

KYRGYZSTAN

Combatting culturally-endorsed sexual violence in Kyrgyzstan through innovative education and information technology

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BACKGROUND

In the Kyrgyz Republic gender-based violence, including sexual violence, often takes place within culturally accepted and normalized forced marriage practices of bride kidnapping and child marriages. This type of sexual violence is invisible, thus, hard to investigate and address. Lacking capacities for solid policy-oriented, safe and ethical research, poor provision of state services of support to the victims and large-scale impunity of the rapists characterize the situation. There is a need to generate reliable evidence for policy, education, and research; improve support services quality for victims; and advance prosecution of the perpetrators in ways which are appropriate in the local context.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project goal is to strengthen local capacities in the Kyrgyz Republic to combat gender-based violence through an innovative university curriculum, ethical and safe research, and effective use of information technologies for awareness raising and multi-sector service provision.

The project will pursue the following objectives:

1. Development and testing a sexual violence-focused university curriculum integrating innovative teaching approaches, e. g., service learning, system thinking, action-research and critical thinking.
2. Building local capacity (academics, scholars, state officials, civil society organizations and university students) to respond to sexual abuse victims through pilot-testing methods of solid and ethical research, victim-focused provision of social and legal support, and development/testing of a SOS mobile application.
3. Making visible the problem of sexual abuse, especially the silenced and socially accepted practices of child marriages and bride kidnapping, through inter-institutional cooperation, academic publications and use of social media.

METHODS

Multiple methods will be used in this project: the research component will include quantitative and qualitative data collection; health & legal component will be based on service-learning and action-research; and information technology component will use an application (software) to network the entire process (i.e. victim-police-medical personnel-relatives of victim/victim).

The university curriculum will be called “Combating sexual and gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan through research, service and practice” and will have a built-in service learning and action-research component with the following goals:

1. Deepen theoretical knowledge among current and future professionals (lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, journalists and software engineers) about the nature of gender-based violence, its roots on individual, family, community and societal levels.
2. Develop practical skills in
 - Research: faculty and students jointly develop and undertake qualitative study on understanding of culturally endorsed sexual violence in Kyrgyzstan
 - Victim-focused response: students receive training in multidisciplinary responses. Faculty and students jointly explore challenges and opportunities in partnership with local civil society organizations and state agencies.

- Human rights: faculty and students (from human rights and law departments) jointly work on guiding and accompanying one criminal case from the stage of registering police complaint to court proceeding.
 - Information technologies: faculty and students work with a local non-governmental organization on the development and pilot testing of a mobile application for reporting of violence by the victims with an option for police response.
3. Strengthen emergency response through the design and testing of a SOS mobile application and its subsequent promotion; building network and gender sensitivity capacity with police, medical personnel, civil society and potential victims.
 4. Improve the quality of health and legal assistance to survivors through individualized and supervised work, lectures, study sessions, rehabilitation and mentoring/guidance and counseling.

TIMELINE

March 1st, 2017- February, 28th, 2019

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The project is expected to generate a number of important lessons for fostering effective strategies to put an end to violence against women and girls in the Kyrgyz Republic. Empirical evidence produced by the project, comprised of qualitative and quantitative data on the prevalence and nature of culturally-endorsed sexual violence, will be used to inform policy decision making processes at the national and sub-national levels. These data will also be used by educational institutions, civil society organizations for lobbying and advocacy.

The project's testing of broad-based multi-disciplinary service system to support victims will identify opportunities and challenges for cross-institutional cooperation in emergency response and point to institutional spots where current processes, procedures or policies need improvements. Analysis of the institutional settings of the support system will help to enhance the quality of victim-focused social service support. Lessons learnt and guidelines will be made publicly available.

As the capacity of university faculty members, representatives of civil society and state organizations and university students will be built to carry out sexual violence research, prevention and response in innovative victim-focused ways is expected to be enhanced in quality and quantity.

The project's produced mobile application and immediate multi-disciplinary mobile response groups will support new and existing services, will make the process of reporting sexual violence and receiving assistance more accessible, efficient, and accountable.

Comprehensive and interdisciplinary university curriculum on the problem of sexual violence will raise cohorts of gender-sensitive, ethical and informed junior and para professionals who will contribute to development of the discipline, and enhancements in the practice of violence prevention and response.

