

ZINDAGII SHOISTA LIVING WITH DIGNITY



Preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Tajikistan

Report of the Formative Research Phase

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LIST OF TAJIK TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

TAJIK TERMS

Avlod	Clan/extended family
Aqsaqal	Respected elder
Buzkashi	Traditional game played by male riders on horseback seeking to gain control of a goat or veal carcass, the audience is also almost exclusively male
Chaikhana	Traditional teahouse, used mainly for men's social gatherings
Ghurbat	Violence
Imam	Islamic religious leader
Jamoat	Municipal/village level administration
Kelin	Daughter-in-law
Kolkhoz	Soviet collective farm
Khusbunat	Violence
Mahalla	Local council
Mard	Man
Muallima	Female teacher
Nikoh	Traditional, Islamic marriage (often unregistered)
Raisi Zanon	Head of women
Talaq	Traditional Islamic divorce proceeding
Zurovari	Violence, in some parts of the country implies sexual violence only

ABBREVIATIONS

DFID	Department for International Development
DV	Domestic Violence
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBAO	Gomo-Badakhshan Autonomous <i>Oblast</i> (region)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
MRC	South African Medical Research Council
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the findings of the formative research phase of the ‘Living with dignity’ project, which is part of the broader ‘What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls’ programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It is based on qualitative field research conducted in the four target villages of the project, two of which were in Penjikent district, and two in Jomi district in Tajikistan, using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted in November and December 2015.

The research focused on the following issues:

- Assessing available data on prevalence of domestic violence/sexual and gender-based violence (DV/SGBV) in the target villages,
- Experiences of and dynamics leading to different forms of DV/ SGBV, including by and between in-laws,
- Prevalent attitudes toward gender roles, identities and DV/ SGBV,
- Existing services and response/support mechanisms to DV/ SGBV, experiences and potential gaps in these, as well as
- Gendered societal dynamics in target communities (i.e. who are the key gatekeepers in a particular community, what are the particular entry points for DV/ SGBV programming, including patterns of media usage and identification of spaces in which sensitive issues can be safely discussed).

The research found high levels of prevalence of DV/ SGBV, perpetrated predominantly by husbands as well as by mothers-in-law. Traditional gender norms and expectations tended to be dominant, with expectations of young women to submit to a deferential position vis-à-vis older women and men, and for men to be breadwinners and control the family. Social control and policing of gender norms was prevalent, as were norms against reporting ‘family matters’ to outsiders.

Respondents generally saw existing services for survivors of DV/SGBV as being ineffective.

The research indicated several possible entry points for DV/SGBV prevention work, including working with informal leaders, creating safe spaces for discussing frustrations and fears, as well as reinforcing positive local gender norms and working towards changing harmful ones. Current economic hardships also seem to play a role in re-adjusting assigned gender roles and possibly norms, which can potentially affect girls’ education and economic opportunities for women positively. Considering these economic challenges, initiatives focusing on addressing norms which reproduce gender inequality through an entry point of women’s economic empowerment, while importantly also engaging men, may now have a higher possibility of achieving social acceptance and thereby success, than previously thought.



1. INTRODUCTION

The formative research presented here informs the interventions of the International Alert and Cesvi project on 'Living with Dignity' (*Zindagii Shoista* in Tajik), which is part of the global 'What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women' programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The project seeks to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) and domestic violence (DV) by taking a comprehensive approach, which includes women's social and economic empowerment and changing societal attitudes. Although the focus of the DFID programme is VAWG, for the purposes of the formative research, we chose to take a broader approach of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) regardless of biological sex or gender identity, so as not to leave out cases against men, boys, trans* or intersex persons, should these arise over the course of the formative research. The formative research did not uncover any such cases, which does not mean that they did not occur, as strong societal taboos around these issues may have prevented reporting.

The formative research gathered mostly qualitative data in the four target villages (two each in the districts of Jomi and Penjikent), on the following:

- Available data on prevalence of DV/SGBV,
- Experiences of and dynamics leading to different forms of DV/SGBV, including by and between in-laws,
- Prevalent attitudes toward gender roles, identities and DV/SGBV,
- Existing services and response/support mechanisms to DV/SGBV and potential gaps

in these, as well as

- Gendered societal dynamics in target communities (i.e. who are the key gate keepers in the particular community, what are the particular entry points for DV/SGBV programming, including patterns of media usage and identification of spaces in which sensitive issues can be safely discussed).

The formative research was carried out between November and December 2015 by Subhiya Mastonshoeva (Lead Researcher), Zarina Alimshoeva and Mustakim Akhmedov.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Tajikistan, a country of approximately 7.1 million people (UN Statistics Division, 2012), is the poorest of the former constituent republics of the USSR. According to UNDP data, it has a GNI per capita of US\$2,424 and a human development index (HDI) value of 0.607 in 2013, compared with 0.628 and 0.661 in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan respectively (UNDP, 2014). Tajikistan's gender inequality index (GII) value for the same year is 0.383, ranking it 75th out of 149 countries (UNDP, 2014). In comparison, the gender inequality index for Kyrgyzstan is 0.348, ranking it 64 and Kazakhstan 0.323, ranking it 59 out of 149 countries. Tajikistan became independent in 1991 with the break-up of the Soviet Union. It is situated in Central Asia and bordering Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. It is a very mountainous country, with only 6.6 percent of the land area being arable, and a further 0.9 percent devoted to permanent crops. The main export is cotton (the picking of which is mainly carried out by women and to a lesser extent children), mainly grown in the southern part of the country.

Tajikistan's economy is also highly dependent on remittances from mostly male labour migrants working in Russia. According to the World Bank (2013), Tajikistan was the country most dependent on remittances in the world, with perhaps half of the male labour force working as migrants outside of Tajikistan and contributing around 47 percent of the GDP. Migration had until recently become so prevalent as to be seen by many younger men as the 'default' option. However, the recent downturn of the Russian economy coupled with new, more stringent

immigration requirements by Russian authorities, have raised fears of a negative impact on the Tajik economy as well as concerns in the Tajik government over possible socio-political impacts of a large reserve of unemployed young men, especially with relation to possible religious radicalisation.

Tajikistan is an overwhelmingly Muslim country, with 85 percent Sunnis and 5 percent Ismaili Shiites, with a large part of the latter living in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region (often referred to as GBAO, using the Russian acronym) in the southeast of the country. Ethnically, the population is 79.9 percent Tajik, 15.3 percent Uzbek, 1.1 percent Kyrgyz, 1.1 percent Russian, and 2.6 percent other, including Germans, Jews, Koreans, Turkmens, and Ukrainians (US Library of Congress, 2007). It should be noted, however, that, in addition to their ethnic background, there are often great regional differences between communities, including in their local-level decision-making structures and gender norms.

Regional and ethnic groups have in the past tended to marry within their groups (traditionally along parallel-cousin lines; Harris, 2004) and mostly following patri-local traditions, leading to mono-ethnic/mono-regional communities, especially in rural areas. However, for historical reasons, including Soviet-era movements of populations from mountainous areas to the plains and displacement during the civil war (see below), mono-ethnic/mono-regional communities may often be found in the same district living next to each other.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area of modern-day Tajikistan began falling under indirect and later direct Russian rule in the mid-1800s with Russian expansion into Central Asia. While debates around Islam, modernisation and gender roles took place in Russian Turkestan, as it was called, it was the Bolshevik Revolution and the incorporation of Tajikistan into the USSR, which had a much greater impact on gender norms, roles, identities and behaviours (Harris, 2004). Under Soviet rule, polygamy, child marriage and the wearing of a facial veil were forbidden, often in the face of active and passive resistance as well as attempts at circumvention (Harris, 2004; Roche, 2014). Soviet rule was also accompanied by a process of relative modernisation and urbanisation, with an attendant increase in education levels as well as an increase in women's participation in the public sphere, both socially and economically. State intervention also led to larger family sizes through improved maternal and postnatal health care, but also through financial incentives to have more children post-World War II (Roche, 2014).

Tajikistan gained independence in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR. Soon after, increasing socio-political tensions flared up into a full-scale civil war which lasted from 1992 to 1997 and led to 50,000 – 100,000 killed (mostly civilians) and around 1 million displaced (Kuvatova, 2001). Much of the fighting and violence against civilians occurred in the south, especially around Qurghonteppa. Human Rights Watch decried some of the violence against Pamiris and Gharmis in the region as tantamount to ethnic cleansing (Human Rights Watch, 2001). During the civil war, in an environment of heightened violence, women were subjected to different types of gender-based violence, including rape, torture, verbal abuse,

harassment, and forced marriage (Haarr, 2007). Substantial breakdowns in the traditional social organisation of the country, as well as increased socio-economic difficulties, resulted in the growth of criminality and violence during, and immediately after, the conflict. Women remained at risk of violence in both the public and private sphere (Kuvatova, 2001).

The war mostly pitted the Soviet-era power elites hailing from Leninabad (now: Khujand), against an opposition coalition including Pamiris from GBAO and Gharmis, which included both liberal democrats and Islamists under the umbrella of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). The government was supported by both Russia and neighbouring Uzbekistan. Following a UN-brokered ceasefire in 1997 and presidential elections in 1999, which the then and current incumbent Emomali Rahmon won, Tajikistan has mostly been at peace. Recently, concerns have been raised by reports of an increasing number of Tajik men being recruited in Russia to join Islamic State (International Crisis Group, 2015).

GENDER ROLES AND NORMS IN TAJIKISTAN

As pointed out above, gender roles, norms and expectations in Tajikistan vary regionally, between communities, as well as between families and individuals. At the risk of making broad generalisations, however, it can be said that, overall, societal power tends to lie more with men than with women, and more with older generations, than with younger ones. While the systems of age- and gender-based seniority differ, they may include varying positions of power and societal expectations placed on women and especially men based on birth order. For example, older brothers may be expected to take on positions of responsibility vis-à-vis siblings, akin to those of the father while the youngest brother is often expected to take care of the parents in old age (Roche, 2014). While especially older men tend to hold positions of formal and informal power in communities, be it for example through administrative positions, in *mahallas* (village/ neighbourhood committees), or as traditional and religious leaders (e.g. *imams*), depending on the particular village, women may also be in key positions. This tends to be especially true of older, respected women, sometimes referred to as 'active women.'

Although today women are starting to marry later, again with regional differences especially between rural and urban areas, expectations tend to be for women to marry by their early 20s and men a few years later (Roche, 2014). While the practice is changing, traditionally parents have often played a central role in choosing suitable marriage partners (Haarr, 2007; Harris 2004 and 2006; Roche, 2014). In addition to official state-registered marriages, couples may also be married through religiously sanctioned marriages (*nikoh*), which are often not officially registered. Following

changes to the Family Code in July 2010, the legal minimum age of marriage in Tajikistan is now 18 years old. Polygamy and early marriage are illegal in Tajikistan, but unregistered *nikoh* marriages are often used to get around these legal barriers. In cases where the marriage is only religiously sanctioned, this may have negative consequences for women in the case of a divorce as they will have no legal recourse, e.g. in terms of alimony payments (K'tepi, 2013). Young women are expected, especially in rural areas, to move in with the family of the husband and support the husband's and his parents' household. Especially if the husband returns to Russia for work, the daughter-in-law (*kelin*) will often be expected to defer to the parents-in-law (especially the mother-in-law) and, based on seniority, to her sisters-in-law.

Divorce is legal in Tajikistan, and based on anecdotal evidence the traditional practice of *talaq* is often used by men to initiate divorce proceedings (Harris, forthcoming; K'tepi, 2013). *Talaq* is a traditional divorce practice in Islamic jurisprudence. The exact procedure of *talaq* differs between communities (e.g. in terms of a waiting period between the repudiations), but in essence it consists of the husband repudiating his wife three times. In spite of being relatively common, divorce – both formal and *talaq* divorce – can place women in a vulnerable position, as their own parents' household (including their brothers' wives) may be unwilling to take in a further member, especially if accompanied by children. Widows may also find themselves in similar situations of sometimes-extreme socio-economic vulnerability.

In the case of officially registered marriages, it is easier, less time-consuming, and financially

onerous for the women to fight for alimony and right to housing. Due to increasing non-governmental organisation (NGO) activism over the past years, even in cases of unregistered marriages, lawyers can now increasingly advocate for property rights. This may include moving divorcees into one room in the house if the husband is the owner of the house and secure alimony through paternity tests/affiliation of paternity. These talaq-related processes take more time and energy from women and lawyers but precedents exist. In the target villages, there were cases where women were granted the legal right to move back into husbands' house by court decision after a talaq divorce in an unregistered marriage, after being initially forced to leave the house. Thus, the law can also cover women and children in unregistered marriages, but these cases are more difficult to defend in court, than in the case of registered marriages.

Although early marriage and polygamy have been illegal in Tajikistan since Soviet times, especially the latter is still relatively widespread, with several cases emerging over the course of the formative research in the target villages. A common way of getting around the ban on polygamy is by having a *nikoh* marriage instead of a formally registered one (see also Roche, 2014 for similar practices during Soviet times). Reasons for polygamy vary, ranging from a wish to increase one's standing as a man in the community, to supporting women who are in a vulnerable position (e.g. a brother's widow). It is also not uncommon for Tajik migrant labourers to have both a wife in Tajikistan and simultaneously a girlfriend or wife in Russia (see also Harris, forthcoming). Given how much of an 'open secret' polygamy is in the villages in spite of its illegality, there do not seem to be any major fears of

sanctions from the authorities, nor does it seem to be seen as a transgression of social norms. For the women, however, the situation can be precarious due to their lack of a legal status as a wife and due to competition between the wives, which can contribute to violence and risk of poverty.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE / DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While reliable data is not available, human rights organisations estimate that one third to half of all women in Tajikistan are regularly subjected to physical, psychological or sexual and gender-based violence, DV and sexual abuse, perpetrated not only by husbands, but also by in-laws (Amnesty International, 2009 and 2010). In the latter case, it tends to be especially young daughters-in-law who are at most risk of becoming victims of violence by other members of the household which they have moved into upon marriage (Haarr, 2007; Harris 2004 and 2006).

The 2012 Tajikistan Demographic and Health Survey (TjDHS, 2013) figures are somewhat lower with 19 percent of women age 15-49 reporting having experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, 13 percent having experienced physical violence within the 12 months prior to the survey, and four percent of women reporting having experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. The focus of the survey, however, was mostly on violence in the domestic sphere by a husband/partner. In part perhaps due to this, figures varied quite significantly based on marital status. Of the respondents, 36 percent of women who experienced physical violence were no longer married, due to divorce, separation, or being widowed, compared with 22 percent who were still married, and 7 percent who had never married (TjDHS, 2013). In the 2012 TjDHS, information was obtained from ever-married women on violence committed by their current and former spouses and/or by others, which includes both official and un-official marriages.

Most cases of DV/SGBV tend to go largely unreported, as the overall socio-economic environment in which violence takes place,

including the attitudes and social norms that regulate gender and age relations, often condone the behaviour of perpetrators, attach shame to the survivor and to the act of reporting, and/or consider DV/SGBV to be a mostly private matter. These prevailing attitudes prevent survivors from seeking legal recourse in spite of the legal protections that are in place. Existing services for survivors of violence are very scarce and are not available in all parts of the country, which is another factor impacting reporting. According to the TjDHS (2013), only one in five women had sought any assistance to try to stop the violence they had experienced, making the collection of valid and reliable data on DV difficult. Furthermore, prevalent attitudes both among men and women tend to condone the use of violence against women in certain situations, as also reinforced by our research findings (Falkingham and Baschieri 2009; Haarr, 2007; Harris, 2004 and forthcoming; TjDHS, 2013). These situations might include failure to fulfil expected obligations at home as a wife and mother by women, arguments with in-laws, especially the parents-in-law, which is considered disrespectful, failure to inform husband and secure permission before leaving the house, or visiting relatives or friends without prior permission. One consequence of high levels of physical, psychological and emotional violence, but also of women's often very difficult life circumstances, including extreme social pressure and difficult socio-economic circumstances, is a higher number of suicides for women than men. However, given social stigmas around the issue, figures are unreliable and suicides may often be reported as 'domestic accidents' (Haarr, 2010; UNICEF, 2013a).

In addition to societal norms accepting of DV/SGBV in certain situations, other underlying factors, especially in the household, can increase vulnerability. These include women's generally low levels of social and economic empowerment (cf. Falkingham and Baschieri 2009; Harris 2004 and 2006; Mirzoeva, 2009), the complex gendered impacts of high levels of male labour migration (cf. Harris forthcoming, Hegland 2010 and OSCE 2014), gender- and age-based hierarchies, societal expectations and dynamics of power within families and communities (Falkingham 2000, Harris 2004 and 2006, Roche 2014). As discussed further below, other drivers of violence identified in the research are linked to notions of masculinity, to social norms around honour and shame both of the individual but even more of the family, older women's and men's expectations of deference and even subservience by younger women and men as well as men's and women's acceptance of violence.

RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

The formative research outlined here forms the basis of the "Living with Dignity" project which Alert, Cesvi and three Tajik NGOs partners developed with different stakeholders and which has been approved by the 'What Works' consortium. In the conceptualisation phase, the following main risk factors were identified as priority areas for the project:

- Women in Tajikistan tend to be socio-economically marginalised and disempowered: only 57 percent of women are employed and the vast majority of them (86 percent) work in low paid sectors (Amnesty, 2009; UN Statistics Division, 2012). This is due to many factors, including the high levels of poverty across the country. However, two specific factors tend to disadvantage women: first, the lack of access that women have to educational and economic opportunities, and secondly, the effects of migration, with an estimated one to two million men working abroad, mainly in Russia, making Tajikistan the most remittance-dependent country in the world (HRW, 2011; World Bank, 2013). In terms of education, primary school enrolment tends to be high and relatively equal for both girls and boys until age 14-15 (above 90 percent), after which girls' participation drops to around 20-40 percent by age 17, with strong regional and socio-economic differences. Girls' attendance rates are however consistently lower than boys', though again with differences based on age, socio-economic background and regional origin (UNICEF, 2013b). In families where the husband has migrated, women's socio-economic status tends to be controlled both by the husband and by the mother-in-law.

Evidence suggests that migration increases women's vulnerability to violence, either by men returning seasonally or by in-laws (Harris, forthcoming; Hegland, 2010). Patrilocal traditions and early marriage, which tend to see young women moving in with the husband's family and working under the strict control of mothers-in-law, as well as cultural norms restricting especially young women's mobility, also tend to disempower younger women (Harris, 2004 and 2006).

- While laws and policies against DV/SGBV are in place, including a presidentially supported national-level campaign in 2015, implementation is often lacking at the local level. At the local level, neighbourhood/village associations known as mahallas and other informal institutions (which vary greatly between villages, be it in terms of their composition (including gender breakdown), their respective authority and interest in addressing issues of SGBV), often play a key role in regulating community life. This may include addressing or not addressing violence (women victims of DV can for example seek help from mahallas instead of the police). These informal institutions, however, can also fail to properly address women's needs or listen to women's voices, as they are generally made up of male elders and religious leaders (UN CEDAW, 2005).
- Tajik social norms and stereotypes prescribe a dominant role to men and a submissive one to women, especially younger women, which contribute to a violence-condoning environment. These norms affect the behaviour of men, and women

Table 1: Basic characteristics of the target villages

NAME	POPULATION	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	SCHOOLS	HEALTH CARE FACILITIES	POLICE POSTS
Guli Surkh (Penjikent)	1,630	285	1 primary school, 1 secondary school	1 hospital, 1 health care post	1 police post
Haftrud (Penjikent)	7,553	2,101	2 kindergartens, 2 primary schools (1 Tajik, 1 Uzbek), 2 secondary schools, 1 vocational training facility	1 hospital (with maternity ward), 1 clinic, 1 pediatric hospital, 1 regional dermato-venerological dispensary	1 police post
Labi Jav (Jomi)	4,000	390	1 primary school	1 medical post	1 police post
Chorbogh (Jomi)	1,950	250	1 primary school	None	1 police post

TARGET VILLAGES

and communities. Men may not see DV as reprehensible, but rather as an ‘expected’ or ‘normal’ part of their lives as their social standing is in part linked to the ‘control of their women’. Women may accept violence as a ‘fact of life’ as may communities as a whole, which do not intervene in such situations (Haarr, 2007; Harris, 2004; Hegland, 2010; TjDSH, 2013).

Evidence suggests that interventions which increase women’s economic empowerment can be successful in preventing vulnerability to violence against women when coupled with gender norm change, although the impacts are not entirely straight-forward (Jewkes et al., 2014). It is important to consider that in some contexts, increased economic activity can put women at a greater risk of violence (DFID, 2015), and so economic empowerment must occur alongside gender transformative approaches.

The ‘Living with Dignity’ project therefore seeks to address DV/SGBV comprehensively by economically empowering women in target communities and developing DV/SGBV prevention mechanisms based on the needs and wants of women. Importantly, the project will work to change the attitudes of women and men, including community leaders, migrant men (including those who have returned from Russia/ have not been able to return there) and in-laws, towards DV/SGBV. A key group of concern will be the kelin, who are expected to serve both their husbands and parents-in-law, and who often have little recourse to justice in cases of violence. They are also often unable to return to their own families in the case of abuse, as the family and the community would see this as bringing shame to the family as well as being an unwanted financial and economic burden (Harris, 2006).

The project consortium identified four villages in two districts, two in the northern district of Penjikent and two in the southern district of Jomi, for the intervention. The rationale for choosing the four villages was to allow for a comparison between two areas with different regional dynamics (northern, mountainous region vs. southern, plains region) as well as different ethnic compositions, and by comparing proximity to an urban centre. While we have purposefully kept the area of study narrow in order to gain more insight and greater depth into the subject during the fieldwork, the villages were chosen in a way to maximise our understanding of different gendered dynamics in order to develop a perspective for ‘what works’ on DV/SGBV prevention in Tajikistan.

The following four villages were selected by the project consortium as the focus for implementation and for the formative research (the villages have been given pseudonyms due to the sensitivity of the information and to ensure the safety of the research participants):

JOMI DISTRICT

1. The village of Labi Jav
2. The village of Chorbogh

PENJIKENT DISTRICT

1. The village of Guli Surkh
2. The village of Haftrud

The villages were chosen by the organisations collaborating in the project based on the following selection criteria:

- The standard of living is comparatively low and economic opportunities are limited;
- There is a high level of labour migration;
- The villages consist of different nationalities or ethnic groups in order to capture variety based on different informal governance structures and gendered identities;
- The partner organisations already have good working relations with local government structures and community leaders, and these are supportive of the project;
- There is a high level of divorce and, as a consequence, abandoned wives; and
- There is a high level of withdrawal of girls from school as well as early marriages.

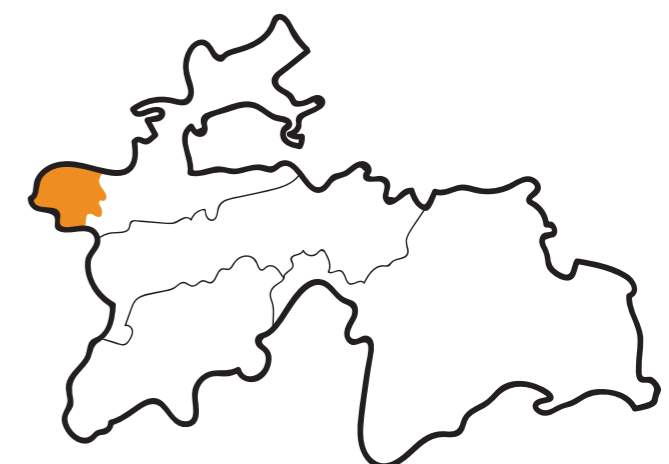
Figure 1

Location of Jomi District in Tajikistan



Figure 2

Location of Penjikent District in Tajikistan





3. METHODOLOGY

KEY THEMES OF THE FORMATIVE RESEARCH

Given the comprehensive nature of the overall project, which aims to work on socio-economic issues, gender norms and attitudes to DV/SGBV, especially against women and girls through local-level formal and informal structures, the formative research phase focused on the following issues:

- Available data on prevalence of DV/SGBV,
- Experiences of, and dynamics leading to, different forms of DV/SGBV,
- Prevalent attitudes toward gender roles, identities and DV/SGBV, as well as perceptions of violence,
- Existing services and response/support mechanisms to DV/SGBV and potential gaps in these, as well as
- Gendered societal dynamics in target communities (i.e. who are the key gate keepers in the particular community, what are the particular entry points for DV/SGBV programming, including patterns of media usage and identification of spaces in which sensitive issues can be safely discussed).

Prior to the formative research stage, available official state information but also 'grey' NGO literature and academic literature on the above-mentioned thematic areas was gathered and analysed by the research team. Furthermore, basic socio-economic and demographic data about the target villages, including on local informal decision-making mechanisms (e.g. mahallas, imams, groups of 'active women' and the like) was collected in two separate reports, as there is a great degree of regional variance in these mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODS AND RATIONALE

In order to ensure safety and well-being of participants of the research, the project was required to secure ethical approval for the formative research. The research proposal was developed and submitted prior to commencement of the research to the Medical Research Council South Africa Ethics Committee for approval, which is registered as an institutional review board (IRB) with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) of the USA Department of Health and Human Services. The South African MRC Ethics Committee granted approval for the research on November 4, 2015, under the number EC032-9/2015.

While much of the economic and demographic data gathered prior to the formative research phase was of a quantitative nature, during the formative phase the research team gathered qualitative data through focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). These focused on issues such as gendered attitudes to women's socio-economic empowerment, community-level public and private power dynamics, the gendered impact of migration, attitudes to DV/SGBV, perceptions of violence, experiences of DV/SGBV, existent responses and support mechanisms and the adequacy of these. Due to their different nature, the FGDs and in-depth interviews were used to gather different kinds of data (e.g. FGDs reveal more about dominant norms but were not used for information on personal experiences of violence, which was explored in the IDIs instead).

The FGDs focused on community views of gender roles, norms and expectations, gendered impacts of migration as well as attitudes towards SGBV/DV. The research team organised FGDs separately

for older women, older men, younger women and younger men. Furthermore, for the purposes of the latter stages of the project, information about gendered social spaces, media usage, and key allies, gatekeepers and entry points in the particular village (e.g. formal and informal leaders, mahalla councils, imams, 'active women') was gathered. The rationale for age group and sex-disaggregated groups was to allow for as wide a range of responses as possible, which participants would perhaps not feel free to voice due to expectations of deference to age and gender hierarchies.

FGDs can often lead to an assertion and affirmation of existent social norms, mores and dynamics (which in itself is important information for the formative research phase), also they often do fail to allow for the safe discussion of sensitive, personal experiences. Therefore, additional in-depth interviews were held with four women and two men of different ages in each village, with different sets of questions for the female and male respondents. The research team identified the participants during the FGDs and approached them separately. Key issues in the IDIs were personal experiences of dominant gender norms and expectations for both genders, and for women a strong focus on possible experiences of DV/SGBV, existent response and support mechanisms and what kind of support/responses could better meet the needs of survivors. For the male respondents, questions focused on societal expectations of being a breadwinner and expectations of protecting one's and one's family's honour.

The semi-structured interviews used a life-history approach, allowing for the possibility of raising a broad range of experiences of the impacts

of societal gender norms, gendered power dynamics, DV/SGBV and responses to violence, without constricting the range of respondents' answers as a more structured approach may do. While the interview guides contained a range of potential questions, the research team used these as guidance only, and not as a questionnaire, allowing for free-flowing interviews.

Where available, official statistics as well as quantitative and qualitative data from international and local NGOs, and academic research was used in order to triangulate primary data gathered in the formative research phase, together with expert interviews with Tajik and international issue specialists.

Given the differences in village dynamics depending on the region, ethnic composition and individual agency, the formative research also identified key local allies (e.g. mahalla leaders, imams and/or 'active women') for the subsequent stages of the project and used the insights gained in this initial stage to develop indicators for measuring project impact together with the Tajik project partners.

Due to the mostly gendered and age-based hierarchy in Tajik society and the high premium placed on respecting these societal hierarchies, the FGDs were sequenced in a particular way and carefully set up to allow those who would normally not speak up (i.e. women and younger people) to voice their opinions and to respect the societal hierarchy. The FGDs and interviews were semi-structured in nature, in order to allow themes to arise as freely as possible.

During the weeklong research phase in each of the villages, the sequencing was planned as follows:

1. Introductory meeting with formal and informal leaders to explain research and its aims, and to enable access to villages;
2. Discussions with local formal and informal leaders;
3. FGD with older men;
4. FGD with older women;
5. FGD with younger men;
6. FGD with younger women;
7. In-depth interviews with four women and two men of different ages per village.

During the research phase, the research team had to change the pre-set sequence in some of the villages depending on the circumstances and developments. For example, in Jomi district, introductory meetings with formal leaders were not required in the beginning of the research, since the local NGO partners have conducted meetings with the formal governmental officials before the arrival of the research team. The research team then decided to conduct a courtesy meeting at the end of the research in Jomi district with local governmental officials to verify some of the findings as well as to thank them for the given opportunity.

The local NGO partners are based in the administrative centres of the two targeted districts, but they have close contacts with informal leaders in the targeted villages. Thus the research team was met by the informal leaders (heads of mahalla, heads of villages) in all four villages prior to the focus group discussions and interviews. In Haftrud village, the FGD with older women was conducted before the FGD with older men as the latter were attending a buzkashi game and were unavailable for the scheduled meeting.¹

¹ Buzkashi is a traditional Central Asian sport in which riders on horseback attempt to gain control of a goat's or veal's carcass. The game, including the audience, tends to be either male-dominated or a wholly male enterprise

In Guli Surkh village, which was the first village to be researched, the team had to meet local governmental officials both at the beginning and the end of the research. On the first day of the research in this village, a young woman had committed suicide and the research team felt that due to the police investigations and sensitivity of the research topic, local officials were demonstrating interest in talking to the research team once more by the end of FGDs and interviews. During the meeting, the research team once more explained the aims of the research and expressed gratitude to the local officials for giving the team an opportunity to conduct the research. Due to unavailability of younger females for FGDs and problems with finding premises in Guli Surkh village, the research team conducted the first two FGDs followed by three interviews. The next two FGDs with younger men and women were conducted later in the week, followed by three more interviews. In the rest of the three villages, all FGDs were conducted first, followed by interviews.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

The study population includes women and men in the four target villages aged 18 and above. The breakdown of the respondents was as follows:

Table 2: Number of participants in FGDs and IDIs in target villages

	GULI SURKH	HAFTRUD	LABI JAV	CHORBOGH
FGD older men	12	8	11	11
FGD older women	12	9	8	10
FGD younger men	9	8	9	8
FGD younger women	11	14	12	11
IDI women	4	4	4	4
IDI men	3	2	2	2

The local implementing partners, Farodis in Jomi and Women of the Orient in Penjikent, helped in identifying participants for the FGDs. One of the selection criteria for the target villages was that local implementing partners already had a good rapport with local administrative and informal leadership structures (e.g. mahallas, 'active women', and imams). These contacts were used to make the initial contact between the research team and the communities. The local implementing partners also assisted with identifying potential participants for the FGDs and in-depth interviews based on age, sex and marital status (a mix of unmarried, married, widowed, and divorced). The implementing partner organisations provided the research team with double the number of participants necessary for

the FGDs, from which the research team randomly chose half in order to increase anonymity.

The research team informed the implementing partners beforehand that participants could not be a member of any staff of the project, be it the research team or local implementing partners. They had to be over 18 years of age, have no cognitive impairment and give their consent. Although this did not come to pass, the team was to end or cancel any IDI or FGD if the interviewee/FGD participant felt uncomfortable, threats were made by third parties, or if the research team noticed any potential risks to the participant or themselves. While the implementing partner organisations informed the local formal and informal authorities, as well as potential FGD

participants about the aims of the research, and assisted in identifying participants, they did not, for reasons of confidentiality, partake in the research directly.

The research team identified potential participants for the IDIs during the FGDs and approached them afterwards. The team then asked those identified whether or not they would be willing to participate, and when and where they would prefer to be interviewed. The participants were identified by the research team during the FGDs as possible survivors (and/or perpetrators) of violence. The rationale for choosing twice as many women as men for the IDIs was due to the focus of the overall DFID-funded 'What Works' research project, which focuses on VAWG, their experiences of it and their experiences of referral/service provision systems.

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The research team approached each potential participant, with a male researcher contacting males and a female researcher contacting females using the recruitment script and consent forms for in-depth interviews and FGDs. The research team informed all participants in detail about the aims of the research, the type of questions asked and the right to withdraw at any point, as well as contact points in case of any concerns or questions.

The consent forms used were based on the MRC guidelines and were used in their Tajik version. Before signing, the participants were asked to, in their own words, repeat the key points to ensure informed consent.

The team faced some challenges in explaining the consent forms and in conducting FGDs in Guli Surkh, which has a predominantly ethnic Uzbek population. Participants were not fluent in Tajik and some of them did not understand Tajik at all. Two research assistants were able to speak basic Uzbek and had to explain the consent form and the questions to them. Additionally, the research team had to ask others who were fluent in both Tajik and Uzbek to assist with translation during the FGDs. The majority of the population of Chorbogh village were Uzbeks as well but none of the participants had problems with Tajik and were able to speak and understand it fluently. In Labi Jav village two female participants from the older age group refused to sign the consent forms and had to leave the FGDs. These women had been victims of fraud in 2014 and were reluctant to sign anything. Over the course of the research, there was only one participant who could not write or read and was not able to sign the consent form herself. In this instance, the consent form

was explained to her and she signed with her fingerprint.

During the FGDs and interviews, the research team took hand-written notes, which the research team compared internally immediately following each FGD and in-depth interview to ensure that all data is captured. These were then translated and typed up in English or Russian and sent to the supporting experts by email. Each interview was anonymised and catalogued using a standardised code number. In addition to the notes of the FGDs and interviews themselves, the researchers took notes of any observations they made before, during or after the FGDs/interviews that might be of relevance.

The data analysis was carried out using standard qualitative research methods with a thematic analysis approach. Emerging data was coded and categorised, using QSR NVivo 11 as a research tool.



4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 GENDER ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

MEN'S ROLES AND TRAITS OF AN 'IDEAL' MAN

In the target communities, attributes of what constitutes an 'ideal man,' who is respected and honoured in the communities, are strongly linked with the perception of the male breadwinner, with a man's generosity, his dominance within the family and the capability to support others in the community. In all four villages, the respondents of both sex and age groups consider men to be the head of household, the main decision-maker and breadwinner. "The man is the president, the woman is the prime minister, she should resolve all issues in consultation with the man"², explained one of the respondents during discussions with men of the older age group (Guli Surkh village). Respondents in one of the younger female groups stated that the man is the master of the house and family, and that women do not have any rights. "Men make all the decisions, and men even dictate what to buy while being in labour migration in Russia". Among the responses to the question of the traits of an 'ideal man,' issues related to DV, equality within the family and harmonious relationships also emerged. Women tended to highlight positive, more egalitarian aspects:

A participant in an FGD with older women for example stated: "an ideal man is someone who has a good character. He listens to the advice of his wife; he is a man who allows his wife to be active in the community, for example to participate in a meeting like this (referring to the focus group discussion)".

² In the presidential systems of many post-Soviet countries, including Tajikistan, prime ministers have much less political power than presidents.

In the FGD with young women in Haftrud village, a participant highlighted issues of respect towards women, faithfulness and empathy, but also providing economically for the family: "an ideal man is someone who understands life, who is a breadwinner, who is faithful, respects women, and financially sustains the family. There should be mutual understanding between men and women".

"The man is the president, the woman is the prime minister, she should resolve all issues in consultation with the man."

Among male respondents, being personally respected by others in the community was closely linked to how the man's family was viewed in the community, or as stated in one FGDs with men of the older age group: "an ideal man is someone who has a good family" (Guli Surkh village). In Labi Jav village respondents of the same age and sex group underlined that "a man must be intelligent, must have good relationships, and

“Men make all the decisions, and men even dictate what to buy while being in labour migration in Russia.”

good behaviour.” While men, and to a certain extent women, expressed opinions that seems to tolerate violence within the family, there were no responses which directly linked violence with ‘ideal’ manhood, thus giving an opening for working on more positive masculine traits over the course of the project.

The dominant role of men in the household depends mostly on their financial power, one of the main indicators of ‘ideal’ masculinity as expressed by the respondents. A respondent in the younger male group in Haftrud village replied, “The man is the master of the house, I am a man, I sustain my family financially, I bring them food and clothes, I am a man. If a woman fulfils these responsibilities, the man loses his manliness.” People in the target villages tended to make a direct correlation between the ability of men to sustain their families financially and their expectations of masculinity. Other determinants of idealised masculinity identified by the respondents were the ability to physically protect the family, preserve the dignity of their spouse and to have full control over their family.

According to the participants, in addition to family-related responsibilities, men are also expected to play public roles in their communities by helping other community members practically or financially, and to actively help organise and participate in community events. Younger men, in particular, highlighted that an ideal man should have a respected, ‘good family’ and good relationships with others. The responses indicated

that the ideal of a ‘good family’ means a family where each member understands and adheres to their socially prescribed roles and responsibilities, is happy with these roles, fulfils them voluntarily and does not create tensions in the family. An ideal man is therefore someone who creates opportunities for this kind of a family and maintains the dynamics and family order. Both female and male participants expected a man to be brave and to be able to protect other family members.

The respondents’ perceptions of an ‘ideal man’ are closely linked to the fulfilment of ascribed gender roles both in the family and in the community. Within the family, an ideal man is financially secure and can sustain his family, has

“The man is the master of the house, I am a man, I sustain my family financially, I bring them food and clothes, I am a man. If a woman fulfils these responsibilities, the man loses his manliness.”

a dominant position and commands obedience of other family members to his rules. However, it is important to notice that there are hierarchies between men themselves in the family, where the father takes the leading role, followed by the oldest brother and the rest of the brothers. In the community, villagers value the ability of a man to help others. The older men mentioned present or past formal employment within the state or non-state sector as a characteristic of an ‘ideal man’ along with organisational skills and the ability to mobilise people. Older women viewed positions of a local official, a doctor or a teacher, who can give advice or provide practical help, to be appropriate for an ideal man. Some older women also underlined that an ideal man should be faithful in marriage, should listen to the advice of his wife and allow her, if she was an older woman, to be active in public life. The younger female respondents also mentioned respect towards women as a trait of an ideal man.

Men earn honour and respect by meeting community expectations related to their family and community obligations. Men who fail to meet these expectations risk losing the respect of their families and community members. “A man should financially sustain his family, if he does not financially sustain his family and does not secure good living conditions, he will lose respect in the eyes of his wife”, said a young male participant in Chorboogh village.

“A man should financially sustain his family, if he does not financially sustain his family and does not secure good living conditions, he will lose respect in the eyes of his wife.”

WOMEN'S ROLES AND TRAITS OF AN 'IDEAL' WOMAN

Both male and female respondents commonly considered women's roles as being subordinate to those of men, and that women usually play a secondary role in family decision-making process. In contrast to men, women's roles are mostly confined by the boundaries of the family and physically by those of the household compound. Participants from both sexes and age groups agreed that women's primary responsibilities include household chores such as cooking, cleaning, bringing water, and working in the field if the family has land. Fetching water is a very taxing chore. In all four villages, none of the households had any water supply inside the houses, and traditionally it is women's (young daughters' and daughters-in-law's) task to bring water. Women have to walk 15-30 minutes to reach the water source, wait in line for another 5-10 minutes and come back 15-30 minutes. Women have to go for water at least twice, sometimes up to 4-5 times a day. While being a burdensome chore, fetching water does also give women a chance to socialise with other women in the community. Another set of women's roles includes childbearing and raising children. Women are furthermore expected to satisfy all needs of their husbands which include sexual and emotional needs, and providing for food and comfort at home. Male respondents of older age groups in some of the villages mentioned that a woman should be able to calm down her husband with good words and behaviour, even if he comes home drunk or angry.

Older female respondents further mentioned the role of an (older) woman as a mother-in-law, who should oversee functioning of the household, discipline and teach her daughters-in-law how to properly fulfil the domestic duties expected of them.

Participants perceived an ideal woman as being submissive and obedient, portraying her as a faithful, patient, polite, and soft-spoken person who does not talk back and maintains good relationships with her husband and in-laws. Many participants stated that an ideal young woman was a "house girl" who is good at cooking, cleaning, sewing and doing other chores. A "house girl" would ideally have learned all of this at her parents' house, as she would have mainly been spending her time on chores, instead of studying, working, going outside of the house, or meeting friends. Moreover, she is to be shy, and she would not contradict others. She would not have been studying and would have always been under her parents' control. Since she does not have any profession, she would certainly become a housewife.

Some male participants of both age groups mentioned thriftiness as a desirable trait in women, reasoning that earning money was not easy and it should therefore be spent 'rationally.' Some male respondents from the younger age groups mentioned that an ideal woman does not gossip, and does not go outside of the house very much. Only in one village did older men mention that an ideal woman is someone who also helps others, for example by teaching children at school.

Older women, however, also highlighted civic and community engagement as a positive trait in women. Several older female respondents in two of the villages added that an ideal woman, in addition to fulfilling family obligations, is also one who is respected by others, is able to help others, can start a business and help others earn a living. They saw a respected woman as being one who fulfils leadership positions, manages

an organisation or works as a teacher or a prosecutor. Female respondents of both older and younger age groups underlined that an 'ideal woman' has to be intelligent and educated, so that she can raise intelligent children. Some older women also emphasised physical attractiveness as a desired trait of an ideal woman.

In addition to expectations related to their spouses and children, men and women of different ages must also fulfil certain obligations towards parents, siblings and in-laws, depending on where they stand within the family hierarchy.

Overall, participants of both genders view ascribed gender roles and expectations as inviolable even in the face of external pressures. When the economic situation demands readjustments of gender roles in terms of male and female employment, this may be considered as a challenge to the husband's role as family provider, and, ultimately, to his dominance in the family. Although many male and female participants had positive opinions regarding female employment and economic empowerment, they agreed that if a woman starts earning money, husbands might find it psychologically difficult to accept. Moreover, according to the participants, employed women might use their newly acquired economic power to question husband's authority within the family, which community members viewed negatively. Overall, members of extended family, in particular female in-laws, strictly control fulfilment of gender roles by women.

NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO WOMEN'S MOBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

According to the participants, women, and in particular young and unmarried women, are restricted in their mobility and communication. Young unmarried women must ask permission from their fathers, mothers and brothers in issues related to traveling outside of the village, education, employment and marriage. Young women cannot attend ceremonies like weddings and other events without permission of older female members of the family. Young unmarried female members of families also need permission from parents for using cell phones in some of the villages. When a woman marries, the husband and his mother control her physical mobility. "Women should ask for permission when she decides to go somewhere, visiting her family, or someplace else. If men from the beginning of family life teach their wife to ask for permission, everything will

"Women should ask for permission when she decides to go somewhere, visiting her family, or someplace else. If men from the beginning of family life teach their wife to ask for permission, everything will be fine eventually."

be fine eventually", shared one male respondent within a younger age group. In some cases, female respondents mentioned that they have to ask permission from husbands over the phone if the husband is in labour migration.

Older women, who already have married children, mentioned that they do not need to ask permission to go anywhere, and this is because they have to some degree 'earned' this through patiently tolerating violence and other challenges in their lives. Older women are more active in the community, since they have daughters-in-law in the house taking care of chores and thus they can leave the house and not be worried about food preparation, cleaning and so on.

The respondents did not question the authority of the mothers-in-law in giving permission to daughters-in-law. In fact, men and women of all age groups considered this as a valid norm. "My wife never asked my permission to visit her parents. She always asked my mother; in fact, my mother knew when it is right time for her to visit them. After we moved to our house, my wife was already "educated" in this regard and this helped our family to not have disputes or conflicts", one male respondent from an older age group explained. "We have to ask for the permission of our mother-in-law when going somewhere, including visiting our parents. Even if the husband gave his permission usually he also asks to secure the permission from his mother", shared a female respondent of a younger age group. In addition to the husband, the mother-in-law and sometimes the father-in-law as well, married women may also need to ask permission of their brothers-in-law if authority in the family was passed on to them in the absence of the father-in-law. This also applies to education and employment,

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where married women are required to have the permission from their husband and mothers-in-law, and in rare cases from fathers-in-law to study or have a formal job. Apart from husbands and in-laws, the other community members also have influence on mobility of women. Female respondents mentioned that people might start gossiping if a woman is spending too much time outside of the house, if she is going to the administrative centre regularly or if she is talking on the cell phone too much.

The issue of control over women's cell phone use was not initially part of the interview and focus group guides, but emerged in Labi Jav village and was further explored in Chorbogh village. According to the participants, women needed permission from their husbands to own and use cell phones. Generally, both male and female respondents of older age groups were against women having access to and using cell phones. Among the reasons for restricting the use of cell phones, respondents mentioned

that these could provoke family problems, as a young woman could talk to another man over the cell phone while her husband was in migration. Respondents mentioned that in their villages (Labi Jav and Chorbogh villages), there had been cases where women had been using cell phones and dating other men. Once this had been revealed, the couples had separated. Thus, such restrictions were seen as helping to prevent cases of unfaithfulness in marriage by women. If a woman needs to call her parents, she has to ask her husband and use his phone. Some female respondents of younger age groups also mentioned that cell phones could cause other family problems unrelated to faithfulness in marriage. They mentioned that if a woman has a cell phone, she has the possibility of complaining

"We have to ask for the permission of our mother-in-law when going somewhere, including visiting our parents. Even if the husband gave his permission usually he also asks to secure the permission from his mother."

to her parents when she is frustrated or is facing violence, which would then lead to further disputes among her parents and her in-laws and husband. In these cases, according to some of the respondents, it is better not to have a cell phone. Therefore they reasoned, even in the case of violence, the woman will not call anyone and will cope on her own, she will tolerate and eventually forget the violence, and family unity will be preserved.

4.2 VIOLENCE

DEFINING VIOLENCE

In the target villages, the levels of awareness about violence in general, and DV in particular, differed. Furthermore, different terms were used in the different villages for DV, and for violence in general. In one of the villages with a predominantly Uzbek population, the Tajik equivalent of the term violence, *zurovari*, was usually used for sexual violence and rape. Therefore, the respondents were confused in the beginning when the discussion started around this term, insisting that they live in a respectable village and sexual violence was not occurring within their community. The researchers had to use a different term, *ghurbat*, which the respondents understood as DV and only then did they start discussing this issue. In another village with a predominantly Tajik population, the term *khushunat* was used by both the research team and the respondents when talking about violence, including DV. Organisations working on gender equality and violence in Tajikistan often use this term in their campaigns. This particular village is in Penjikent district, where a women's resource centre is operating in the administrative centre and the NGO running the centre covers this village as well when organising informational campaigns and outreach activities. This might be one of the reasons why the level of awareness of respondents about violence, including different types of DV was considerably higher than in others. In Jomi, both *zurovari* and *khushunat* were used by both the research team and the respondents when discussing the issue of violence and DV. Generally, respondents tended to consider only physical violence when discussing DV. In some rare cases, respondents mentioned that limiting women's physical mobility, not

allowing schooling and employment, and verbal abuse are also forms of violence.

Women face different types of violence in the family perpetrated by their husbands and in-laws. Based on the responses and data gathered during the research, violence perpetrated by in-laws, more by specifically mothers-in-law towards daughters-in-law included emotional violence and psychological abuse. This took on various forms, such as constant criticism, humiliation, treating them like servants, intimidation, isolation, controlling their mobility, controlling their communication with their husband and other close relatives, excessive working hours and threatening to tell them off to their parents or husband. In some cases, mothers-in-laws were also physically abusive to their daughters-in-law by shaking or hitting them. Given high levels of male migration, mothers-in-law may perpetrate economic violence as well, including by controlling remittances coming from their migrant sons, depriving daughters-in-law financially, restricting access to food and other necessities, or restricting access to medical services. Current research also highlighted the role played by mothers-in-law in controlling the sexual life of spouses, banning their sons to share a bed with their wife or to demonstrate affection towards her. Mothers-in-law also often play a central role in controlling the reproductive rights of daughters-in-law, including pressure to bear children (especially male offspring), but also forced or selective abortions.

In terms of intimate partner violence, in addition to the types of DV mentioned above, husbands

“Let’s say she violated some rules, like doing something without the permission of her husband and in this case she will become victim of physical violence.”

perpetrate physical violence towards wives by punching, hitting or slapping. Husbands used emotional and psychological violence including humiliation, embarrassing, neglecting of the female partner, dominance in the relationship, intimidation, threat of ‘talaq’ (divorce by Islamic law), as well as controlling their wives’ mobility and communication. In terms of economic violence, husbands forbade wives from working or getting an education, and they often controlled access to financial resources in the family, even when they are abroad as labour migrants. In relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights, husbands also perpetrate reproductive coercion and forced sexual intercourse.

JUSTIFYING VIOLENCE

Many men respondents saw violence as a tool for disciplining and ‘educating’ women not obeying set rules and social norms. A majority of male respondents thought that in some cases physical abuse is justified, and only few male respondents mentioned that physical abuse is not justified at all. Among the reasons justifying violence respondents listed unfaithfulness in marriage by the wife, breaking rules and norms set in the family, failure to fulfil her duties as a wife and mother properly, such as taking good care of children and doing her share of household chores.

“Let’s say she violated some rules, like doing something without the permission of her husband and in this case she will become victim of physical violence”, said a younger male respondent. Disrespectful treatment of in-laws and arguing with her husband can also be seen as justifying violence. Male respondents mentioned that if a man is financially sustaining his family, if he is providing everything for his wife and she continues complaining, then he ‘has to teach her a lesson.’

4.3 FACTORS CAUSING AND TRIGGERING VIOLENCE

FAMILY DYNAMICS

Most participants agree that mothers-in-law have generally unquestioned authority in the family, which they have earned throughout their life by overcoming challenges, including violence towards themselves from their husbands and in-laws. Mothers-in-law often control the finances in the family and use this tool to put limitations on the daughters-in-law. Mothers-in-law control their daughters-in-law with regard to household chores and other duties, at times abusing them or even harming their grandchildren. “In her house, my mother-in-law did not let me and my son to even take matches. The potatoes would rot, but she would not let us cook them. I was starving, but did not tell anyone about this. My mother-in-law grew up in an orphanage; maybe that is why she acted like this”, shared a younger female participant. Some respondents noted that sometimes mothers-in-law might be jealous if the husband and wife have strong attachment to each other, so the mother-in-law fears losing control over her son.

In general, male respondents tended not to question the authority of mothers-in-law over daughters-in-law. On the contrary, in their opinion it was the daughters-in-law who should act according to the rules set by their in-laws, in particular by their mothers-in-law. Based on participants’ accounts, in the case of disputes between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the final word was usually with the mother-in-law and men would take the side of their mothers, even if this leads to divorce and separation. Some of the respondents were separated from their husbands due to violence coming from both husband and mother-in-law. In some cases, the mother-in-

law was the main perpetrator, in other cases she would encourage her son to ‘discipline’ his wife or even insist on divorce.

Participants’ accounts suggest that mothers-in-law generally do not consider the separation of families as a tragedy. Mothers-in-law are often willing to find a new bride for their sons if the current wife is, in their eyes, not living up to the criteria set by the family, even in cases where divorce would affect her grandchildren psychologically and economically.

“In her house, my mother-in-law did not let me and my son to even take matches. The potatoes would rot, but she would not let us cook them. I was starving, but did not tell anyone about this. My mother-in-law grew up in an orphanage; maybe that is why she acted like this.”

A minority of older women reported that they are aware of the problem of violence and that they respected the opinions and autonomy of their daughters-in-law. However, some of these reports were contradicted by the observations made in the houses of these women where focus group discussions were conducted. It was obvious that daughters-in-law are busy the whole day with work around the house and barely find time to spend with their children. Although some respondents acknowledged that sometimes mothers-in-law might be responsible for the conflicts with their daughters-in-law, they explained that the mother-in-law's fault lay not in teaching their daughters-in-law properly how to do the work around the house. The general view among the respondents was that it is the duty of the mother-in-law to instruct her daughter-in-law about the rules of the house, the food preferences of the household members, the tasks assigned to the daughter-in-law in the house and how they should be fulfilled at the very beginning of the marriage. In case the mother-in-law did not give proper instructions in the beginning, according to these views, the daughter-in-law might make mistakes and thus 'create conflicts'. In this case, it was expected by the respondents that the daughter-in-law patiently obey the instructions of the mother-in-law, thereby preventing violence and disputes.

Male respondents of both age categories mentioned that husbands should have a neutral role in the conflicts between the mother- and daughter-in-law. In most cases, however, the husband takes the side of his mother and not that of his wife. Male respondents of all ages suggested that the only thing a husband can do to prevent disputes between his wife and his mother is to build a separate house for himself and his wife, which in most cases lessened the tensions.

"We did not have kids for 8 years. It was hard for both of us psychologically. Even my close friends advised me to divorce, I did not know what to do. All relatives and friends were continually suggesting me to divorce and get another wife. In order to take the final decision, I talked to my mother. My mother said to me: "You got married because you fell in love with her, do not give up. Your poor wife, what will she do?" And I decided not to leave my wife. Probably God tested me, as I didn't give up, my wife delivered a daughter. Now we are happy."

Still, a small number of participants cited positive attitudes of mothers-in-law towards their daughters-in-law. As an older man related: "we did not have kids for 8 years. It was hard for both of us psychologically. Even my close friends advised me to divorce, I did not know what to do. All relatives and friends were continually suggesting me to divorce and get another wife. In order to take the final decision, I talked to my mother. My mother said to me: "You got married because you fell in love with her, do not give up. Your poor wife, what will she do?" And I decided not to leave my wife. Probably God tested me, as I didn't give up, my wife delivered a daughter. Now we are happy". Sometimes, parents-in-law may protect the daughter-in-law from their son's maltreatment and violence, as this younger woman stated: "in my case, for example, when I came to my husband's family my husband was against my studies. My mother-in-law and father-in-law insisted and he had to deal with it. After I finished school, he was against my employment, my mother in law supported me again and I worked for some years. My mother as well was telling me that I do not need to study further; I had to take care of my family. But that was my dream, to study and receive diploma so at my in laws house I received support and my dream came true".

Family conflicts may also occur between a wife and other members of the husband's extended family. Some older men mentioned that disputes between several daughters-in-law usually happen over children, since many families live together in one house.

FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITIES

The understanding of a wife being a housekeeper and a servant of the family members is very strongly rooted and was not questioned by any respondents, be they men or women. Any deviation from this norm – being late with preparing food, not keeping the house clean, not being able to respond in a timely fashion to other family members' needs, or not taking proper care of her children, will lead to criticism first from the mothers- and sisters-in-law, and other daughters-in-law. Gradually, it would involve the husband, potentially also the father-in-law and brothers-in-law. Women may be subject to violence, including physical, if others perceive them as failing to fulfil their duties as wives and mothers, even in cases when it is not their fault. "Once, when my son was small, I took him and went to see my mother. It was in the winter and he got sick. When I came back, my husband hit me. He was very angry because I could not take proper care of my child and he got sick. I cried but did not tell anyone", an older female respondent shared her experience of physical violence.

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ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS VIOLENCE TRIGGERS

Many respondents who had been victims of violence mentioned that substance abuse, in particular alcohol abuse, was often a factor triggering violence³. Respondents mentioned alcohol abuse problems in all four villages, but usually denied that drug abuse was a problem in the villages. However, during individual interviews, the study team came across violence cases where both alcohol and drug abuse played a role.⁴ Cases associated with alcohol abuse are well known in the villages and people seem not to regard this information as sensitive. Respondents cited unemployment as the main cause of alcohol abuse among men.

Alcohol may directly increase aggressiveness of men and act as a catalyst for them to vent pent-up frustrations, as demonstrated by the following quotes. A male respondent said: "My wife should not contradict me, whatever I say she must listen, if I come drunk, she should set me at rest and after I sleep, and then there will be no violence. We are Muslims, we should take into consideration our ways of solving problems, and things are different in Europe". A female respondent said: "He is four years older than I am. We are married for seven years and we have two kids. My husband drinks every day and uses drugs. He comes home and beats me. I am now pregnant with third child, I wanted to go for abortion but the doctors said it is too late. I am afraid my child will be born with disabilities. My husband is not sustaining me financially, I buy food myself. I cry every day".

In other cases, alcohol abuse and related behaviour, such as unfaithfulness or disregard to family needs cause family quarrels and men respond with physical violence. "My husband used to drink alcohol before, in the beginning of

our marriage and used to see other women. I was very jealous and was complaining all the time. This was the reason why we had disputes and he used to beat me. I was facing physical abuse until I gave birth to my third child", a female respondent told.

Alcohol may also fuel jealousy and suspicion in men and consequently trigger violence. "One day he came to the café and saw me talking to a client. I worked as a waiter, so I had to talk to people. I did not see him coming. That day when I came back home, I also had my daughter with me, she was little, she was walking by my side. We came home and my husband was drunk and waiting for us near the entrance to our yard. When I came close to the gate, he hit me hard, I fell down. My daughter started crying. It was in the evening and people and neighbours who were in the street saw it. Then my neighbours called my mother and they took me to the local hospital. I stayed there for two weeks or so. My face was broken, I could not open my right eye, and all my face was swollen", one of the older female respondents shared.

³ Tajikistan, as one of transit countries for Afghan heroin, has been experiencing an epidemic of opioid use since the late 1990s, in particular in border districts including Penjikent. Alcohol use was widespread in Soviet times; however, due to the rising influence of stricter understandings of Islam, prevalence of alcohol use declined. Overall, injecting drug use is a much more stigmatised practice than alcohol use.

⁴ In one case that came up in the formative research, a woman had been coerced by her husband to participate in drug smuggling, which led the woman to leave her husband out of fear for her security.

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ECONOMICAL AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

A majority of respondents, both men and women, mentioned financial problems as a major factor leading to frustration, family conflicts and violence. "Violence is happening because of unemployment, when you are sitting at home jobless, then disputes start and then it leads to violence, the more you sit at home, the more there is a risk of violence, if jobs are secured for men in the village, family violence will be minimised" mentioned one male respondent within the younger age group. "All disputes start because of financial problems. When a family is

in need of food and other things, then it leads to frustrations. Woman will start complaining and man will get angry. When there is everything in the house, no one will complain, there will be no violence," an older man related.

Male respondents stated that the expectation of a man having to be a breadwinner set the bar too high, in particular during times of economic hardship. According to the participants, when men fail to fulfil their roles as breadwinners, their wives put pressure on them by manipulating their husbands' sense of manly pride, which leads to more frustration and disputes. Furthermore, men are expected to support both their nuclear (wife and children) and extended (parents, siblings) families. Thus, the household members, in particular women who usually have no or little income – wife, mother, sisters, all compete for a man's financial support. Special attention in a form of a present for the wife or unplanned shopping that was not agreed to with the mother-in-law or even sisters-in-law can lead to a deterioration of relationships among the women in the household.

At the same time, affluent husbands may also affect women's well-being. Some of participants mentioned that financially successful men may consider having a second or third wife. "There are men who have 2-3 wives, if a man can have more than one wife, he can be married to more women."

Financial constrains may cause several families to live together, which leads to frustrations, disputes and violence. In this situation, women, in particular sisters-in-law, may quarrel with each other over the actions of their children. Sometimes, women returning to live in their

parents' house because of violence coming from their spouse and other in-laws may nevertheless provoke or directly use violence towards the wives of their brothers. Women living with their in-laws may be deprived of necessities, including food. "I was afraid to eat something in their house; they were always saying that there is not enough food and bread in the house. My husband left for Russia and I was living with his mother and sister. There were no conditions for living in my room. It was very cold and I was usually starving. They were working in the market; they would eat there and come home. They were bathing in warm water, and I was only bathing once a month in cold water. Everything was locked in the house – cleaning powders, soap – all were locked, I had to ask my relatives to buy me these things", a young woman disclosed. Some respondents also mentioned the dowry that a new bride brings with her. A large dowry may ensure better treatment of the daughter-in-law.

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MIGRATION

Labour migration also affects family dynamics and facilitates violence. Generally, the male population of the villages are in labour migration for 8-9 months and wives are living with their in-laws. However, physical absence of males does not guarantee that wives will not face violence, since their husbands are not the only perpetrators. While in labour migration, men rely on information coming from their mothers and other close relatives regarding the behaviour of their wives. In the absence of the husband, other men in the family – the father or brothers-in-law – may step in to control the wife, and mother-in-law's authority over her daughter-in-law increases significantly. Men usually send their remittances to parents, not to their wives, so mothers and fathers-in-law decide how to spend them. In cases where women live separately from their in-laws, remittances are sent directly to them and they use them for their children and the household.

Participants in general did not acknowledge hardships experienced by women due to physical separation from their husbands while they were absent due to labour migration. A notable exception was a male participant who said, "It is very difficult for women when their husbands are gone. Men in migration still have a life, they can live with women in Russia, but for wives it is impossible. Women miss their husbands; they miss love and physical care. Very often when men are in migration for a long time, their wives develop sexual and reproductive problems, they can face early menopause".

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DISABILITY

Disabled women are often regarded as a burden by both the husbands and the close relatives of the women, who are not willing to sustain them. "Well, they have a lot of land. From his first wife he has three children. His wife got sick and doctors said that she cannot do hard physical work. For some time they paid for her treatment, and she could walk, but she could not do hard physical work. And then his father asked him to get divorced" a male respondent stated. This respondent talked about his neighbour who left his wife because she became physically disabled and was not able to fulfil her duties around the house and in the field anymore. Disabled women are also not considered attractive for their husbands, which also limits their marriage prospects or results in divorce.

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AGE OF MARRIAGE

Several participants mentioned women's marriage age as a factor that may exacerbate violence. Older unmarried women generally have a lesser chance to be married at all or to be the first wife. Sometimes, mothers-in-law and other in-laws can use this as a reason for humiliating and offending their daughters-in-law. Village inhabitants believe that if a woman is not married at a certain age (usually by 20-22), then something 'must be wrong with her.' Marriage age plays a crucial role in the marriage perspectives of women. The older a woman gets, the higher the risks are for her being humiliated because of her late marriage. People in the villages believe that a young woman with good traits and skills will be married off very easily and early, which means that women who are not married at a certain age have something negative in their traits, behaviour, health or skills. Marriage at a later age also is seen as a negative thing in relation to the woman's ability to conceive and give birth to children, and therefore often women of older age become second wives, look after the husband's parents or children from first marriage, serve the family. As one younger female respondent related, "I got married when I was 28. Before this, I heard from people that there were many families who wanted to have me as a daughter-in-law. They were saying that I was a good girl, but that I was not beautiful. My mother-in-law once asked my husband whether I was virgin or not since I got married late. My husband confirmed that I was a virgin." The respondent was the first wife because her husband was in jail for a long period and did not marry earlier. Often, older women become second and third wives and their relatives insist on getting married to anyone who proposes, in order for them not to stay alone. "I got married in 2012. The next day after the wedding I found out

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that my husband had another wife and 5 children. My husband is ethnic Tajik, I am ethnic Uzbek. We lived only three months together and he left to Russia. He did not send me money, did not call. His mother and younger brother were perpetrating violence towards me. I left their house afterwards. My mother always tells me that I should be patient, many women are second and third wives, everything will be fine once I get pregnant and deliver child. My sister was insisting to marry him in the first place," shared a woman from Labi Jav village.

REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Apart from household issues, a woman's position in the community and in the family can be negatively affected by reproductive and sexual health problems. A woman's infertility, unwillingness to have more children or giving birth to girls only may result in neglect, violent victimisation, separation, and polygamy on the side of the husband. Moreover, issues pertaining to reproductive health and rights of women tend to be controlled by the husband, the mother-in-law and the community at large. The birth of a child to some degree strengthens the position of the daughter-in-law within the family, though it does not fully protect her from violence or divorce.

Few men sympathise with women who have sexual and reproductive health problems or who do not meet the standards for sexual life set by men. "Sometimes a wife is not able to sexually satisfy her husband. In this case he leaves her and takes another wife, he has no choice", shared one of the male respondents. Men and other in-laws may abuse the new bride if they suspect her of not being a virgin.

"There are different opinions about polygamy, but if, for example, the first wife cannot have children, then it is ok for a man to take a second wife, people will understand this."

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Older female respondents were mostly of the opinion that the number of children in the family depended on the family's financial situation, and if a family could afford it, they could have four or more children. However, if the husband insisted on having more children, the wife should obey. Community members usually accept the man's decision to have a second wife if the first wife is infertile. "There are different opinions about polygamy, but if, for example, the first wife cannot have children, then it is ok for a man to take a second wife, people will understand this," explained one of the younger men. "If a woman is fertile, then she will be respected and valued by the [husband's] family. If a woman gives birth to several daughters and is not able to give birth to a son, then her husband will divorce her", a young woman said. "I did not have children, so in my husband's family no one respected me, I was hearing lots of cruel blames. I was doing all domestic work. I had eight miscarriages and had to divorce," a young woman from Guli Surkh village shared during focus group discussion.

DIVORCED AND WIDOWED WOMEN

The process of divorce often depends on whether the marriage was officially registered by the state authorities or not. Separations by *talaq*, an Islamic divorce procedure, are very common since they do not require any official procedures if the marriage was not officially registered in the first place. They are convenient for men, as they are only required to say 'I divorce you' three times. Talaqs are even practiced over phone by husbands who are in labour migration, demonstrated in the following quote by a younger female respondent: "My husband started calling me and asking me to go to Russia since he was missing our daughter. I took my daughter and went to Russia. While in Russia, I got pregnant again and it was cold in the van where we were living. I had to come back to Tajikistan and live with my parents. Then, he stopped calling me and sending me money. He did not give his last name to my children, since our marriage was not registered. Then once he called and asked me to give the phone to my parents. I was curious why he wanted to talk to my parents. Apparently, he wanted to give me talaq and separate. He divorced me through phone with talaq."

If the marriage was officially registered, divorced women and their children are in a more advantageous position, since in this case law regulates property rights and issues of alimony.

Divorcees, widows and their children are a very vulnerable group because of the stigma attached to lone women. Social norms dictate that women have to be married, have to be attached to someone and associated with someone; otherwise, she will suffer from gossip, humiliation and harassment. Divorced and widowed women also face financial challenges and problems with housing. Women returning to their parents' house

after divorce or husband's death are usually not welcomed. On the contrary, parents and siblings (or their brothers' wives) often insist that women stay in their husband's households despite the violence they may face there. However, if an older woman with grown-up children becomes widowed, she will maintain her higher status and decision-making authority in the household.

ARRANGED MARRIAGES AND MARRYING RELATIVES

In the target villages, parents generally arrange marriages. In cases where men select a bride, an approval from the parents is also required. Arranged marriages often involve marriage among cousins. Sometimes two sisters marry their cousins, two brothers. "Many marriages are arranged and the couples are too young, for example, girls get married at 18, when they are quite young. They are still kids; they do not know what the relationship is. They still need care of their mother, how can they serve the husband and mother-in-law? They come to new families where everything is new for them. Until she gets adapted, she may face loads of problems" a young male respondent said with regard to arranged marriages. Often the bride's family agree to marry her off to a relative reasoning that in-laws will be less likely to commit violence against her. However, arranged marriages among close relatives do not necessarily protect a woman from violence and may even cause friction between families.

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4.4 COMMUNITY DYNAMICS AND VIOLENCE

GOSSIP AS A MECHANISM TO ENFORCE COMMUNITY NORMS

Communities have a strong influence over individuals and families. It is worth mentioning that men and women of both age groups fully understand the power of gossip and social control in relation to their family and personal lives. Moreover, respondents of both sex and age groups admitted the disproportionate impact of gossip and social control on female members of the target communities, especially on lonely women, as illustrated by the following quote from an older man. “Everything happens in life. Regarding my second wife, I would like to say that her husband was my good friend. He died some years ago, and before his death, he asked to take care of his wife and children. You know that in our society it is impossible that a man takes care of a woman who is not related to him. There will be a lot of chatter if man comes to woman`s house – even without harbouring any bad thoughts. Actually, I did it like this. In the beginning, I was just visiting and helping her, if she needed something. Since I work with people in the village, I heard different chitchat about that fact that I am helping her. For me as a man it is acceptable, but for her it was quite bad. All this gossip was directed at her. Therefore, as my friend asked me to take care of her, I did not have any choice. Then I discussed it with her and she agreed. Therefore, we did Nikoh and the gossip stopped”. Another older male participant shared his story of coping with gossip and social control, saying that “as I told you, my wife is from city. I had a big problem. For about eight years we did not have kids. Mentally, it was hard for both of us. There were many times when even my close friends advised me to divorce her. I did not know

what to do. All my hairs became white. You know, my family became an object to talk in the village. Despite the fact that she was from the city, my poor wife was working in the field. She was doing all the work around the house. However, all of my relatives and friends were constantly advising me to divorce her because we did not have kids. My mother was supportive of my wife and did not let me divorce her; I also loved my wife and was happy that I found support of my mother in this issue. In the end we stayed together”.

However, despite the negative impact of gossip, participants did not express any willingness to challenge this type of social control. Only in rare cases, can people disregard communal attitudes.

Gossip and social control is also strong in terms of regulating family life even in the physical absence of male members of households. Respondents told of cases in which migrants in Russia were informed of the behaviour of their wives by other members of the village by phone. This further leads to disputes, lack of trust and sometimes separation. Therefore, even in the absence of male family members, wives and other female members are in fact under social control, which influences their physical mobility, behaviour, personal development and economic empowerment.

As the response of an older, divorced woman from Labi Jav shows, the physical and emotional impacts of negative social control can be highly detrimental: “This house is like a jail for me, I am stuck here. I was living like in jail when I married and lived with my mother-in-law. They are all very

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religious and we were not allowed to go outside of the fence surrounding the yard. I got used to that and even now, I do not like going out of the house much. I sometimes go and talk to my neighbours, when my son is at school, but most of the time I am in the house. I cry a lot, I think that is why I have headache and my brain does not work properly, see, I do not quite understand some of your questions; you have to repeat and explain them. You know, when you are alone without a husband, even when a man comes from the administrative centre to collect money for electricity and other utilities, people start talking, as though when you are separated you would be willing to see any man.”

4.5 SEEKING HELP FOR VIOLENCE AND FAMILY CONFLICTS

Disclosure of DV and family conflicts to the community is considered to bring disgrace to the family and triggers gossip. Therefore, violence victims first seek help from trusted people who will keep the information confidential. These trusted people are mostly close relatives, i.e. parents and/or siblings. Female respondents cited sisters and mothers as the most trusted people. The male respondents mentioned close relatives in general without further specification when asked about seeking help and advice in case of violence and family disputes. However, responses to other questions imply that male respondents as well prefer to talk to mothers, fathers and brothers during family crises and in most cases their mothers may come first. Support-seeking from family members and the level of trust is also determined by the individual family dynamics and relationships among siblings and between parents and children. "If there is a small problem, women try to solve it by themselves. It means that they will not share it with anyone. Sometimes if they have been physically abused, then the first people they would go to are their parents, mostly their mothers. In cases where the woman does not have parents, she goes to her sisters and brothers, and in the worst case they go to [the local authorities]", shared a male respondent of the younger age group FGD (Chorbogh village). Female respondents also shared this opinion. A female respondent within the older age group, whose husband has been in labour migration for several years, answered that "I miss him (husband) some time; I talk to him over phone. However, I share my secrets with my sister only. I think a woman should not tell anyone else outside of family about family issues, about disputes within the family".

Because of the strong social control and the role of gossip formal complaints on DV are rarely made to institutions like the local branches of Committee on Women and Family Affairs. This is

especially true with communities that are closed or are composed of other ethnic backgrounds, like Uzbeks. During a meeting with representative of a Committee on Women and Family Affairs in one of the districts, the committee representative stated that one of the targeted villages is not considered problematic in terms of DV and SGBV. She mentioned that the village has been an exemplary and there have not been any complaints from that village on any case of DV or other forms of SGBV. However, during the research process the team interviewed several victims of DV and it appeared that the levels were relatively high in the village. This demonstrated once again the role of social control in the lives of these communities and the attitude towards formal complaints on DV, and thus the lack of knowledge of DV/SGBV dynamics by the state authorities.

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THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEADERS

Respected people, such as elders or other informal leaders in the village are generally the next in line in terms of seeking help in the hierarchy of trusted people after close relatives. Elders in the context of Tajikistan are people of older age, often men, who are respected in the community, who can give advice with regard to family issues, and who have served the community when they were younger. This was highlighted for example by a young male respondent in an individual interview: “There are different stages [in addressing violence]. If there is a problem in the family, it should be solved within the family. Otherwise, the first stage are relatives, the second stage is head of the village or other respected people, then the Jamoat and the last stage is the police.” Informal leaders’ role and influence in settling family conflicts is determined by a set of factors. Among them are the issue of trust, their ability to resolve disputes, influence among villagers, similar past experiences and a willingness to help potential victims. The last two factors were mentioned by the female respondents of different age groups, especially those who are experiencing or have experienced violence in past. A female respondent among the younger age group mentioned, “You could seek help from close relatives. The best would be to refer to someone who have had similar experience, who have been victim as well. Relatives do not always believe you. My mother arranged my marriage; therefore, she did not allow me to tell about this to my father. The first person after my mother, whom I told this was muallima Savsan (Muallima – literally meaning teacher, a polite form of referring to a female who is respected, name is changed). She saw me and asked me why I had lost so much weight. I told her my entire story; she suggested

that I should resume my studies. Relatives were suggesting me to tolerate, not to tell anyone.”

A *raisi zanon* (the voluntary unpaid position of a female leader of village women) is often selected by the women in the village themselves and thus is a trusted person among female members of the village. Usually village women of both young and older age groups select the leader of the village’s women. The influence of the *raisi zanon* depends on her overall perceived authority and charisma, education level and life experience. These informal leaders are one of the main source of information on family and women’s issues in the villages, and they often contribute greatly

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to the work of the official regional women’s committees and sometimes are the only available support for victims of DV/SGBV in terms of listening to the victims, offering compassion and advice. An older female respondent related that she used to serve as *raisi zanon* for 14 years in the village. “People trust me, women trust me and I try to help everyone. Women see that I also had family problems in the past but I overcame all of them, and now I have a good family and decent relationships with my husband and my daughters-in-law.”

In cases of DV or other family issues, people seeking help outside of the family most frequently refer to the head of *mahalla*⁵ (informal community leader selected by people among older respectable men), head of village, or female leader or other elders, depending on the village.

Despite high levels of religiosity in the study villages (as manifested by presence of mosques, observance of religious norms, regular prayers, high mosque attendance, and popularity of religious books), participants generally denied the influence of religious leaders and their role in family mediation or resolving family disputes. Although religious leaders seemed to be among the main opinion makers, their authority and influence is gradually declining. People prefer to address other informal leaders, such as heads of mahallas or heads of villages who are not associated with religion. Respondents mentioned that they are reluctant now to involve religious leaders in resolving family disputes and other family issues due to the pressure and suspicion exerted by the Government on religious leaders.⁶

⁵ Mahalla, which means community or neighbourhood, is a traditional autonomous social institution built around communal and familial ties and public Islamic rituals (e.g. prayers and funerals). The mahalla is managed by informal leaders selected among respectable elder men, referred to as *aqsaqals* (lit. ‘grey-bearded’).

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As for the formal leaders, both female and male respondents named the heads of jamoats, representatives of committees on women and family affairs, and local police as figures to address in cases of DV/SGBV. At the same time, participants did not recall any specific example when these officials or organisations were effective in solving DV issues. On the contrary, some participants who were victims of violence reported that officials may take the husband’s side, even if he is breaking the law. A young woman shared her story of receiving no help from the court and her hired lawyer: “I filed for divorce [...] But the judge took his side, as [my husband] gave them money. The judge refused to divorce us. I told in the court that I cannot live with him anymore because he has two wives. The judge replied that if he takes us both to the market to sell, people would buy only him, nobody would buy you. I replied that if someone wants a disposable thing, they may buy him, but I don’t need him. Finally, they divorced us, but he still does not pay child support money [...] I hired a lawyer, but the lawyer took his side as well. Here in our district everyone is on his side”.

Participants in several villages mentioned that the local branches of the state Committee on Women Affairs mostly work on organising community events and are not actively involved in addressing urgent needs of vulnerable women. “The Women’s Committee is not working properly, in all their activities they involve only 4-5 women, and it is the same women all the time. They do not involve those women who have no formal jobs and are housewives” shared one of the older men in one of the villages. Participants did not mention receiving effective violence-related services from NGOs working on gender equality and VAWG either. Some participants expressed doubt in the popularity or effectiveness of violence prevention centers if they were to be opened in their villages.

Not surprisingly, these formal leaders and institutions were named as last instances in resolving family issues, as people prefer to address informal leaders when the family reputation is at stake. Participants’ accounts suggest that formal institutions are difficult to access because of geographic, social, cultural and psychological barriers. Formal institutions are located in administrative premises, have official working hours and certain procedures that visitors need to follow (e.g. registering the purpose of the visit). These factors make addressing formal leaders difficult, especially for victims of violence, who also often face issues around restricted mobility and would face the potential stigma of having reported family matters to the authorities.

Most of the men interviewed did not consider formal institutes and formal leaders as favoured options in resolving family issues either. The majority of men viewed the interference of formal leaders or institutions in family matters as a

threat and challenge to the established family and community dynamics as they were questioning the authority of male members of the family. Some younger male respondents also mentioned that formal leaders and formal institutions stereotypically tend to see men as the only side at fault, although women reported the opposite bias. The men considered this to be unhelpful in resolving disputes and might even exacerbate the situation. A young male respondent (Labi Jav village) stated that, “here [in the village] people are always taking the side of a woman [in case of severe physical violence], but men are not always the one to blame. Usually, support is provided to women only and no one bothers to ask who is guilty. The police will seize the man by the scruff of his neck and take him to the police station. Next time, this man will hit his wife even harder”.

The dominance of social control mechanisms can be utilised by informal leaders, who can use this lever to mediate family disputes without creating stigmatisation, avoiding the risk of divorce. Victims refer to them mostly for consultations and for lecturing the perpetrators, which, according to some respondents, may help. However, in cases where the violence is severe and victims are not willing to live with the perpetrator any more, they often refer victims to formal leaders and formal institutions, which have the legal power to resolve property issues and custody over children.

⁶ This is part of a wider crackdown on any religious activities not directly sanctioned by the state.

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WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SPACES IN THE COMMUNITY

Men and women in the study villages traditionally do not gather in one place together, except for parents' meetings at schools and official meetings at the village or 'mahalla' level. When families have guests who are not close relatives, men and women also sit separately. There are few opportunities for women to socialise. Women usually gather during weddings, the birth of children and for other similar traditional ceremonies, where they sit separately from men. Another place for socialising for women is the nearest water pipe, where women go for water. Women can visit their female friends or neighbours, but this may require obtaining permission if these friends are living far away. In case of physically close neighbours, women usually can visit them using excuses, but nevertheless need to inform either husband or mother-in-law about it. Men usually gather during the same traditional ceremonies; they also can gather during *Buzkashi* (a traditional horseback competition), in *Chaikhanas* (teahouses) or in other meeting places near the main roads or bus stops and stations.

USE OF MEDIA

Many of the participants in all villages mentioned TV and newspapers as the most popular media. One respondent specifically mentioned "Oila" (a nation-wide newspaper covering family and personal issues) and "Minbari Khalk" (printed by the ruling People's Democratic Party). Young people also use the Internet, although as mentioned above, young women's use of mobile phones and social media is viewed with great suspicion in the community. Participants mentioned that lack of electricity or seasonal agricultural work might interfere with reading books.

4.6 WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The voice and status of men in the decision-making within family generally depends on their ability to financially sustain family members. "Men's point of view is final because men bring money home," younger women in Haftrud village stated. On the other side, if a man fails to perform his role as a breadwinner, women may question the man's authority and his dominant role in the family. "After six months my husband called me. I told him that since he is not calling me and is not sustaining me financially, let's separate. Then, for the first time he sent me \$300. Then he sent me money once more and then I went to Russia to live with him there," a young woman shared, highlighting how women can also use social norms to their advantage.

However, in most cases financial dependency fuels discrimination and violence towards women and girls. Financial dependency puts them in a position where they have to tolerate a subordinate position in family decision-making processes. This type of dependency hampers their physical mobility, personal life, reproductive and sexual health and rights, and access to health care. "Generally, all decisions in the family were made by my father in law. He did not allow me to go and see doctor. I was sick once and I wanted to go for medical check. He did not allow me to go, he said that I should go to my mother and it is her business to pay for my treatment" a young woman from Guli Surkh village stated.

The majority of female respondents, both of the younger and older age groups mentioned that if a woman starts earning a living, she would have more decision-making power and personal freedom. Female respondents within the younger age group underlined that the attitude of in-laws towards those daughters-in-laws that work and bring money home is more positive. "If there would have been job places and salary, our mothers-in-law would look after our children themselves", said some of the younger female respondents from Haftrud village. "If a woman is working, she feels her advantage, if a woman is not working she depends on her husband", mentioned a female respondent of the same age group in another village. This attitude was shared

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by some male participants, one young man in Haftrud village said: "if a woman earns money, I think she will have higher status. In my case, both my wife and I are working, and if she wants, say, to buy new clothes, I am not against it".

Women's education and employment in the target villages depends on their families' and husbands' decision. According to the participants, men are more willing to let their wives work and bring income to the family, in comparison to the situation 4-5 years ago. However, there are still restrictions put by the husbands on their wives with regard to certain types of jobs. According to the responses, appropriate positions for women are teachers, nurses, dressmakers, and cooks. In addition, men are willing to let their wives work only if employment is guaranteed within the village, not further afield, and only with female co-workers. Considering the harsh economic situation both in Tajikistan and Russia, men tend to welcome the prospect of women's increased financial contribution to the family within these parameters. In all villages, men stated that women need workplaces, that they needed kindergartens for children so that they have

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spare time to earn something and help men with sustaining families financially. Some men, though, see employment as an opportunity to show women how hard it is for men to earn money, so that women would value the money and the time men spend on earning it more, which was a common complaint by male respondents. However, if a woman in the family starts working, many male respondents would not be willing to ease her workload within the household, even physically hard tasks, such as bringing water or working in the field.

Jealousy and distrust of women by men and mothers-in-law and the pervasive fear of negative gossip may limit women's employment opportunities. Some respondents mentioned that women may have a formal job only if they were deemed trustworthy, i.e. that they would not come under the suspicion by other community members of being involved in extra-marital affairs. This concern is heightened by the fact that formal jobs often involve interaction with men who are not relatives or travel outside of villages. This tends to be seen as a violation of gender norms which strictly limit women's communication with men.

In all of the villages, older women were of the opinion that the situation of women and girls is better now compared to Soviet times. They mentioned that previously, women were not allowed to study after they graduated from school, because the general expectation for her was to get married and create a family. During the Soviet period, women were working in the tobacco or cotton fields, or other forms of work in the *kolkhoz* (collective farm). According to older female respondents, women did not have that many career options in the villages during

the Soviet times. Moreover, according to both older male and female respondents, the economic situation back then was stable and men had enough income to sustain their families, so there was no need for women to work. She could however only go and study if her husband and his family allowed her. Usually, the consent of the husband was final, since men were living together with their wives during marriage; there was less migration back then. Theoretically, once married women could then continue their studies if there was no objection from the husband, because they did not have to worry about the cost of the study and about their children, as kindergartens were available. In contrast, the older female respondents mentioned that today, women have more alternatives, as there are no *kolkhozes* in the villages anymore and women can choose any career path they want – assuming of course that they are given permission and have the economic means to do so.

However, the responses of younger women seem to contradict the responses of the older women. Younger women mentioned that they do not have the opportunity to choose where and what to study for several reasons. A major obstacle was the cost of the studying and other financial constraints. Furthermore traditional expectations of marrying young and negative stereotypes about educated women (if she studied outside of the village/district she might have had dated someone, so she is not seen as an obedient and modest 'house girl') militated against continued studies. Furthermore, the unavailability of kindergartens means that young women cannot go for further studies because of the expectation that they would need to look after their young children. According to the respondents, if girls are studying in some other cities or region, there is

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always a possibility that they have some personal life and relationships with a man there, which was considered to be negative. Male labour migration currently is also a factor, as many men spend two to three months on average during a year with their wives, and for the rest of the time the wife lives with in-laws. In this case, mothers-in-law and other members of the house tend to prefer 'house girls' who will be doing work around the house instead of studying.

4.7 OTHER VIOLENCE-RELATED ISSUES

FEMALE SUICIDES

Cases of female suicide were mentioned in all four villages within different contexts. Overall, respondents were reluctant to talk about cases of suicide, especially in the villages with a predominant Uzbek population, due to the shame and stigma related to the issue. During the visit of the research team to one of the villages, a young woman had committed suicide just prior to the arrival of the team and the investigation was ongoing. Respondents were reluctant to talk about the case with the study team during the five days spent in the village. Official governmental representatives only mentioned to the research team that the woman had some mental problems which had led her to commit suicide. In the same village, a female interview participant shared that her daughter had committed suicide when she was seven weeks pregnant with her first child. The respondent mentioned that she never knew what the reason was, since her daughter had never complained to her about anything, did not tell her about her problems and possible conflicts with her husband or in-laws. The investigation apparently did not produce any results either. It seems that often cases of suicide are not thoroughly investigated, since in all four villages suicides had occurred in the past, yet no one knew the reason or who/what might have potentially driven the victims to commit suicide. In three villages, these were young married women, in one village it was a young female teenager. Often suicides are explained by a mental disorder of the person who commits suicide and the investigation does not go further to look for other possible causes.

MEN AS STAKEHOLDERS IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Some of the respondents mentioned that men could also suffer from persistent demands placed on them, which they may or may not be able to fulfil. For instance, a younger male participant explained that, “See, if a man cannot afford to buy something, let’s say a luxury item which his wife wants to have and his wife insists on having it, and she reminds him about it every day, I think, the man gets frustrated, and this is violence as well. He will think that he cannot satisfy family needs. However, cases where women are the victims are easier to spot”. At the same time, no participants mentioned physical abuse and other severe forms of DV against husbands. Overall, men were glad that they were considered as interested parties and that their opinion was asked as opposed to the usual practice of gender-related projects that talk only about women in the context of family violence.



5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENDER NORMS AND POWER DYNAMICS

Our findings suggest that social norms defining gender roles and expectations are the main factor regulating behaviours of community members. Communities have little tolerance for transgressing gender norms and enforce this by gossip as a social control mechanism. These norms give structure to both community and family dynamics, which influence expectations placed on both men and women within communities, determine the gendered use of space in the villages, define mobility and access to communication, and contribute to or prevent DV and other forms of VAWG. These norms and expectations also shape the support-seeking behaviour of potential victims of violence; and define acceptability or non-acceptability of domestic and other forms of SGBV. Within this context, gender role expectations for different sex and age groups are paramount and any deviation from these roles will likely result in a challenge, in frustration, and violence against individuals.

The notions of honour, respectability and shame are very closely linked to fulfilling gender norms, roles and expectations. The Tajik equivalent of the word man – *mard* has a connotation of a reliable person, the one who fulfils his promises, a man who people can refer to for help and support. Perhaps due to the social, public understanding of the word “mard” in Tajik, the majority of participants emphasised the role of a man within the larger community. Emphasis on the community role of men may be a legacy of the Soviet times, when formal employment, selfless collectivism and mobilisation of people were highly regarded. Another publicly expected aspect of being *mard* is to be in charge, or at least seen to be in charge, and to be able to protect and

control himself and his kin, in particular his wife, daughters and unmarried sisters. This control and protection may often be exercised in a gender inequitable way. Not surprisingly, the younger female respondents who are often treated unjustly by men in the families, considered respect towards women as one of the desired traits in a man.

Participants’ views of desired female characteristics focused heavily on traditional female gender roles in a patriarchal society. Even alternative roles for younger women not directly related to family duties, such as being a teacher or a doctor are still closely linked with the ‘feminine’ role of a caregiver. Public activism is possible only once women reach older age, when the burden of household chores are transferred from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law. Being married for a woman in Tajik society means far more than only financial stability, it also serves as a form of protection, including from malicious gossip, and is seen as a fulfilment of a life trajectory focused on being someone’s wife and giving birth to children. Among the respondents within the target villages, there were cases in which women were working due to a husband’s illness or other problems, but this did not give them the same degree of power as male breadwinners would enjoy in the family dynamics. Employed women were not able to negotiate the gendered expectations in terms of household chores, taking care of children and elderly, while men generally would not take on these responsibilities, even in the case of unemployment or an inability to sustain the family financially.

FAMILY POWER DYNAMICS AND VIOLENCE

A number of actors and their relationships shape family dynamics within the study villages. These dynamics also depend on the commonly accepted gender roles and expectations. The key actors determining the family dynamics are spouses and mothers-in-law. In these relationships, the husband’s main role is that of a breadwinner. Successful fulfilment of this role gives him authority and decision-making power in the family. The wife has a secondary role and her main duties involve serving others – her husband, children, mother-in-law and other in-laws in the household. The main decision makers within the spousal relationships are men. These decisions include family budgetary and spending issues, marriage and education of children, education and employment of the wife, and mobility of the wife and his daughters. Men’s striving to live up to community expectations of domination and control of their wife and children that are imposed through gossip and peer pressure, as discussed below, is a key factor contributing to the dynamics of spousal relationships. Circumstances and actions, which question or threaten the dominance of a man, in particular when visible in public, create tension, frustration and eventually may lead to spousal violence.

Involvement of men into the project activities is instrumental for the success of violence prevention. Unacceptability of any form of DV/ SGBV violence, even as ‘disciplining’ measure, and its harmful consequences for women, children and men themselves should be the central message to be conveyed. At the same time, the project should not put all the blame on men’s behaviour as the only cause of violence. Rather, men should realise how their behaviour is shaped by social norms and power hierarchies and what they can do to change the situation without compromising their

honour and status in the community. Changing social norms justifying violence, addressing negative pressure from peers and family members instigating violence, and promoting more positive masculine norms helpful in preventing violence (e.g. “*real men do not hit women*”) may be effective in this regard, especially if linked to activities which give men a safe space to voice and address their own needs and frustrations.

At the same time, husbands are not the only decision-makers in the family. Other family members of the husband, in particular his mother, also play important roles in shaping family power dynamics resulting in violence against his wife.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF MOTHERS-IN-LAW

The relationship of the daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law needs to be considered as a separate category when analysing family dynamics. Roles attributed to women are generally all family-related and the status of a woman in the communities is very closely tied with gradually rising in the hierarchy of the so-called mandatory female development phases which resemble a “caterpillar’s life”: prospective bride, *kelin*/wife, mother, and finally mother-in-law. The mother-in-law is the peak of a woman’s life trajectory. She becomes the “honey taster” of the family, reaching this status through patience and persistence. Mothers-in-law have already fulfilled their female duties in terms of serving their husband and their in-laws, giving birth and raising children, and thus have earned respect and certain degree of freedom of choice.

This high position of mothers-in-law is supported by the traditional social norms supporting the cult of the mother. The mother-in-law generally gains authority and is fully involved in the family decision-making process. The authority of the mother-in-law is not limited to issues traditionally considered female issues only, but involves decision-making on property issues, the education of children, the purchasing of high value items such as cars or a house, migration of sons and use of remittances, the marriage of children and finding suitable wives for sons. The mother is to be respected because “heaven is under her feet”, as stated in a well-known Hadith (a quote attributed to the Prophet Muhammad). These norms require obedience and respect of mothers by all younger family members, including sons. One of the implications of the cult of the mother is the notion that a man can have other wives, while the mother is the only one and no one can replace her. Therefore, in family conflicts between

mother and wife, sons are expected to take their mothers’ side and discipline their wives by all means, including violence.

Mothers-in-law’s endorsement of, or compliance with the use of violence in family affairs, can also be explained by the fact that they experienced the same patterns of violence and subjugation by their own in-laws when they were younger. Their understanding is that their daughters-in-law also must go through this cycle by serving the in-laws and tolerating violence; if the daughter-in-law is patient enough, she will be happy eventually, achieving the same high status in the future. Since mothers-in-law went through this cycle themselves, they consider it tolerable and often have little empathy towards their daughters-in-law’s hardship.

DV/SGBV projects should take into account the central role of mothers-in-law in family power dynamics and related social and cultural norms promoting their authority. If mothers-in-law can be sensitised to violence issues, they may become a key player in preventing violence. One potential mechanism for changing mothers-in-law’s attitudes in the project can be referring to their own experience of DV to improve their empathy towards daughters-in-laws and persuade them to break this vicious cycle.

COMMUNITY DYNAMICS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Social control, which is largely exercised through gossip and violence, is a powerful mechanism of policing social norms and gendered expectations in the community and family life of the study villages. Social approval, respect of the community members, family’s reputation in the community, and the notions of honour and shame are important determinants of people’s success and life achievement. Moreover, as in many traditional societies, family reputation in the community is valued higher than the personal physical and psychological well-being of individual family members, in particular younger women and girls, who are placed on the bottom of gender and age hierarchy. Certain categories of women with stigmatising characteristics – including those with reproductive problems, lone or unmarried after what is considered the prime age, widows, divorcees, disabled and abandoned women are particularly vulnerable to gossip.

Community norms dictate that family affairs should be solved within the families and interference of outsiders may affect the family’s reputation and trigger gossip. In this regard, women who are victims of DV may be reluctant to seek help or report violence fearing shame and disgrace to them and their families.

In light of this, projects aimed at reducing DV/SGBV should address this powerful mechanism of social control that ensures the status quo in the family and community gender hierarchies. This includes work on reducing the stigma of reporting or seeking support by survivors, reducing the expectations on men to be seen as controlling, and reducing tolerance for DV/SGBV. This should be done with great sensitivity and with inclusion of key opinion makers who have been gender-sensitised and are willing to contribute.

Community campaigns against DV that do not address social norms condemning disclosure of and reporting violence may further hamper help-seeking opportunities of violence victims. Therefore, the project should enable discussions around social norms and discriminatory practices as a restraining factor for violence prevention with involvement of gender-sensitised opinion makers. Another aspect to be addressed is recognition of various forms of violence other than physical violence, such as restrictions on mobility and communication, limiting access to food and other household resources, violation of reproductive and sexual rights, shouting and other forms of psychological pressure.

These discussions should be grounded in positive aspects of social norms and values that may be used to promote gender equitable attitudes towards women. For example, as indicated earlier, respect for mothers is a norm that empowers mothers-in-laws as violence perpetrators or instigators in their conflicts with daughters-in-laws. At the same time, it may be possible to present respect for mothers as a value that requires respectful and just treatment of all women as potential mothers, making sure however that this respect is not contingent upon being or becoming a mother. Therefore, it is essential to provide room for discussion among project participants, both males and females, to revisit this concept from the perspectives of women and men of various ages demonstrating that gender equality is reflected in the traditional values.

Community social norms require men to be the main breadwinners in the family, so the ability to sustain one’s family financially is viewed as one of the main ideals linked to masculinity. The

current economic crisis and high unemployment make it difficult for many men to meet these expectations. As a result, men who fear that they are no longer viewed as a 'real *mard*' in the eyes of community and family members, experience high level of frustration. Since it is mostly their wives who openly confront their husbands for being unable to fulfil the role of breadwinner, this frustration easily transforms into violence against women in the family. Alcohol abuse catalyses this process by increasing aggressiveness of men, leading to more frequent and severe episodes of violence. Therefore, one of the project tasks should be addressing community norms of hegemonic breadwinner masculinity. Promotion of alternative expressions of masculinity, such as commitment to family security and well-being, faithfulness, being a good Muslim, ability to control anger, indifference to gossip, helping family and community members in non-financial ways, may all seek to ease the negative pressure of social norms related to men's role as breadwinner, reduce men's frustration and prevent violence.

It is worth noting that traditionally in Tajik culture, families value children and childless families are perceived as not being 'whole'. Women and men of older age value time spent with grandchildren and consider this an important part of their family lives. A Tajik proverb goes that grandchildren are sweeter than children. However, the study findings show that considerations of their own children's and grandchildren's health and well-being do not always stop perpetrators from using violence. Therefore, social norms valuing children and grandchildren can be used in changing attitudes towards DV.

There are other local concepts as well that can be

used to help interventions targeting behavioural change. Tajik folklore includes stories and images of women, who overcome the existing gendered expectations and norms, especially in relation to limitation of women's roles within the borders of family and household. The female heroes of these stories and pieces of folklore are highly respected by both males and females and people talk about them with a high sense of honour. One such female hero is Roxana, daughter of the Bactrian nobleman Oxyartes, whom Alexander the Great married. People in Penjikent consider Roxana as being from that region and she is considered as having possessed a high level of courage, intelligence and dignity. Another potential role model is Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisha, who was Muhammad's active supporter, a distinguished Muslim scholar and political leader.

Gossip and social control are also at the core of the establishment of a circle of trusted people, who potential victims or those at risk refer to. Issues of confidentiality and trust are paramount in building relationships and communication within a community where gossip and social control strongly interfere with family and private lives. Community members consider family issues, including violence, as being sensitive and thus potential victims or by other close family members speak only to the most trusted people about these.

Apart from men's alcohol abuse, respondents' opinions about factors leading to violence are exclusively formed around the idea of a woman breaking set norms and rules and therefore requiring disciplining. Because of this villagers think that it is women who need to change their attitudes and behaviour to avoid violence. The same idea and perception is prevalent among

informal leaders involved in the mediation and conflict resolution processes. The project should seek to address this uneven apportioning of blame.

Generally, villagers are concerned about the image of their village, especially the villages with predominant ethnic Uzbek population, who as a minority group, are especially sensitive to being depicted in a negative light. Therefore, it is important to guide participants so that they start questioning the behaviour of perpetrators, not victims, as the main cause of violence. This would see the dynamics of social control reversed, in a sensitive manner, to castigate those who perpetrate violence and create an idea that DV is a socially inappropriate action. Again, as indicated above, this should be coupled with changing social norms related to unacceptability of victims disclosing, reporting and seeking help for violence.

Finally, the project can counteract gossip targeted at violence victims and other vulnerable women and girls by promoting Islamic values favourable for women. For example, it is a Muslim's duty to help and support vulnerable women. Further, gossiping is considered a major sin in Islam, and gossipers are seen as deserving punishment in the afterlife.

Any use of mass media for changing community norms should take into account local specificities. Electronic media channels such as the Internet and TV may have limited coverage due to high costs and unstable electricity supply. Since participants prefer to read national newspapers rather than local ones, it would be difficult to use newspapers to disseminate targeted information within the project. Radio may have higher

coverage since it is less costly than TV, may be operated without constant electricity supply, and both men and women can listen to it while doing other things. All electronic and print audio-visual materials should be adapted to various dialects of Tajik and Uzbek languages spoken in each village and take into account the relatively low literacy level of the target audience.

POTENTIAL COMMUNITY-LEVEL ALLIES IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Informal leaders, both men and women, may have great potential in addressing DV, VAWG and SGBV more broadly in the study villages. Community members perceive informal leaders to be more suitable for solving family conflicts than religious or formal leaders, as the latter are often unable to ensure confidentiality of violence cases and are obliged to employ harsh response measures to violence perpetrators, which in turn can lead to divorce, separation, repeated violence, and stigmatisation. It is worth keeping in mind that in spite of high levels of religiosity in the study villages, community members view the heads (imams) of the village mosques as formal leaders and rarely appeal to them in cases of family conflicts. This may be due to the fact that imams are not elected by the local communities but rather are appointed by the Government-controlled religious councils. At the same time, it is possible that some renowned informal leaders may have certain degree of religious knowledge and authority, which could make them even more effective in tackling violence issues. In this regard, one of the main tasks of the project would be involving the informal male and female leaders who are able and willing to work against DV/SGBV into the project activities.

Although participants perceive formal governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies to be ineffective in addressing DV, the project should still engage with these structures to sensitise them to actual problems related to violence and ensure their involvement into violence prevention. Representatives of state agencies should be encouraged to acknowledge that DV/SGBV is an acute problem and that official statistics do not reflect the grim reality. They should be sensitised about reluctance of victims to report violence

and seek help from formal institutions, and convinced to abandon approaches which blame victims. Although it is outside of the scope of the locally targeted project, changes in policies and procedures of the organisations related to handling DV cases (e.g. lowering reporting thresholds, ensuring confidentiality of cases, training of responsible officials on gender equality issues, and so on) are required to increase their effectiveness. NGOs working on violence prevention should be more closely engaged with both men and women, younger and older, to increase their awareness about existing services, and, more importantly, to tailor these services to the actual needs of violence victims.

SOCIAL SPACES

Social control and gender norms are also strong in determining community spaces where men and women may gather and socialise. Therefore, the project activities should identify spaces that are both suitable for the planned activities and acceptable for women and men alike. This should be done in consultations with village members, since some premises (e.g. local authority offices) may be too imposing and not conducive for discussions and interactions.

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT AS VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Financial dependence of wives on their husbands seems to be largely stipulated by social norms and, depending on the circumstances, provides both advantages and challenges for males and females within families. In terms of advantages from males' perspective, financial dependence of wives is a strong control mechanism and an indicator of men's masculine status. This explains men's resistance to women's employment. On the other hand, due to the high rate of unemployment in the country and decrease of economic opportunities in Russia and regionally, men seem to be willing, to a certain degree, to compromise their authority in order to ease the financial burden.

Depending on circumstances, women regard their financial dependence on their husbands both as an advantage and as a challenge. Since social norms require men to be breadwinners, the financial dependency of women within families is not viewed by the community as something negative. Participants seem to believe that financial dependency on men gives women an opportunity to stay at home, attend to children and not have income concerns. In reality, though, financial dependence does not always mean peace of mind.

Our findings suggest that both female and male participants realise that, in addition to enabling women to meet their basic needs like buying clothes or paying for health services, financial income boosts their self-esteem, helps in building equal relationships with husbands and re-defines their position within the family hierarchy. At the same time, our study shows that men and other family decision-makers expect that women's income generation activities should conform to gender roles and expectations. In particular,

women should be able to fulfil their household obligations with no or little help from their husband's side; the job should be within the village boundaries; jobs should comply with the notion of traditional feminine activities (sewing, cooking); there should also be no interaction with other men. In addition to these concerns voiced by the participants, there may be other issues affecting empowerment of working women. For example, women may be required to bring all their income to their husbands or mothers-in-law; families may be against women borrowing money or making any material commitments necessary for starting entrepreneurship activities; and empowerment of women coupled with financial instability of men may cause more frustration, tension and conflicts. The project activities aimed at economic empowerment of women will take into account these potential triggers of DV.

One of the ways to address these (and other violence-related) problems should be questioning and transforming unfavourable social norms at the community level or at least at the level of groups of families forming "avlods" (Tajik word for clan, dynasty). Given that collectivism is a cornerstone of the Central Asian sociocultural context, behaviour change actions must target groups, not individuals, in order to be accepted and not criticised. Through intervention, the current heavy financial situation can be used to change attitudes towards women's employment and secure change in social norms within the What Works project. If this changes and transformation in gender roles occur in larger groups of families, there is less chance for gossip to arise around individual families where women start earning and have a say in the decision-making process, and which can provoke violence.



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ANNEX 4 – TEMPLATE FOR FGDs

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to participate in this study. My name is ... and I will be running this discussion. This is my assistant... If at any point you wish to stop or if you have any questions, then please say so.

International Alert and CESVI are conducting research examining relations between men and women of different ages in Tajikistan as part of a three-year project which aims to improve the economic situation of both men and women in four villages, two in Jomi and two in Penjikent, as well as contribute to better relations between men and women, which is also part of this year's government priorities. For this purpose, we will be carrying out a series of focus group discussions, which we would like to invite you to participate in. The research will take place between ... and ...

If you have any questions, please let us know and we will take time to explain them as we go along. You can ask us questions at any time, and also withdraw your participation at any point in time if you wish to do so.

The purpose of our research is to better understand the conditions in your village and how these affect men and women of different ages differently. We will be asking questions about the type of work available to women and men of different ages, about how household income, what kind of activities different people carry out in the household and the community every day, about relations between women and men and how these have changed over time.

The reason we ask these questions is that we are working together with ... [enter name of local partner organization in particular district] ... and the local authorities to improve both the relations

between men and women, including reducing violence, but also improving the economic situation of the whole village, which are all in line with the current priorities of the government.

The interview will take approximately one hour, but if you want to keep it shorter or make it longer, that is not a problem.

Everything that is said here is completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. And, as mentioned, if you do not wish to answer a question or if you wish to leave the FGD at any point, that is perfectly all right. We also ask you to respect each other's confidentiality, give everyone the time and space to talk and respect each other's opinions.

Do you have any questions at this point?

If not, is it ok if we start with some preliminary questions?

DATE:

LOCATION:

CODE NUMBER OF FGD:

STARTING TIME:

FINISHING TIME:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

AGE BRACKET:

Question 1: To start off, could I ask you how many of you are married? Is anyone widowed or divorced?

(record numbers)

Question 2: How many of you have children? If so, how many?

(record numbers)

Question 3: What does it mean to be a man and a woman in Tajikistan these days? How has this changed over time? What would you say are the characteristics of an ideal woman and an ideal man in your community? How has this changed over time?

Question 4: What do you feel is expected of women these days in your community? Should she stay at home and work? Should she work outside of the home? Should she get an education? Should she take part in decision-making?

Question 5: What do you feel is expected of men these days in your community? Should he find work outside of the community? Should he participate in domestic work? Should he get an education? Should he participate in decision-making?

Question 6: This year is the Year of the Family, and our project aims to support better relations in the family. Sometimes, there is violence in the household. Are there situations where violence might be justified – between spouses, between in-laws, between siblings, between parents and children? If so, in what kind of situations? What do you consider to be violence – emotional neglect, financial pressure, verbal abuse, threats, shoving, slapping, other physical abuse?

Question 7: If there are cases of violence in the household, how should the victim react? Do you think it is correct to report this to outsiders? If so, who should it be reported to? How do other people view people who report such violence to outsiders?

Question 8: This brings us to the end of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to discuss? Or do you have any questions to us?

Thank you again for your time. This has been extremely useful for us.

ANNEX 5 – TEMPLATE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS FOR FEMALE AND MALE PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for your time and your willingness to participate in this study. My name is ... and I will be running this interview. If at any point you wish to stop or if you have any questions, then please say so.

International Alert and CESVI are conducting research examining relations between men and women of different ages in Tajikistan as part of a three-year project which aims to improve the economic situation of both men and women in four villages, two in Jomi and two in Penjikent, as well as contribute to better relations between men and women, which is also part of this year's government priorities. For this purpose, we will be carrying out a series of focus group discussions, which we would like to invite you to participate in. The research will take place between ... and ...

If you have any questions, please let us know and we will take time to explain them as we go along. You can ask us questions at anytime, and also withdraw your participation at any point in time if you wish to do so.

The purpose of our research is to better understand the conditions in your village and how these affect men and women of different ages differently. We will be asking questions about the type of work available to women and men of different ages, about how household income, what kind of activities different people carry out in the household and the community every day, about relations between women and men and how these have changed over time.

The reason we ask these questions is that we are working together with ... [enter name of local partner organization in particular district] ... and the local authorities to improve both the relations

between men and women, including reducing violence, but also improving the economic situation of the whole village, which are all in line with the current priorities of the government.

The interview will take approximately one hour, but if you want to keep it shorter or make it longer, that is not a problem.

Everything that is said here is completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. And, as mentioned, if you do not wish to answer a question or if you wish to end the interview at any point, that is perfectly all right.

Do you have any questions at this point?

If not, is it ok if we start with some preliminary questions?

IDI QUESTION SHEET - FEMALE PARTICIPANTS

DATE:

LOCATION:

CODE NUMBER OF INTERVIEW:

STARTING TIME:

FINISHING TIME:

AGE, BIRTH ORDER AND MARITAL STATUS:

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: THE INTERVIEW SHOULD BE AS FREE-FLOWING AS POSSIBLE. AFTER THE FIRST QUESTION OF THE LIFE HISTORY SECTION, LET THE INTERVIEWEE ANSWER AS FREELY AS POSSIBLE AND BRING IN THE OTHER QUESTIONS ONLY AS YOU SEE FIT OVER THE COURSE OF THE INTERVIEW, OR DEVELOP YOUR QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE FLOW OF THE INTERVIEW. THESE QUESTIONS ARE TO BE USED AS GUIDANCE, NOT AS A QUESTIONNAIRE.

FOR THE INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN, THE KEY OBJECTIVE IS TO GAIN INSIGHT ON EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND RESPONSES TO IT.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS: If it is ok with you, we would like you to tell us a bit about your life. Were you born in the village, or if not did you move here? If she has moved to the village: what was the reason you moved to the village? At what age did you move?

Are you single/married/divorced/widowed? Any children? If so, what is their age and where are they now? Are they married?

LIFE HISTORY: We would like you to tell us about your life so far and its different stages.

Childhood: If you don't mind, we would like to start with your education. Could you tell us about what it was like being in school? (Possible

additional questions: Did you enjoy being in school? How many years did you spend in school? Why did end your education? Who decided it? Would you have wanted to continue? Did you experience any violence in school?)

Marriage: Could you tell us how you got married? (Possible additional questions: Did you choose your husband or was he chosen for you? If so, by whom? Why did you choose him/why was he chosen for you? Did you move into your husband's family? How was that experience? What were your initial relations with your husband and in-laws like? How have they changed? Were you ever afraid of your husband or in-laws? Can you tell us about those situations? Did you feel happy/unhappy in those times?)

Motherhood (in case interviewee has had children): Could you tell us a bit about how your life as a mother has been? (Additional questions: how many children did you bear? How many sons/daughters? Were you able to decide how many children you had? Did life with your husband/in-laws change after you had children? Have you treated your sons/daughters differently?)

Married life: Could you tell us about what your life as a married woman was like? (Additional questions: How is your relationship with your husband? How is your relationship with your in-laws? How did these change over time? Why did they change? Do you work outside of the home? Does your husband outside of the home? Did he emigrate? If yes: how did that affect your life? Have you experienced any violence in your married life? Were you ever afraid of your husband or in-laws? Can you tell us about those situations? Did you feel happy/unhappy in your married life?)

If applicable – divorced/widowed life: You mentioned that you are divorced/widowed now. Can you tell us about how your life is now compared to your previous life (Additional questions: how did this affect your life in the community? Who do you get support from? Were you able to stay with your family/husband's family? Did you experience any violence in this period? Have you felt afraid?)

If applicable – experiences of the Civil War (insert this into the appropriate section of the life history): Could you tell us about how you experienced the civil war? (Additional questions: how were you able to protect yourself? Did you experience any violence in this period?)

If the interviewee relates experiences of violence at any stage of the interview, ask about responses/support mechanisms: Did you tell anyone or did anyone learn about this? When did you tell? Who? What did you/your family/peers do, what support did you get? Was this sufficient or would you have wanted other support? How did others in your family/community react when you reported it?

Additional questions: (in case issue of violence did not come up in life history)

Support mechanisms: If you have personal issues you want to talk about or are in need of support or need to make a big decision, who do you consult?

Violence (in general): What do you consider to be violence – emotional neglect, financial pressure, verbal abuse, threats, shoving, slapping, other physical abuse?

Justification of violence: Do you think violence is ever justified – between spouses, between

in-laws, between siblings, between parents and children? If so, in what kind of situations? If so, when?

DV/VAWG: Have you experienced/witnessed violence yourself? In what kind of a situation? What led to the violence? What happened afterwards?

In case interviewee does not report violence: If there are cases of violence in the household or in your family, do you think it is correct to report (talk about?) this to outsiders? If so, who should it be reported to? How would you see people who report violence? How do other people in the community view people who report violence?

This brings us to the end of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to discuss? Or do you have any questions to me? Thank you again for your time. This has been extremely useful for us.

IDI QUESTION SHEET - MALE PARTICIPANTS

DATE:

LOCATION:

CODE NUMBER OF INTERVIEW:

STARTING TIME:

FINISHING TIME:

AGE, BIRTH ORDER AND MARITAL STATUS:

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: THE INTERVIEW SHOULD BE AS FREE-FLOWING AS POSSIBLE. AFTER THE FIRST QUESTION OF THE LIFE HISTORY SECTION, LET THE INTERVIEWEE ANSWER AS FREELY AS POSSIBLE AND BRING IN THE OTHER QUESTIONS ONLY AS YOU SEE FIT OVER THE COURSE OF THE INTERVIEW, OR DEVELOP YOUR QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE FLOW OF THE INTERVIEW. THESE QUESTIONS ARE TO BE USED AS GUIDANCE, NOT AS A QUESTIONNAIRE.

FOR THE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN, THE KEY OBJECTIVE IS TO GAIN INSIGHT ON EXPERIENCES OF THEIR GENDER EXPECTATIONS AND IF THESE CONTRIBUTE TO VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS: If it is ok with you, we would like you to tell us a bit about your life. Were you born in the village, or if not did you move here? If she has moved to the village: what was the reason you moved to the village? At what age did you move?

Are you single/married/divorced/widowed? Any children? If so, what is their age and where are they now? Are they married?

LIFE HISTORY:

We would like you to tell us about your life so far and its different stages.

Childhood: If you don't mind, we would like

to start with your education. Could you tell us about what it was like being in school? (Possible additional questions: Did you enjoy being in school? How many years did you spend in school? Why did end your education? Who decided it? Would you have wanted to continue?)

Marriage: Could you tell us how you got married? (Possible additional questions: Did you choose your wife or was she chosen for you? If so, by whom? Why did you choose her/why was she chosen for you? Did she move into your family? How was that experience? What were your initial relations with your wife and in-laws like? How have they changed? Did you feel happy/unhappy about your marriage?)

Fatherhood (in case interviewee has had children): Could you tell us a bit about how your life as a father has been? (Additional questions: How many sons/daughters? Who decided on how many children you had? Did life with your wife/parents change after you had children? Have you treated your sons/daughters differently?)

Married life: Could you tell us about what your life as a married man was like? (Additional questions: How is your relationship with your wife? How did this change over time? Why did it change? Do you work outside of the home? Have you emigrated for work? If yes: how did that affect your life? Have you experienced any unhappiness/frustration/violence in your married life? How did you deal with the frustration or unhappiness?)

If applicable – divorced/widowed life: You mentioned that you are divorced/widowed now. Can you tell us about how your life is now compared to your previous life (Additional questions: how did this affect your life in the community? Are you planning to re-marry?)

If applicable – experiences of the Civil War (insert this into the appropriate section of the life history): Could you tell us about how you experienced the civil war? (Additional questions: how were you able to protect yourself/your family? Did you experience any violence in this period?)

If the interviewee relates experiences of violence at any stage of the interview, ask about responses/support mechanisms: Did you tell anyone or did anyone learn about this? When did you tell? Who? What did you/your family/peers do, what support did you get? How did others in your family/community react when you reported it?

Additional questions: (in case issue of violence did not come up in life history)

Support mechanisms: If you have personal issues you want to talk about or are in need of support or need to make a big decision, who do you consult?

Violence (in general): What do you consider to be violence – emotional neglect, financial pressure, verbal abuse, threats, shoving, slapping, other physical abuse?

Justification of violence: Do you think violence is ever justified – between spouses, between in-laws, between siblings, between parents and children? If so, in what kind of situations? If so, when?

DV/VAWG: Have you experienced/witnessed violence yourself? In what kind of a situation? What led to the violence? What happened afterwards? Did you report it?

In case interviewee does not report violence: If

there are cases of violence in the household or in your family, do you think it is correct to report (talk about?) this to outsiders? If so, who should it be reported to? How would you see people who report violence? How do other people in the community view people who report violence?

This brings us to the end of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to discuss? Or do you have any questions to me? Thank you again for your time. This has been extremely useful for us.

ANNEX 6 – SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS ON DISABILITIES FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

DISABILITY					
DFID requests that all projects use these questions in all waves of data collection to be able to analyse issues related to VAWG and disabilities					
	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE OPTIONS			
1	Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?	No - no difficulty	Yes - some difficulty	Yes - a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all
2	Do you have difficulty walking?	No - no difficulty	Yes - some difficulty	Yes - a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all
3	Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?	No - no difficulty	Yes - some difficulty	Yes - a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all
4	Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?	No - no difficulty	Yes - some difficulty	Yes - a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all
5	Do you have difficulty speaking?	No - no difficulty	Yes - some difficulty	Yes - a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all



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