp; VAWG</td>
<td>• Recruitment and engagement of community activists</td>
<td>• Sensitization of health professionals and marriage registrars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SRH &amp; rights</td>
<td>• Celebration of special days (drama, filmshow, rally, etc)</td>
<td>• Policy advocacy with judiciary, police, line ministries, NGOs, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legal rights, remedies</td>
<td>• Display and distribution of BCC materials</td>
<td>• Media campaign using TV and radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Available services</td>
<td>• One stop service center:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life skills</td>
<td>- Health services &amp; referrals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Attendance=5.9 sessions/group member</td>
<td>- Legal advice and representation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAFE evaluation design: RCT

Study Design

Baseline Survey → Intervention → Endline Survey

Arm A
- Male groups
- Female groups
- Community Campaign

Arm B
- Female groups
- Community Campaign

Arm C
- Community Campaign

Service
- Health
- Legal

Service related Intervention

Training: Gender, Rights, Violence and SRHR

Qualitative formative

Quantitative and Qualitative monitoring

Qualitative evaluation
**Sample size by arm:**
Baseline (2012) and Endline (2014) surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arms</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th></th>
<th>Endline</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm A</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Community + Female + Male)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm B</td>
<td>1491</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Community + Female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm C</td>
<td>1480</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Community)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Arms</td>
<td>4458</td>
<td>1617</td>
<td>4581</td>
<td>1620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAFE surveys and analysis

- Mapping and household listing of 19 slums

- Formation of 234 contiguous clusters using natural or artificial boundaries with 50-100 households in between clusters as buffers

- This analysis includes currently married women (n=5,336)

- Difference-in-difference analysis was used for assessing impact
### Number of qualitative interviews and FGDs conducted for evaluating SAFE’s impact in Dhaka slums and legal service uptake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male (age 18-35)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married (age 15-29)</td>
<td>Unmarried (age 15-19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Depth Interviews</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Records from 75 cases who accessed legal service provided by SAFE were also analyzed.
# Background characteristics of sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Baseline (n=2,666)</th>
<th>Endline (n=2,670)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 yrs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 yrs</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 yrs of education</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 yrs of education</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever employed (%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevalence of spousal physical violence and help seeking by females aged 15-29 in Dhaka slums

Baseline (n=2666) | Endline (n=2607)
---|---
Physical violence | 58 |
Help seeking | 47 |

Baseline (n=1556) | Endline (n=1241)
---|---
Help seeking | 19 |
--- |---

Sources of help

- **Informal source**
  - Baseline (n=290): 89
  - Endline (n=220): 94

- **Formal source**
  - Baseline (n=290): 11
  - Endline (n=220): 5
Impact of SAFE on help seeking by physically abused women

Impact of Female and Male Groups \([(c+f+m)-c]\)
Impact of Male Group \([(c+m+f)-(c+f)]\)
Impact of Female Group \([(c+f)-c]\)

- **p<0.05; * p<0.1

\(c + f + m = \text{Community mobilization, female and male group intervention}\)
\(c + f = \text{Community mobilization and female group intervention}\)
\(c = \text{Community mobilization}\)

![Bar graph showing the impact of SAFE on help seeking by physically abused women.](image)
SAFE encouraged disclosure & help seeking

“Almost all of those who attended the group sessions gained the courage necessary to speak out. The group members have changed; they now come to us for help.”

In-depth interview, CCM, married woman
Formal versus informal help

“I advised her (an abused woman) to go to SAFE office for legal services. However, suggesting women to take legal action does not always make them access such services. They are slum dwellers. They prefer to protect their marriage no matter if they (the husbands) beat them or tear them apart. They know that reporting to the police would result in husband’s arrest. The legal system will cause a lot of harassment even if a fair verdict is reached at the end.”

*In-depth interview, married woman*
Uptake of SAFE legal service

- Women sought legal service as last resort (e.g., when physical or economic violence was severe)
- More than half of them finally backed out from taking any legal action
- >50% of the rest preferred to continue the marriage by solving the problem through mediation
- 10 women agreed to file litigation (out of 30)
- 3 women got divorced using support from SAFE (out of 30)
Conclusion

- When both formal & informal support is offered informal sources are preferred by the survivors

- Formal services are accessed by very few survivors as a last resort

- Targeting men is critical for creating an enabling environment and boosting informal help seeking

- Strengthening not only formal support systems, but also the informal ones is important for catering to the needs of the survivors
Acknowledgements

- We acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) to SAFE

- We are grateful to the slum population who participated in SAFE

- We are thankful to all the project staff for SAFE a success
icddr,b thanks its Core Donors

[Logos of Core Donors: Bangladesh, Canada, Sweden, UK Aid]