

A Domestic Violence Coordinated Project - Going Beyond Victim Support

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Domestic violence is a silent crisis that happens daily and with impunity behind closed doors and within close relationships in many Indian homes. Community gender norms tacitly sanction domestic violence. The strongly held belief that marriage as a social institution should be preserved at all costs and that family honour is important forces women to remain silent on the issue and live with abuse. Unfortunately this is a shared philosophy with the criminal justice system, further victimizing the woman. 'Survivalistic corruption' (Prasanna, 1995) adds fuel to the fire.

This paper describes and analyses a coordinated (women police unit and a social agency) project, Udhayam- A PCVC Community Support Unit, based in Chennai, India. It highlights the success of an integrated response model that would enhance victim safety, reduce secondary victimization and incidence of domestic violence. The program run on an experimental basis for one year has come out to be an ideal community-based integrated response model with the police and the social and health services together to provide interventions. It paves the way for a Domestic Violence Integrated Response Program that will reduce secondary victimization and enhance victim support through inter-agency cooperation and collaboration.

In this age of bombs and terrorist threats, it will not be surprising to hear a woman say she fears to travel in a train or a plane, or holds her heart till her child returns home safely from school or work. But the fact is that for many, 'home' is where they face a regime of terror and violence at the hands of somebody close to them – somebody they should be able to trust. They fear going home, a place they should be safest. The women who suffer are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further repercussions.

Several complex and interconnected institutionalized social and cultural factors have kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence directed to them, all of them manifestations of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Factors contributing to these unequal power relations include- socio-economic factors, the family institution where power relations are enforced, fear of and control over female sexuality, belief in the inherent superiority of males, and legalisation and cultural sanctions that have traditionally denied women and children an independent legal and social status (UNICEF, 2000).

While in India international attention has focused on dowry deaths, perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of violence against women, it is only part of the problem. Not all violence within the household can be reduced to dowry demand; domestic violence is far more systematic and pervasive than previously acknowledged. The few studies available indicate that physical abuse of Indian women is quite high, ranging from 22% to 60% of women surveyed (Rao, 1996 and Mahajan, 1990). A multi-site study of 9,938 households found that 40 per cent of the women reported experiencing at least one form of physical abuse and, of these, 65 per cent reported severe physical abuse, including being kicked, hit or beaten (INCLIN, 2000). However, there has been very less research on domestic violence as it is highly sensitive and there is a strong cultural resistance in most societies to publicly acknowledge the problem (ICRW, 1998).

Cultural Context:

Domestic violence in India arises from patriarchal notions of ownership over women- sexuality, labour, reproductive rights, mobility, and level of autonomy. Deep-rooted ideas about male superiority enable men to freely exercise unlimited power over women's lives and 'effectively legitimizes' it too. Violence is thus a tool that men use constantly to control women as a result of highly initialized patriarchal conditioning which accords men the right to beat their wives and thus ostensibly perform the duty of chastising them. The unequal and hierarchical gender relations manifest itself clearly in the familial setup and are accentuated by clear demarcation of sex roles and sexual division of labor.

Violence within the home constitutes, more often than not, a 'private' affair because of the high value attached to family as an indisputably sacrosanct social institution. In fact, this belief disables rightful cognizance of the fact that more often than not, the family, in reality, is the site of and the root of unequal gender relations and oppression of women. This in fact, puts violence (which is systematically meted out to women within the family) above public scrutiny, thereby creating a public/private dichotomy with respect to violence against women.

Not surprisingly, thus, marital violence, especially woman battering goes largely unnoticed or more importantly, hushed. It has also been quite apparent for a long time now that violence against women within the family does not constitute an occasional, rare incident, but is a regular systemic and structural manifestation of social control. One of

the main causes for the non-recognition of wife battering as a serious social crime has been the fact that the phenomenon has been shrouded in myths and stereotypes which need to be debunked to enable an understanding of family violence. These range from viewing battered women as mentally disturbed or sick individuals, batterers as products of an abusive environment; and violence as a result of abuse of drug and alcohol. (Subadra)

Response to Domestic Violence in India:

The government of India has always been open to working towards ending violence against women and support women's movement to reform the law and evolve strategies to provide support and treatment services. Throughout the 1980's, the Indian society witnessed numerous struggles by women's organisation, on issues of dowry deaths, custodial rape, abductions of women, *sati*, female infanticide, sexual harassment of young girls and women in public places, trafficking and prostitution. It is important to note that there is a legal reform by the government in response to each of these issues of violence against women during the past decade (Agnes, 1996).

Both government and non-government organisations have come up with various preventive and supportive strategies that include shelter homes, counselling services, and legal aid centres. Further several Indian states have established special women police cells or all women police stations (AWPS) to aid women in reporting violence. The introduction of these AWPS, especially in Tamilnadu, has been an important response to family violence. Non-governmental organizations are a final critical entry point for women who are unable to access the police or legal services. NGO services include crisis counselling, legal assistance, temporary shelter, economic opportunities or a combination of services.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provides for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family. Under the new Act, any woman subjected to mental or physical injuries, physical abuse, criminal intimidation or force, sexual abuse (any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of woman), will be covered under domestic violence.

As per the Act, a police officer, protection officer, service provider or magistrate who receives a message of domestic violence shall inform the aggrieved person of her right to make an application for obtaining relief by way of a protection order. The Act further provides the rights for free legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and right to file a complaint under Section 498-A (Cruelty by Husband and In laws) of the Indian Penal Code, wherever relevant. The aggrieved person may be provided shelter in the home and also medical facilities, if needed.

Domestic Violence and the Criminal Justice System:

Although the government, both central and state, recognise the importance of protecting women from abuse and punishing the perpetrators of the crimes, the dilemma of whether it should be treated as a traditional crime or whether there should be emphasis on counselling and mediation prevails. Most magistrates, judges and the police adhere to traditional values that support the family as an institution and the dominance of the male party within it (UNICEF, 2000).

The criminal justice approach of arrest, prosecution and conviction with punishment is a clear condemnation of the society for the conduct of the abuser and acknowledges his personal responsibility for the activity. Though there is no research comparing the success of mediation to prosecution of domestic violence cases in India, a Minneapolis Police department 's research has shown that 19 per cent of those involved in mediation and 24 per cent of those ordered to leave their matrimonial homes repeated the assault, but only 10 per cent of those who were arrested indulged in further violence (UN, ECOSOC, 1996). It is critical that those involved in policy making in this area take into account the cultural, economic and political realities of the country. Any policy that fails to acknowledge the singular nature of these crimes and which is unaccompanied by attempts to provide the support for the victim-survivor and help for the abuser is doomed to fail (UNICEF, 2000).

Research shows that battered women are reluctant to police intervention because they believe it to be a private matter, to be resolved within the family; they do not want their husbands or fathers to be prosecuted, they fear that reporting the matter to the police will result in more violence being inflicted on them, perceptions of the incident as minor and the issue not being important for the police. The one motive for getting police help is self protection (Felson et al. 2002). Thousands of cases that throng women police units in the state even though they believe that reporting their problems to the police will do little good and harm their marital status (Natarajan, 2003)

Legislation with regard to domestic violence is a modern phenomenon (UNICEF, 2000). The first problem that arises with legislation is that if the women withdraw the case under, the men cannot be prosecuted for beating up their wives. Since the spouse is the main witness, the law cannot proceed without her support. Quasi-criminal remedies like the protection order, that bounds to keep the perpetrator away is hardly used in India.

All Women Police Units/Stations (AWPS)

Special women police stations, staffed with multi-disciplinary female teams equipped to respond to the different needs of victim-survivors, have been set up in several countries as an attempt to make police stations more accessible to women. In India, each station has social workers attached, which provide advice and support, referring women to support networks and suggesting other options. These stations are designed to provide comprehensive support to women, including social, legal, psychological, housing, health, day care services. They respond to many levels of support that a victim of domestic violence needs.

In the early 90's the Tamilnadu government decided to introduce All Women Police Units to deal with crimes against women, especially dowry disputes. It was felt that women victims would feel more comfortable to share their problems with women. A study by Natarajan (2005) in 188 AWPSs in the state showed that victims did indeed value the opportunity to confide their problems to female officers, and that intervention by these officers was helpful in reducing abuse and violence. In her previous studies, however, she has found that the officers in the AWPSs were not trained professionally to resolve disputes. They also lacked training in interviewing and counselling and instead relied on what they had learned through experience. In many units, her research found that, support from social workers and psychologists were very limited. The research further added that these problems were compounded by the complexity of the cases and an increasing workload. Many officers found it difficult to make decisions about the best way to handle the cases and they felt that they could not give the necessary attention to women petitioning for help with their problems.

In 2003 gender sensitisation training was given to all 4000 women police in the state. PCVC was responsible for training them in the issue of domestic violence and methods of communication and empathising with the victim. No follow up or research was done from the side of the training academy to analyse the impact of the training.

Among factors that perpetuate domestic violence, insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary has been listed (Heise, 1994). Debate regarding the magnitude of the problem is also clouded by the fact that domestic violence is a crime that is under-recorded and under-reported. When women file a report or seek treatment, they may have to contend with police and health care officials who have not been trained to respond adequately or to keep consistent records. On the other hand, shame, fear of reprisal, lack of information about legal rights, lack of confidence in, or fear of, the legal system, and the legal costs involved make women reluctant to report incidents of violence.

Most police, prosecutors, magistrates, judges and doctors adhere to traditional values that support the family as an institution and the dominance of the male party within it. The police are particularly well positioned to provide assistance to victim-survivors, but very often their own prejudices, lack of training, and reluctance to intervene hinder them from dealing with domestic violence.

Training of law enforcers and medical and legal professionals who come in contact with those experiencing violence is important to understand gender violence, to appreciate the trauma of those suffering and to take proper evidence for criminal proceedings. The nature of the crime of domestic violence requires the intervention of the community to assist and support victim-survivors.

Community workers play an important role in identifying violence, raising awareness about such issues and directing survivors to the correct procedures for seeking redress. Counseling serves as an alternative sentencing option especially in cases where women prefer that their partners "get help" rather than be punished.

An integrated, multidisciplinary approach with the criminal justice system and the service providers working together to gain a holistic understanding of each particular case and the needs of the individual is the best option. Giving attention to the real-life context of the battered woman, her hopelessness, dependency, restricted options, and her consequent need for empowerment, should underpin every approach. The goal is to work with her to develop her capacity to decide her own future.

Udayam-PCVC Community Support Unit

The International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC) is a non-governmental organization in Chennai, India that works to address the problems of women survivors of domestic violence and offer support services. PCVC's mission is to facilitate the process by which women with abusive partners develop self-empowerment and material independence. The profile of our client groups cuts across class lines, and their problems are manifold: physical beatings, economic and emotional manipulation, sexual violence and coercion, and acid or kerosene burns inflicted by partners or in-laws. Our goal is to provide and locate resources for women in situations of domestic violence, and to validate and respect our clients' ongoing processes of independent decision-making.

Crisis intervention or counseling includes helping the victims in expressing their thoughts and feelings about the trauma, educating them about the choices they have and helping them choose a violence free life. We recognize that men are not excluded from victimization and therefore also provide services to men who have experienced domestic and sexual violence.

Broadly the services of the organization include: 24 hour crisis line staff who provide non-judgmental support, information and referral; support groups; court advocacy including accompanying to court; emergency and interim shelter for victims; 24 hour accompaniment for support and advocacy at hospital emergency room or police station; and drop-in support center during office hours.

Initiation of an NGO-run Community Support Unit at an AWPS:

On Friday the 13th May, 2005, Amudha a central government employee was brutally stabbed by her husband, in broad daylight in Ashok Nagar. Two days later, 15th May, Saroja, a housemaid was chased on the streets of Mylapore, again in broad daylight, and thrashed by her husband. She struggled for life for 5 days and passed away at the General Hospital on 20th May, 2005. Her husband, an alcoholic, was said to have stated that he hit her everyday but didn't know that she would die this time. These are two stories of women who have been violently murdered by their partners. There are many more such instances that perhaps do not come to light.

To provide crisis support services to such victims, the organization set up a **PCVC Community Support Unit** at the **Anna Nagar Police Station** on an experimental basis for one year starting August 3rd, 2005. There are totally 34 AWPS in Chennai city. The Annanagar AWPS was set up in the year 2002. They receive an average of 10-12 petitions per day.

The key objective of the project was to add NGO services to police endeavours to reach out to domestic violence victims and help them avail remedy and relief. An orientation was given to the police personnel before the project was started. They were assured that the project personnel will not interfere with their working and only on referral by the police personnel the project counsellors will assist the victims. A press release carrying the crisis line numbers was given prior to the inaugural that covered both English and Tamil local and neighbourhood newspapers. Posters were stuck in shops, malls, clinics, police booths, and autos in the area. A co-coordinator was available at the Police Station, from 9am to 5pm to give information on support services offered by NGOs. The crisis line was a 24 hours service and the police personnel could also call the NGO to accompany them on home calls.

The project coordinator accompanied the mobile police unit to help create awareness on social issues including eve teasing, domestic violence, teenage pregnancies and violence-free, healthy and safe relationships at schools, colleges, residential flats and welfare associations. Three crisis counsellors were available to counsel the victims at the station, on police referral. The project coordinator would, on consultation with the Inspector of the police station, list out cases that would need follow up and visit the survivors at their residence. If they were not found to be in a satisfied state they were asked to report to the station again. In a few special cases, the counsellor would make regular visits and even offer counselling at home for the couple. The coordinator along with a woman police officer did a door-to-door awareness by giving an info card with the crisis numbers. The project also documented the cases and case management was done at in coordination with the police.

Evaluation:

Evaluation was done at the end of the experimental period in two ways, an external evaluator had detailed discussions about the project, its merits and demerits, with the police personnel, the NGO personnel, and petitioners, randomly chosen. An evaluation report was submitted. Secondly, a statistical evaluation was made comparing the previous year's data (cases/petitions) and the project period data.

Findings:

1. The number of petitions given to the station, between August 2004 to July 2005, was 294, while the number between August 2005 to July 2006 was 243. Counselling was given to 3.74% of the cases in the year 2004-2005 while in the project period, 59.25% of the cases were referred for counselling. While 65.30% of the cases chose to go back to their husbands in the year 2004-2005, 34.15% of the cases went back home in the project year. While 32.65% chose to separate from their husbands in the previous year, only 10.28% chose to do so in the project period. In the previous year, 3.06% came back to the police station for help a close percent of 4.52 came back for help during the project period. 27.55% follow-ups were done in the previous year; nearly 33.74% of follow-ups were done in the project period.

2. The women police personnel found the project extremely useful. The presence of a coordinator at the station, they felt, helped them offer a wide range of options to the women victims. Reference to the coordinator immediately gave the victims hope and confidence that action was taken and that the police were considering the issue seriously. Counselling was the most sought after option. They police felt that the project has bridged the gap between the NGO's support services to domestic violence victims and the women police's duty to offer protection and prevention of harassment at home.
3. The women police felt that the project in a way changed their attitude towards the issue of domestic violence and gave a better understanding of the dynamics of the problem. Rather than blaming the victim and giving her the only option to go back and try living again they have been able to provide her with more options. Linking her to the services available immediately also gave them the satisfaction that they were doing justice to the issue.
4. Further case management at an overall level, at the NGO and the police, helped both the agencies know what was happening to the abuser and the victim, especially when they were called to the station more than once.
5. The police felt it very helpful and effective to have the NGO coordinator also address the community while on mobile policing and awareness programs. The dissemination of the crisis line numbers, they felt, gave their endeavour more credibility.
6. The NGO personnel felt during follow-up that some survivors were thankful that a non-uniformed personnel visiting them was 'safer' than a uniformed police officer. They felt it prevented the neighbours or relatives at home looking at her or both of them or the family as a whole, as having 'a problem'.
7. The NGO personnel also felt that the survivors and the perpetrators hesitated in offering bribes and material gifts to the police personnel, preventing embarrassment to the police officers and challenging their integrity.
8. The women police felt that taking an NGO personnel along in case of home calls was better in several ways, like offering crisis intervention immediately, evaluating risk factors, and removing the victim if necessary-victim support and safety.
9. The women victims fearing the stigma of contacting the police did not have to avoid seeking help. They had the NGO as a 'helper' backed by the police. This helped many women come out and seek help for their problems.
10. Many victims contacted the crisis line number and asked for help requesting the police not intervene directly.
11. The counsellors said that cases that approached the station were mainly those who had problems with their in laws and husband or breach of promising to marry. Dowry was not necessarily the issue and many victims understood that the AWPS did not exist just for dowry problems but domestic abuse.
12. The cases were assessed by the police personnel based on the one incident that brought her to the station. Risk assessment at a systematic level was not done.
13. The counsellors also expressed that legal awareness about divorce, separation and victim rights was very poor or nil among the victims coming to the police station. A brief education did help them in their decision-making.
14. Although the provision of taking digital photos was given the police personnel did not feel the need for it much.
15. The project personnel were unable to insist on photos of injuries to be taken as it was not on the protocol of the police.

Implications of the Udhayam Project and other successful Coordinated Projects:

The Udhayam project on the whole,

- provided a response to police assisted referrals.
- developed a partnership with the police to enable domestic violence specialists to work with police within the All Women Police Station.
- develop a range of resources for the women victims approaching the women police station.

The project provided specialist domestic violence information and support to victims of domestic violence enabling them to stay safe while in the system and be supported through the process from the complaint stage through to prosecution. The pilot project provided an intensive support to victims who may otherwise have dropped charges. The

co-location of the NGO personnel and the police within a single unit further advanced the cooperative working relationship developed between the All Women Police and the service organization. On the whole the program has provided a mechanism for enhanced support to domestic violence victims using an integrated approach.

Effectively dealing with domestic violence requires enhanced and effective coordination and collaboration among different service systems and organizations that often do not ordinarily work together. Some examples of coordinated collaborative justice models are the San Diego Model, the Duluth Minnesota Model, Canberra Act and the Goldcoast Queensland Model.

The **San Diego** Police Department has one of the largest specialized Domestic Violence Investigation Units in the USA. The Domestic Violence Unit is part of the Family Protection Unit of the San Diego Police Department. The Domestic Violence Unit plays a crucial and pivotal role in domestic violence investigations. Operational police respond to the initial domestic violence call, conduct an investigation, arrest on probable cause, notify victim advocacy services and file a computer driven report. The case is then followed –up by a detective from the Domestic Violence Investigation Unit who then checks for prior offences and domestic violence related calls, exams the evidence (including photos, video interviews, 911 tapes and police and medical reports), and prepares the case for prosecution. An officer from the Unit may also re-interview the victim and, if needed, obtain further photos of injuries.

The case is then sent to the City Attorney Domestic Violence Unit who prosecutes all misdemeanor cases of domestic violence. Since its inception in 1986, the Domestic Violence Unit has evolved into one of the largest and most comprehensive one-stop family violence units in the nation with a staff of 11 prosecutors, 3 advocates, 3 investigators and admin staff.

The Domestic Violence Unit of the San Diego City Attorneys Office has adopted many progressive approaches to domestic violence including the following:

- Aggressively prosecute misdemeanor domestic violence cases in order to stop the violence
- Providing early intervention at the misdemeanor level in order to prevent the escalation of offenders' behavior to felony level conduct
- Shifting the focus from victim responsibility for prosecution to a focus on offender accountability
- Enhancing victim safety by safety planning and strong victim advocacy
- The development of a strong multi-disciplinary, inter-agency response to domestic violence family violence
- Promoting community awareness about domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, statutory rape and stalking cases
- Holding batterers accountable by not dropping or reducing charges at the request of victims

In 1981, **Duluth** became the first community in the US to develop a coordinated community response to domestic violence. Fifteen city, county and private agencies in Duluth adopted policies and procedures which coordinated their interventions in domestic violence assault cases. Formal agreements with agencies that deal with domestic violence have been developed including victim advocates, law enforcement officers and administrators, prosecutors, probation officers, court administrators, mental health services, policy makers and judicial officers.

The purpose of developing a coordinated community response in Duluth was to protect victims of domestic violence from further acts of abuse and to hold abusers accountable for their behavior. They have achieved this through combining legal sanctions, behavior change programs and where necessary incarceration. Victim safety is the central focus of all project development and interventions.

The key activities of the Duluth Model fall under one or more of eight activities;

1. Creating a coherent philosophical approach which centralises victim safety
2. Developing “ best practice’ policies and protocols for intervention agencies
3. Reducing fragmentation in the system’s response
4. Building monitoring and tracking into the system
5. Ensuring a supportive community infrastructure
6. Intervening directly with abusers to deter violence
7. Undoing the harm violence to women does to children
8. Evaluating the system’s response from the standpoint of the victim

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) is the coordinating agency for the project. For more than twenty years, DAIP have tracked and monitored domestic violence assault cases at the same time working with various agencies to improve their system responses from the perspective of victim safety. In 1995, DAIP embarked on a project to enhance the existing coordinated response within the community. This included additional training, new methods of risk assessment, implementing new sentencing recommendation procedures, developing a computerized information system to track and monitor domestic violence cases, and implementing extra men's non-violence programs.

The Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) is a coordinated criminal justice and community response which first began in **Canberra** in 1998.

FVIP is a partnership between government and non-government agencies and includes the Department of Justice, Australian Federal Police, ACT Magistrates Court, ACT Corrective Services, ACT Legal Aid Office, Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Relationships Australia and various women's shelters.

The principal aims are, when matters are reported to police, to improve victim safety and increase perpetrator accountability by:

- Encouraging the collection of evidence and active pursuit of charges where prima-facie evidence of the offence exists
- Providing victim support throughout the criminal justice process
- Ensuring appropriate charges are prosecuted with appropriate regard for the wishes of the victim
- Actively case tracking criminal family violence matters
- Conducting hearings in a specialized court list to fast-track family violence cases
- Introducing new sentencing option of a perpetrator education program for certain sorts of offenders.

(Keys Young 2000)

The **Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response** was developed in 1997 and has continued to develop and grow and is now considered a model of Best Practice across Australia. The rationale in developing a Gold Coast Integrated Response to Domestic Violence was that an effective multi-agency approach to domestic violence on the Gold Coast could provide coordinated, appropriate and consistent responses aimed at

- Enhancing victim's safety
- Reducing secondary victimization
- Hold abusers accountable for their violence.

There are several projects which have been developed and implemented to provide for the above including:

- Police Fax-Back
- Police Project S.A.F.E.R
- Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program
- Domestic Violence Offender Education Program

Considerable work has been undertaken on the development of clearly articulated principles, aims and protocols, both within participating agencies as well as across agencies. Agencies involved within the Integrated Response continue to work together collaborative to enhance the interventions and responses to domestic violence.

Though the above-mentioned models differ from each other, they have the core elements necessary for the establishment of a successful multi-agency approach to domestic violence.

Conclusion:

Victims of domestic violence suffer from various forms of abuse ranging from physical to emotional, sexual, financial and social abuse. Much of the violence committed in relationships, occurs on a continuum ranging from menacing phone calls, threats, physical attacks and in some cases murder. No matter what form it takes, the dynamics of abuse are the same and women are mainly the victims. Domestic violence cuts across all strata of the society, economic or social. The abuse most often occurs over a considerable length of time – usually years, and is rarely a single “unexplained” incident.

Largely, domestic violence in India continues to be considered a 'domestic' or social problem best dealt with outside the criminal justice system. Though the special law has been enacted, the legislation is yet to be adopted. The matter most often does not go beyond the home and if at all it is reported it is 'resolved' mostly within the police station. Even though 55,000 petitions were registered in the year 2004 in the 195 AWPS in the State (The Hindu, Aug 5th, 2005) the Crime Review Tamilnadu (2004) shows that only 6310 cases of crimes against women were reported in Tamilnadu under different categories.

The Udhayam Project is the first integrated response program towards domestic violence in Chennai. The project was successful in providing victim support and reducing secondary victimization besides listing resources for domestic violence victims. This pilot project validates the need for an integrated justice model. A full-fledged five year project systematically planned would no doubt lay the foundation for a successful integrated response to domestic violence model that could be replicated in other parts of India and other Asian countries. A research into successful integrated justice models, especially the Gold Coast model, which is more recent and a practical model that could be adapted to an Asian setting, can be an inspiration for a realistic project.

Responses to domestic violence in India undeniably need a change. Programs and responses at present mostly function in isolation to each other with little or no coordination between them. Building an integrated response to domestic violence takes time, energy, commitment and a vision that things can be done better, safer, more efficiently (Gold Coast, DVIR, 2005). The motivation for doing things changes from community to community. It may come from tragic events, lack of resources or lack of proper response from various agencies. Like the Gold Coast project the catalyst for change for the Chennai community were the two murders that took place within 10 days and went unnoticed. The murdered women had wanted help and reached out to the police stations.

A coordinated, appropriate and consistent response aimed at enhancing victim's safety, reducing secondary victimization and hold abusers accountable for their violence is the key for ensuring that every home is a safe home.

A multi-agency model of intervention with organizations working collaboratively and cooperatively together has the potential to not only enhance the responses to victims and their families but also maximise the effective use of resources within and across agencies (Gold Coast, DVIR, 2005).

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