

**Ten Years of
Men’s Action for Stopping Violence Against Women
(MASVAW)
– A Journey towards Gender Equitable Society**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Gender Discrimination is Deeply Entrenched in Indian Society

Indian society is characterized by deeply ingrained feudal customs and traditions with a very high level of gender based discrimination. Women and girls are not allowed to take decisions and have hardly any control on their own lives. Since boys and men are brought up in a very patriarchal fashion, they do not consider violence against girls and women to be an issue.

Not surprising, violence against women (VAW) has been a pervasive and pernicious social issue in India – and has always been largely considered as a domestic issue that is not meant to be discussed outside the home boundary. However, in the last few years the work of women's groups has increasingly brought such unfortunate incidents into open. Today's Indian society is not what it used to be decades or centuries ago. Even if the confinement of women within domestic boundaries or their always remaining under the watchful eyes of elders or male members, who assumed the role of "protectors", may have been necessary for their protection in the ancient times the gender definition needs drastic reevaluation in today's digital and high-tech society.

VAW – A Shameful Human Rights Violation

"Violence Against Women" has been described as the "*most shameful human rights violation*" by the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. What is most objectionable is the fact that in a large section of patriarchal Indian society, violence against girls and women has ceased to be an issue – it has become a fact of routine life and yet another symbol of male superiority that feeds and sustains patriarchal beliefs in the society.

The Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994 (ICPD) has also pointed out: "*Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since, in most societies, men exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal decisions regarding the size of families to policy and program decisions taken at all levels of Government.*" Accepting that there is historical inequality between the sexes, the ICPD emphasizes that the goal of gender equality cannot be achieved without active efforts to engage men.

The plight of traditional Indian women was described more comprehensively by Abhijit Das of Center for Health and Social Justice during a consultation: "*Caught in the mesh of feudal-patriarchal systems, women's bodies are often the battle-grounds for many wars – between communities and clans, over inadequate dowry settlements or even in the matter of family planning. This daily violence takes its toll in the death and maiming of women in many ways – physical, psychological and emotional.*"

Need to Work with Men and Boys

"*Since men are part of the problem, they must become part of the solution too. I am thankful to well-known feminist, Kamal Bhasin, who told me in 1997 that if you want to work on gender equality work with men.*" – **Satish Singh, MASVAW Convener**

"*Since ours is a patriarchal society, men's actions will be far more effective than women's in fight against gender violence.*" – **A MASVAW Activist**

The worsening situation in India regarding maternal mortality, the juvenile sex ratio becoming more skewed across the country, increasing incidents of rape and other forms of violence all indicate that existing women-oriented programs needed to be broadened. With patriarchy as a norm in Indian society and men dictating practically every aspect of women's lives, it is vital to start working with men.

While a number of initiatives exist in the area of women and girls' empowerment, little attention has so far been given to build partnership with boys and men to promote gender equality. Although men appear to be the perpetrators of violence against women, they merely act according to role imposed on them by the patriarchal nature of the society. Therefore, the real problem is the social constructs – adult's attitudes and their input on boys' socialization. When one carefully analyses it becomes evident that they are also a victim of the social system in ways more than one.

What makes men effective?

As a trainer I've seen that men react negatively to us (women) when we talk of VAW, but when men talk, men are forced to listen; they can't ignore their own role in violence any more. Men help the process of confronting VAW to move further. – **Bindu Singh, Gramya Sansthan and WAMA**

The rationale behind the need for a platform to address men is clearly voiced by Dr. Sanjay, a Reader in the Social Work Department of Varanasi's Kashi Vidya Peeth: "*The work done by women's organizations to help survivors of abuse is not enough as they do not manage to influence men, whose attitude towards violence really needs to change before any progress can be made.*" Therefore, the efforts to bring about gender equality, women empowerment, and eliminate violence against women would remain a dream unless men are engaged too.

Similar sentiment is echoed by MASVAW activist Rajdev Chaturvedi, head of Gramin Punarnirman Sansthan of Azamgarh city: "*In the new millennium both men and women have a vested interest in challenging the traditional gender roles of time-worn notions of masculinity that have proved dangerous to the well being of both sexes. Starting at a personal level, each individual needs to rework what it means to be a man.*"

It is with this idea that a group of development professionals in the Indian State, Uttar Pradesh, embarked on a journey to create a movement of gender equitable men, who believe in promoting gender equality and violence free relationships. This movement or campaign is called MASVAW (short for **M**en's **A**ction for **S**topping **V**iolence **A**gainst **W**omen) and it fills the space left open by most social groups working on women empowerment.

"MASVAW initiative was first of its kind in Asia which helped propagate such movements in many other countries. It also played an important role when the "Men Engage Global Alliance" was set up in 2004 at the international level." – **Satish Kumar Singh, MASVAW Convener**

1.2 What is Violence Against Women (VAW)?

"VAW is only the tip of the iceberg, underneath that exists discrimination of all kinds." – **B. K. Roy, MASVAW member**

VAW may be the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. The forms of violence can take the form of wife-beating, sexual abuse of female children, dowry related violence, rape including marital rape, traditional practices harmful to women, such as female genital mutilation, female foeticide and other methods that keep women suppressed.

It also includes non-spousal violence, sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in school, trafficking in women, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state through its

policies. It is also manifested in controlling behaviors such as restricting access to family and friends, monitoring women's movements, restricting access to resources and constant belittling, humiliation and intimidation.

A dominant part of the gender abuse takes place within the family. Since the abuser is most often a member of women's own family, the acts mostly go unchallenged and unpunished. Traditionally men are brought up to believe that they have the right to control women's behavior; and those who challenge that authority should be punished. Various cultural beliefs, norms and social institutions in our country legitimize and perpetuate violence against women.

Violence against women takes a wide spectrum of colors and shades – from verbal abuse, to mental torture, to physical assault, to sexual assault and rape. Here are some typical real-life examples of "excuses" behind which men abuse women:

- "Talking back"
- "Not obeying the husband"
- "Not having food ready on time"
- "Failing to care adequately for the home or family"
- "Questioning the husband about money or friends"
- "Going somewhere without the husband's permission"
- "Refusing him sex"
- "Expressing suspicions of infidelity"

Such justifications directly come from the gender role imposed upon men in our patriarchal society. Since the traditional definition of a 'man' defines a man as someone who wields authority, leadership and power, the fear of losing their leadership position, of being left behind in the race by girls and women, makes boys and men find ways of controlling children and women.

VAW is most common where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honor, dominance and the "ownership" of women. Masculinity, macho, machismo or its counterparts in Hindi like 'muchch' (moustache) or 'mardana' (masculine) are ideas which thrust on men the onus to be callous and uncaring, put on a swagger, act aggressively and be competitive. At the same time, these shut men out from experiencing some of the more fulfilling emotions which emerge from acts of caring and sharing.

In addition to the regular staple of domestic violence, lower caste women have to also contend with caste-based violence. Women also face cultural violence and incidents of violence by state actors. The media does cover violence against women (VAW) but largely as a sensational crime issue; additionally often media-people act as moral police, echoing community outrage over women exercising choice.

When men initially come to participate in the MASVAW programs, they often associate VAW with only wife-beating. But they soon start discovering its many subtle dimensions which play out in both – overt and covert – ways.

"I always thought that violence against women only meant beating wife or having forcible physical relation with her. But now I realize that doing anything without her consent is also violence and so I now allow her to express herself." – **A MASVAW member**

"I realized that taunting and brow-beating are also violence." – **An unmarried youth in Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh, India**

What's in It for Men?

What men gain from stopping violence against women? It makes their lives better too!

At a social level, violence against women hinders their participation and productivity in public life and undermines the economic wellbeing of societies. It lessens their contribution to social and economic development.

In addition to that they are left psychologically shattered: it destroys their self-esteem, confidence and decision-making ability. The victim women often say that the psychological abuses and degradations are far more difficult to bear compared to the physical abuse. The abuse also has a significant, though little recognized, impact on their reproductive health and sexual well-being. What makes matters worse for women is the fact that they are generally emotionally involved with and financially dependent on those who abuse them.

Do the perpetrator men remain immune from the impact of violence against women? The answer is no. Although women are the primary victim but the abuse creates a barrier which also denies men the opportunities for experiencing more fulfilling and deeper emotional relationships with the women they victimize. Therefore, VAW is unhealthy for men as well. In fact, it is bad for the whole society.

On the other hand, when men learn to treat their spouse with care, respect, sensitivity, and dignity it promotes long lasting, more fulfilling, and happier life. As a result they are less prone to depression, stress, and mental disorders. Besides, they get to spend more time with the family and kids resulting in better emotional bonding. When family members provide opportunity for sharing, they need not look outside for mental/emotional support.

1.3 What is MASVAW?

The conscience of a shared responsibility for dealing with and possibly eliminating such acts of victimization stirred into action a movement called Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW). It is a campaign, a movement – not a project or an NGO – which gives both the strength and uniqueness to it. It's a relatively new concept in India – working with **men** on violence against women. Its members are determined to bring about a change within themselves and in other men to raise their voices against the traditional patriarchal values and challenge the stereotypical notions of what it means to be a man.

The MASVAW Touch!
The gender training after coming in contact with MASVAW (through Dr Abhijit, Jashodhara, and Satish) has been the turning point of my life. – **MASVAW activist Rajdev Chaturvedy, Azamgarh**

MASVAW attempts to provide men with a space to explore a different way of "being men", and to understand how equitable gender relations can benefit both men and women. It encourages men to confront traditional attitudes regarding gender roles and exercise of male power and become agents for change in their community. It also helps men recognize the myriad forms of violence against women, accept personal responsibility, and learn non-violent ways to manage their anger and interpersonal conflict. MASVAW men operate from the principle that men, being the primary holder in patriarchy, also need to be the primary agent of change in establishing a gender just society. They promote change in male-dominated norms in institutions such as the workplace, educational institutions and Panchayats (local councils).

MASVAW men speak up for women, think about women, and work with women. Its members include youth in university and colleges, rural adolescents, school and university teachers, media persons, social activists, academicians, and

MASVAW empowers women
Due to MASVAW's support, a few women have also performed the funeral rites of their fathers. *[It is almost unthinkable in the traditional Indian society]*

local elected councilors in rural areas. It trains and supports them to make changes at a personal level, form groups to raise their voices against violence against women and gender inequality through agitations, campaigns, media reactions, public debates, discussions, workshops and seminars.

1.4 How MASVAW Evolved

MASVAW's Evolved from Sahayog

Sahayog, an NGO based in the capital town, Lucknow, of the most populous state, Uttar Pradesh in the north India, was and is the backbone of MASVAW. The MASVAW campaign evolved within Sahayog which has been promoting women empowerment in the framework of rights since its inception in 1992. Besides being the secretariat of MASVAW network, Sahayog also functions as a resource center for "Work with Men" in several states of India and other countries of South Asia. Over the last few years, Sahayog has achieved remarkable success in setting a new agenda for "Work with Men", from the local to the global level. Its contribution has been well recognized – both at local and global levels – and its work has been reviewed; for example, by Oxfam.

MASVAW and Sahayog

Sahayog was and is the backbone of MASVAW.
– Satish Kumar Singh

During the course of self-evolution in Sahayog, it was realized that real empowerment of women is possible only through gender equality and that in turn, is really meaningful only if boys and men were engaged together with girls and women. Therefore, gender equality and involvement of men and boys became the focus of attention. A little more experience of different projects brought into light an important finding: that violence against women (VAW) was an effective deterrent acting against women's participation, equality and empowerment. **Therefore, violence against women must be first addressed effectively in order to promote women's participation, gender equality, and women empowerment.**

Then in 2001, a year long campaign, called HISAAB or Hinsa Sahna Bandh (Stop Tolerating Violence – Demand Accountability), was concluded by women's groups in Uttar Pradesh. It aimed to make violence against women an issue of public concern so that the state and citizens could be made to take cognizance of the enormity of the violation of women's human rights. It emerged that violence against women was not merely a "women's issue" but a larger social issue and that men have a bigger role and responsibility towards stopping gender violence.

HISAAB - Hinsa Sehna Bandh (We Demand Accountability - Stop Tolerating Violence)

In 2001, along with other women's groups Sahayog initiated a state wide HISAAB campaign in Uttar Pradesh, questioning state's accountability on gender equality and violence against women. A series of meetings were held to bring the issue to the fore and to build a broad coalition of concerned and active men to work on gender equality. Individuals, activists and NGO workers – **all male** – participated in the forum. Participants realized that gender equality was not just a women's issue but it involves the society at large. Here it was agreed that *there was a need to direct special attention on involving men with the issue of violence against women.*

In October 2002, the consultation in the capital city Lucknow of Uttar Pradesh gave concrete shape to the realization that *men must also be actively involved in opposing violence against women both as individuals and as part of institutions.* About thirty men from 19 organizations,

working on women's empowerment participated in the consultation, of which only 2 organizations worked directly on violence against women. The consultation also tried to demystify how these organizations ensured gender equality in their own management. After the consultation, a series of workshops covering gender violence against women, sexuality and masculinity were organized.

The consultation highlighted that before involving men and boys in a movement towards gender equality, there is a need to first understand them and their perspectives. It was also important to understand the consequences of women empowerment – How do boys and men and girls and women deal with empowerment, how does it change gender relations? How do women change because of empowerment and how do men react to it? These discussions resulted in the need for all the participating organizations to work together to find a collective answer.

A follow up workshop was organized in December 2002 with 42 men. By then it was clear that personal development and self-reflection was the first key towards the desired change in the society. It was also realized that men create restrictions and societal pressures. Hence, there was a need to reduce the privileges enjoyed by boys and men, by showing them advantages of being gender equitable and help them reduce their dominance by sharing power equally with women and girls.

Birth of MASVAW

A platform was needed to raise these issues publicly and advocate them with the authorities. The need for a new identity led to the formation of a group named *Men's Association for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW)*. The word "association" in the name was seen as inappropriate by many people as it might lead to a power struggle with the women's groups. Therefore it was replaced by the word "action" and thus MASVAW is now known as *Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women*. The focus was on self-action, highlighting the need to change the self first.

Thus, the network MASVAW was launched with 49 NGO partners in Uttar Pradesh and 4 in the Uttarakhand state (before 2001, Uttarakhand was a part of undivided Uttar Pradesh state). The process of the campaign began with meeting the rural youth, students in schools and colleges, the Panchayats (local elected councils) representatives, and the owners of small and big industrial enterprises employing women.

Initially this group held trainings for men, where they realized that not all men are violent and they certainly were not born violent. But it was also true that men remained quiet and did not speak out against violence happening around them; that in a sense legitimized violence against women.

MASVAW Takes Shape

Within one year of MASVAW's inception, it was realized that the group's activities needed to go beyond training of NGOs. MASVAW needed to work directly with the target groups and stakeholders i.e. men. This meant that first MASVAW needed to find ways in which it could connect with men and then find entry points to work with them. Keeping this in mind, MASVAW's initial strategy was to work with the following men:

- Men as perpetrators, targeting their behavior with women.
- Men in peer groups, targeting their behavior with friends.
- Men in positions of authority.

To take this strategy forward, MASVAW identified youth, men in the middle and older age groups, and eventually young boys and adolescents.

Today, around 175 voluntary organizations, 9 universities, 2 degree colleges, 7 intermediate colleges, 1 technical institute, media representatives of main stream media from 11 districts and around 500 other individuals including social activists, advocates, teachers, students etc. from 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh, India are members of MASVAW. It is a unique campaign by male activists who have decided to bring about a change within themselves and in other males to remove gender injustice. It now includes youth in university and colleges, rural adolescents, school and university teachers, media people, social activists, academicians and local elected councilors in rural areas.

"Although initially MASVAW was started to stop VAW but slowly it moved towards strengthening emotional aspect of men, sensitizing them towards women's feelings, making them responsible in sexual relationships, and replacing their overbearing masculinity with an alternate concept of "being man." Hence, MASVAW's work is a human development work." – **Satish Kumar Singh**, MASVAW Convener

"Strength of the MASVAW lies in its network with civil society groups, NGOs, CBOs and some passionately involved members. The blending of rustic and pragmatic approach of Satish, Subhash's long experience and critical understanding, with Abhijit's openness and Rahul's academic potency gave MASVAW a very quick growth than expected." – **Runu Chakroborthy**, A well known Social Worker

MASVAW members are proving that even in the most patriarchal society, there are men who are non-violent and want to establish a gender equitable relationship. MASVAW provides them support to be able to take a personal and where necessary, a public stand against VAW in their society. It has created an environment of understanding and warmth where boys and men can vent their emotions.

MASVAW also attempts to change social norms around gender inequality and VAW through the "Sixteen Days of Activism" and grassroots International Women's Day celebrations, as well as innovative approaches with young men and boys in educational institutions. Youth are encouraged to debate, paint, discuss films and engage with other youth and men towards building a deeper understanding of the issues of VAW and gender inequality. MASVAW has also been mobilizing media persons who could shape public opinion, and tried to convince them that sensational reporting of crime against women needs changing in favor of gender justice.

MASVAW's beliefs and objectives are now fairly well established:

MASVAW believes...

- ...that violence against women is a larger social issue.*
- ...that domestic violence is not an issue of the family alone.*
- ...in promoting positive use of power and seeing violence in the context of power.*
- ...that it is not a competitor but a collaborator on women's issues.*
- ...in working on sexuality such as with transgender and bisexuals.*
- ...that men and boys too gain by gender equality.*

MASVAW's Objectives

- To increase the visibility of violence against women and facilitate the process of challenging set attitudes and beliefs around it.
- To develop a rights-based approach among NGOs and institutions for addressing and mainstreaming violence against women and initiating a campaign of men against it.
- To increase awareness among men about violence against women as a larger social issue.
- To motivate men to shun violence, protest against violence, support survivors and provide new role-models.

At the organizational level, what has worked for MASVAW is its informal structure, which gives it flexibility. Working at different levels, in cities and villages, with different age groups and classes, has broadened its reach. MASVAW believes in involving boys at a young age and influencing them with values of gender sensitivity and non-violence. Girls and women also take part in the campaign, helping both the sexes to learn about mutually respectful relationships. Supporting boys and men in this journey has been crucial.

Being part of global networks on working with boys and men to promote gender equality and to end violence, such as MenEngage, has given the campaign a global identity and international exposure.

MASVAW's Work is Noticed!

- MASVAW has been written as a case study in the 2006 UNESCAP report *Elimination of violence against women in Partnership with men*. Its work has also been documented in booklet titled "Re-discovering Ourselves." Local media persons have written about MASVAW and its various activities as coverage of events and campaigns, as well as part of feature stories on violence against women and the role of men and youth.
- MASVAW men and their experience provided a solid foundation for a two-year research project (2009 – 2011) of the Center for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), Delhi that was done in collaboration with Tarun Chetna Sanstha, Azad Shiksha Kendra and Purti Sansthan on gender based discrimination and violence in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
- MASVAW hosted a national symposium on men's journey towards gender justice in collaboration with a prominent Uttar Pradesh university in the holy Varanasi city – Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidya Peeth – during 16-17 Dec, 2011.
- Many women headed organizations are sending their men staff to become active with MASVAW, in order to strengthen their own work on VAW. Thus, MASVAW has emerged as a collaborator, not as a competitor, of women's groups. Its approach is not paternalistic, but is a human rights and feminist approach.
- Its training manual in English has been a big hit. It is being translated in several local languages as well as in Sinhalese.
- Its members (including the youth) were invited by Save the Children in a meeting represented by 35 nations.
- Its work has also been documented in the films

1. Children's Action to end Violence against Girls and Boys in South and Central Asia

2. **Changing the Course** – A film on men and boys’ initiatives for gender equality and stopping violence

“CHANGING THE COURSE”

The film is a visual documentation of MASVAW’s work in the India’s largest State, Uttar Pradesh. It takes you through a journey of MASVAW’s ideology, practical application of its concepts, its trials and tribulations. You will meet MASVAW members – young children, adolescent students, youth in universities, journalists, women rights activists, teachers among others, who will narrate their experiences and understanding of what is MASVAW today. The film promotes replication of its network, ideologies and beliefs, targeting NGOs, local organizations, global and regional networks and agencies. It also motivates children, youth and adults, girls, women and boys and men, people from different walks of life, to connect with the movement.

MASVAW’s Leadership is Admired

Most people who have benefited from MASVAW’s campaign are full of admiration for its leadership – for its commitment, enthusiasm, and determination to bring about change in society. In fact, members at local and grass-root level look towards the top leadership as their role model and draw inspiration from them. This sentiment is also echoed by Runu Chakroborthy who has seen MASVAW evolve from the beginning.

"I was also taken over by the Abhijit-Jashodhara pair’s engagement at the grassroots with such expanded vision of the policies, structures and systems. But it was Satish who always has reached out to me and brought me closer to MASVAW." – **Runu Chakroborthy**

1.5 MASVAW’s Tools/Processes of Change

Ice-breaking Tools of Change

Along its journey, MASVAW has been raising awareness and building capacity of men in different fields such as in academia, media, private sector, with other professionals on a wide range of topics including men and gender equality, gender based violence, violence against women, masculinity, male reproductive and sexual health, men as responsible partners for women’s reproductive and sexual health and as responsible parents and the sexual rights of young people and sexual minorities.

Being sensitive, all the above topics require use of appropriate tools targeting different age groups. Some very effective tools such as flash cards, the game of Snakes/Ladders, and an activity book for younger generation have been developed and are used in various activities. These tools serve as ice breakers, to initiate and facilitate discussion and further the understanding of the target group and stakeholders on specific issues.

The games in the program were designed in a way that they reduce gender stereotypes prevailing in the region and are used to facilitate interaction among the participants on gender related perceptions and behaviors.

Processes/Interventions of Change

If games and activities are important tools to create and sustain interest of the participants and audience, **workshops are the primary catalysts of change**. They set into motion the correct understanding of our highly gender-unjust society resulting and how it has evolved

from the patriarchal mindset that exists inside every man. Workshops provide fresh angle and the correct perspective to view what goes on inside a man's mind and in his surrounding social atmosphere. Discussing issues in peer groups and sharing personal observations and actions further reassure and support the participants.

Researcher Emily M. Maosa (of University of Liverpool, UK) who studied behavior change of MASVAW men found workshops to be the most effective intervention. She noted: "*The interventions of MASVAW that have helped the men to change in their behavior which were most cited by the respondents were workshops. The workshops helped the men to understand about women's rights and reach out to other men.*"

Other tools of change such as rallies, seminars, and meetings, support MASVAW's work to organize men against violence and gender inequality by creating right social atmosphere and also generate awareness for public accountability to address VAW. MASVAW groups provide a safe and supporting environment to men to vent their feelings and resolve conflicts and confusions. MASVAW also trains facilitators who support men in freely discussing their personal issues.

1.6 How MASVAW Brings About Change

Playing on the Minds of Men

Getting men to think about women sounds easy, but it is not. Having them talk sense about women is even tougher. Ask Ravi. At Vishayi village in Uttar Pradesh's Barabanki district he stands confronting a circle of eyes. Only men. Yet it's the absent women who are the overwhelming presence.

Ravi begins by introducing the participants to each other. The men are small traders, cultivators, young students, drawn from Vishayi and other surrounding villages. They are here in their capacity as husband, father, brother, in-law. Ravi picks two men from the group. Each is given a task to complete, such as making a drawing or putting together a puzzle. One can go about it independently. The second must work only on instructions given by others, yet he is not allowed to speak a word and must remain silent all the time.

The first participant quickly finishes his assignment, while the other mute participant is confused and frustrated by the instructions on which he must depend.

For the gathered men this is the first taste: of what it can mean to be a woman. The games continue at this workshop for men in Barabanki, conducted by Ravi from the network MASVAW. The aim is to make men understand how domination and powerlessness affects decision-making abilities and self-esteem of women.

In the second game, a line is drawn on the floor. Two men stand behind it, one of them is pretending to be a woman. It's like a game of snakes and ladders. With Ravi reading out from flash-cards, the participants take ONE step-forward when positive things happen to them, and ONE step-backward when it's negative.

Ravi calls out: 'Celebrations! A boy is born,' followed by 'Gloom. It's a girl.' And so on. Leading them through the game of life – all the way from schooling for boys and girls to the meals they eat, from going out of home and meeting people to marriage and caring for the sick and elderly. Gradually the "man" moves ahead, leaving behind the "woman" who is clearly slowed down by domestic responsibilities, violence and discrimination.

A silence descends on the group as the 'man' easily outpaces the 'woman' to reach the 'Finish' line. The members look thoughtful, uncomfortable. Now is the time to sow seeds in their minds – to challenge mental stereotypes and set attitudes.

A participant who has been coming regularly for such workshops is 42-year old Dinesh Kumar Maurya. He tells the gathered newcomers that at first he walked out of the program following differences during discussions on the role of men and women at home. Initially he saw no reason why he should help out with domestic work, which he considered his wife's work. Gradually, he says, his attitude changed. When he tells the gathering that now he has started chopping vegetables at home and bathing children to get them ready for school in the morning, he faces stiff resistance.

One member says, *"If we put our wives on such a high pedestal it will go straight to their heads. They will refuse to do the housework."* Others fear they will be called "Joroo ka ghulam" (wife's servant), if they are seen carrying out such lowly tasks. These views are countered by 26-year old Babulal Bharati, who says *"it is better to do the right thing and have a wife who is happy and not tired all the time, rather than blindly follow social norms."*

Many of the men say it is the wife's duty to serve her husband, particularly when she does not "work" outside like her man. When asked, the husbands say they do not consider the heavy household work to be "work" in the true sense. Drawing out such prejudices and countering them with alternate suggestions, the MASVAW members feel it frequently takes more than three to four meetings with a group for attitudes to start shifting somewhat.

Since the MASVAW activities started in Vishayi in partnership with the local NGO Vigyan Foundation, villagers say the awareness generated has had its effect. Earlier around a dozen cases of bride-burning were reported from here each year; this heinous crime has come down to just one or two cases a year.

In fact, men themselves are asked what the punishment should be for such crimes. Hanging to death, was the unanimous answer to bride burning. The suggested punishments for incidents like eve teasing and molestation included various forms of ostracism by the village, such as being excluded from village meetings and hookah-chillum sessions.

The Process of Change Begins!

(a) Ideological Change

At the outset of the process, often the deeply ingrained gendered mindset is jolted as can be seen from the following comments:

"I was shocked when the trainers talked about joining wife in the kitchen." – **A married youth in Pratapgarh**

"When I heard MASVAW men for the first time, I thought they are talking nonsense." – **An unmarried young man from Jaunpur**

But as the gender justice message begins to sink, men wonder as to how any change is really possible, but acknowledge the presence of VAW as well as its seriousness:

"How can we change these (patriarchal system), these have been practiced for so long since the days of our four fathers.... After attending the training I realized that these things happen in our families in daily life but we never pay attention." – **A married man, Pratapgarh**

"These are serious issues." – **26 year old unmarried PhD scholar, Jaunpur**

Many begin to reflect on their own actions too and realize their faulty behavior. For instance,

"Brow beating and taunting are also kind of violence." – **A youth from Jaunpur**

After discussions on sex and sexuality many married man also start to see the component of violence in forced sex or sex done without considering the partner's desire. And as the association with MASVAW's programs goes ahead, an overall sense of responsibility about one's behavior germinates.

"The most important change I find in myself after involving with the program is an increased sense of responsibility. Earlier I used to ask wife and others for every single work. I used to throw my copies anywhere in the room after returning home from tuition and ask them to find it on the next day. I used to scold them when they didn't get it quickly. I have reduced my anger to a great extent and don't scold any one at home now. I have dealt with the tendency to 'always establish my own point without considering what others are thinking.'" – A Married man, Pratapgarh

The change in the ideology also inspires them to look back into the values and behaviors they have been practicing, and re-think the gender roles at home, various forms of violence in the society, ideas of real man etc. Many of them remember their "mistaken notion" of 'women's works' and realized the fact that they were overburdening their mothers and other women and girls in the family. They now discover happiness in the time spent at home and helping the women folks in their domestic chores. It leads them to discover a new meaning of being a "real man" – one who respects everyone and treats every one with care and concern.

(b) Behavioral Change

Men start doing their own work and shift away from the habit of depending on women folks. They also begin helping women of the house in domestic chores like fetching water, washing clothes, cleaning, cooking etc. Consulting wives, mothers or sisters and not acting unilaterally as earlier is a healthy change admired by women. Anger management also becomes an important area of change for many men.

"If I can't control my anger I just leave the place." – **A youth from Jaunpur**

Men also report about their abstinence from violence and other discriminatory behavior in the family and among peers. Young men and boys are often found arguing with peers on respecting girls and stopping eve-teasing, although they themselves might have been indulging in eve-teasing earlier.

The tendency of "wasting time with friends" gets replaced with a preference for "spending more time at home" is another commonly behavior change. Many also report a feeling of happiness over ones' changing behavior. The gains of the change were seen in aspects of family life such as a happier relationship with family members. (*"There is less tension between me and my wife."*)

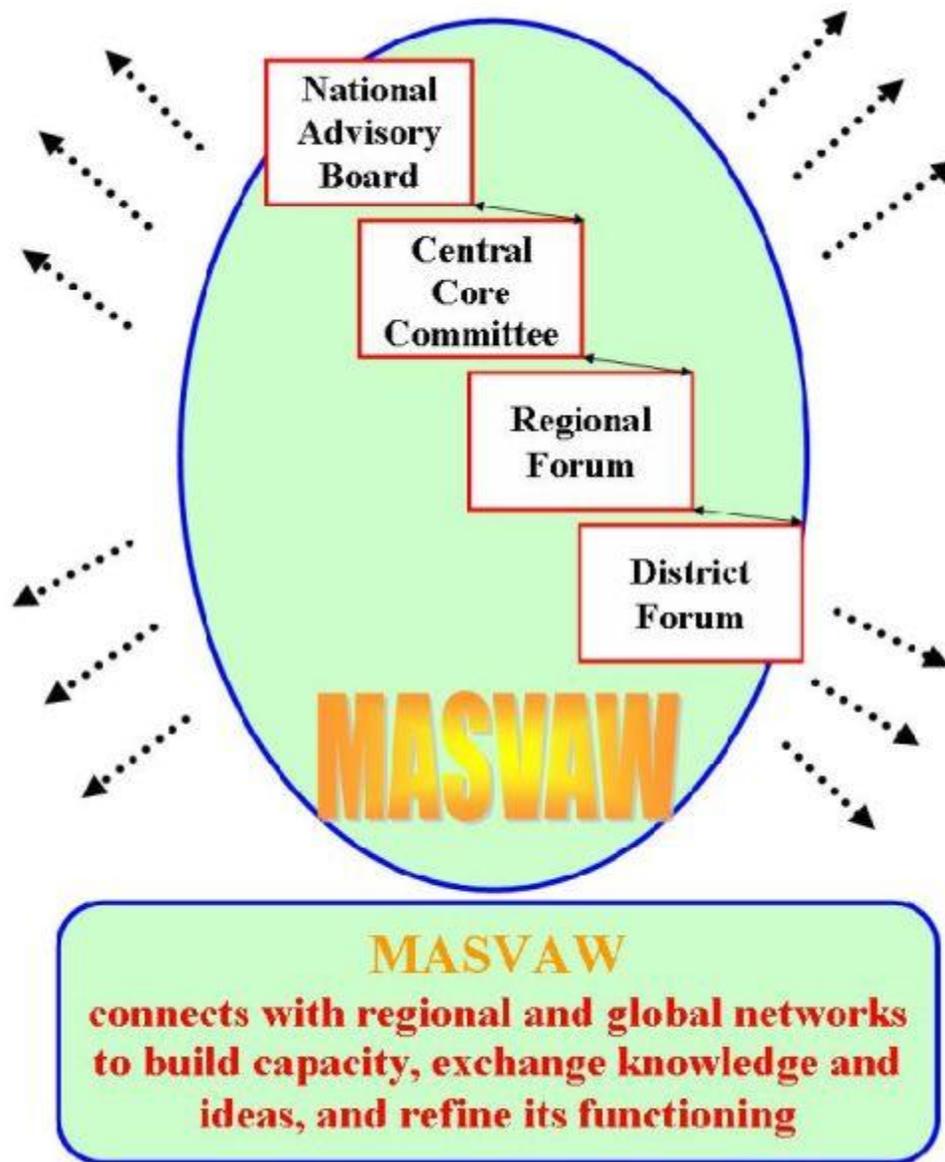
"A thirty two year old teacher from Pratapgarh used to think that being a teacher he knew everything and used to scold everybody for their mistakes. He used to always go by the social norms and thought that it's a women's responsibility to look after men in the family. However, MASVAW's program has made him realize that it was a mistake on his part to think in this way. He has become gentle in his talks with wife and siblings and participates in household tasks."

– Process Report (2009 – 2011): **Supporting Men’s Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women in Uttar Pradesh**, A project supported through UN Trust Fund

1.7 The Structure of MASVAW

MASVAW members are chosen based on their commitment to the issue, demonstration of application of MASVAW’s value in their practical life, and active participation and facilitation of MASVAW’s activities. MASVAW supports and encourages its staff and members and their spouses to apply its ideology in their day-to-day life. Peer vigilance is used to apply this concept. Therefore, membership is by reference only. However, MASVAW does encourage affiliates, who are spread across villages and cities of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The unanimous decision of local MASVAW groups seems to be against becoming a funded organization, or to make MASVAW into a project of some particular NGO/NGOs. MASVAW units want the organization to become a “Jan Andolan” or a sustained campaign



District Forums

The District Forums bring together members and associates of MASVAW in any one district to collaborate and support each other. Incidents of violence against women often have strong local political links preventing such cases from being officially registered. District forums provide a platform for collective fact-finding, bringing pressure to bear on the district administration, interacting with the media for positive coverage and so on. The district forums regularly scan media reports to identify and act upon cases of violence against women.

Regional Forums

The members of different districts come together at the Regional Forums. In Uttar Pradesh there are six regions, namely, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Central and Western Region, Lucknow, Banda and Jhansi. In each region there are 5-7 districts; Uttarakhand forms one region in

itself. The purpose of the regional forum is to facilitate support and cooperation at the regional level in case of common issues, such as during the Sati campaign in the Banda region.

Central Core Committee

The Central Core Committee consists of one MASVAW member from each district in addition to the Secretariat. The committee meets twice a year for planning and reviewing. In 2006, the committee was set up with the purpose of decentralizing day-to-day decision making.

National Advisory Board

A National Advisory Board of 15 people exists at the top of the institutional structure, comprising of senior women and men including lawyers, development professionals and female activists. The board meets once a year to review the campaign and aid perspective building. In particular, the board provides conceptual clarity on working with boys and men and provides strategic direction to this work. For instance, with the advice of the board, in 2006, MASVAW focused its attention to work with boys and men on their issues.

2. What makes MASVAW Effective?

"It was the intensities in the passion for the gender justice I felt in some of the core (MASVAW) members I knew from my earlier days of activism. To name them one name that first comes to my mind is Rahul whom I knew from the days when we were spending a lot of time on the streets of Delhi and harboring a lot of dreams in our young heart to be able to make this world better and sensitive." – **Runu Chakroborthy**, A well known Social Worker

MASVAW puts "Men" at the center of attention. It considers it important to address what goes on inside men's minds – their thinking process, beliefs, ignorance, dogmas, misconceptions, and so on. Having a set of correct attitudes towards women and right understanding of women as human beings is what makes a "MASVAW man" who then becomes the harbinger of change in the society. Therefore, the activities revolve bringing about achieving these changes in men.

Why MASVAW Men Inspire

There is no difference between MASVAW men's words and actions – they first do and then talk. I also should be like them – implement first on me and then talk. – **A new member, on how MASVAW men inspire others.**

By putting "men" in the center, MASVAW operates directly where the source of VAW lies. For most women's groups working on women empowerment VAW is just a peripheral issue and they rarely focus on changing men's intrinsic behavior. MASVAW, on the other hand, does not see it as only a "women's issue," but views it as resulting from men's behavior pattern that has a social context. Therefore, it not only provides support to the victim but also works with men, the perpetrators of violence, to make them understand their own-selves better and how their wrong conceptions and patriarchal tendencies lead them to inflict violence on women, almost instinctly.

The MASVAW campaign aims at providing men with different ways of expressing masculinity, increasing their awareness of different forms of VAW and motivating them to shun violence, protest against violence, support survivors and provide new role models. The network also works with men to promote responsible partnership between the married couples to improve women's reproductive health and rights.

2.1 Sensitizing, Educating, and Supporting Men

"Initially I thought I would only work with others. I didn't think I wanted to change myself but later realized if I don't make change within myself first there's no way I can bring change in others." – **A MASVAW activist**

Emotional Support

An important component of MASVAW is the attention it pays to men's issues. While most groups focus on providing support services for women, men rarely get assistance in the form of care and counseling and they hardly have access to accurate relevant information. MASVAW provides a safe space for the boys and men to express their emotions. It allows them to discuss their problems openly which then leads them to examine wider social issues, such as the changing roles of men and women. The simple exercise of communicating with men often led to an improvement in their behavior.

The importance of looking after emotional needs of men is most emphatically outlined at a MASVAW discussion in Gorakhpur, organized by the Saraswati Devi Shiksha Samiti Inter College, where the participants decided to set up a 'Crying Club' for men, where they can cry or discuss emotional issues with other men the way women do, free of social pressures and without the fear of being laughed at.

Educating Men on Men's Reproductive Health

MASVAW also discovered that men hold a lot of myths and misconceptions about their own sexual health. Their fears and concerns deeply affect their behavior with their partners. Ignoring men's needs for reproductive health information and services was seen as having a detrimental effect on women. Unless men are also educated about the need, for instance, to practice safe sex and prevent unwanted pregnancies, healthcare services and related information to his partner may not be effective in any meaningful way. If men refuse to cooperate in changing their sexual behavior, women's health would continue to be jeopardized.

Discussions reveal that men's own reproductive health needs are rarely addressed by anyone. Therefore, education about condom-use and encouragement to undergo vasectomy, for instance, are topics sometimes taken up at the men-only workshops. Men are encouraged to take the responsibility for safe sex, rather than putting the onus on the women. They are also told to seek immediate and effective treatment for infections like STD and avoid passing it on to their wives.

Educating Men on Women's Reproductive Health

Another important aspect has been the focus on women's reproductive health system men's workshops system, about which they apparently knew very little. For instance, their understanding of menstruation is often very sketchy. How educating men on this vital area helps, is explained by MASVAW's convener Satish Singh: *"Exploring men's knowledge, attitudes and behavior in the areas of sexuality and reproduction and the manner in which they deal with sexual relationships, all contribute in finding ways for couples to negotiate safety and satisfaction in their sexual relationship."*

Help Remove Ignorance and Cultural Beliefs

Men sometimes express complete ignorance of the implications of some of the cultural beliefs and practices they enforce. In some cases they reveal they have blindly followed social expectations, enacting certain roles because they know of none other. With the help of

MASVAW initiated discussions, men also recognize the psychological stress they take on themselves by being unable to publicly express the "gentler emotions". For instance they are unable to express concern for their woman partner, as it would be taken as a sign of weakness. They also feel compelled to stay away from 'matters of the woman's domain' because of family and peer-pressure. In fact, not being expected or permitted to participate in pregnancy, child-birth or post-partum care can be difficult for their own emotional needs.

The core idea is for men to stop discrimination and rights violation against women, and adopt new supportive roles, responsibilities and behavior. To promote this MASVAW focuses on the formation of an "alternate" male identity, emphasizing its effect in the exercise of power in men-women relations, the dynamics of a couple's negotiation and decision-making, strategies for resolving disagreement and how men should relate to women's reproductive health issues.

2.2. Encouraging Men to Take Social Action

Apart from gender sensitization training to help men bring about personal changes in their lives, MASVAW has also built a cadre of committed men's groups in towns and villages who actively follow-up cases of crimes against women and make efforts to get justice for victims.

Sanjay Pandey, head of the Chandrakanta Gram Udyog Seva Sansthan, a MASVAW partner in Gorakhpur, for instance, is involved in helping out rape victims. A recently concluded successful intervention by his team was the case of a poor six-year old Dalit girl who was sexually assaulted by her maternal uncle. When the medical examination took place the doctor insisted the girl's wounds were due to an external injury. Following an intervention by the MASVAW team, the doctor re-examined the girl and acknowledged that it was indeed a case of rape. The team collected money from the public to fight her case and stood by the girl and her mother till the rapist was put behind bars. MASVAW is also involved in giving help to a woman in Gorakhpur whose arm and leg were amputated following the torture she underwent for resisting her father-in-law's advances. Money is being raised for her medical treatment and the fitting of prosthetics, and support provided in dealing with lawyers and the police.

Pandey says, *"In one year of our activities we have made a lot of progress. People now know that whenever they are in any kind of trouble and need help, they can rely on the MASVAW network to support them."* The NGO is now trying to set up youth organizations in the Panchayats (councils) of villages neighboring Gorakhpur. The aim is to motivate youth to take up cudgels against child marriage, dowry-harassment and domestic violence in their villages.

An unmarried young man from Jaunpur feels highly sensitized on women VAW and says, *"Whenever we hear about any domestic violence case, we intervene without thinking who the victim is."*

Santosh Kushwaha of Banda is not only highly satisfied with the positive changes in relationship with wife and other family members but has inspired others too. For instance, he encouraged the principal of a local inter college to change his abusive behavior towards women. Likewise a rich man who had strained relationship with wife and was staying away from her began relating to her in a positive way. Another success story that he related is from Late Kamta Prasad Shastri Mahavidyalay in Badausa town of Banda district in Uttar Pradesh where, due to MASVAW groups intervention, the post of vice president got reserved for ladies only.

Rajdev Chaturvedy of Azamgarh narrated the following story of transformation in the life a woman from affluent background, in a telephonic interview.

A postgraduate woman was working as a teacher in a private institute of her father-in-law where her husband was the principal. Despite the strong educational background of the family she was a victim of gender violence at the hand of her husband and in-laws. She was contemplating suicide when she got hold of a pamphlet distributed during a MASVAW campaign. [Interestingly, the (Walk-on-Foot) campaign was earlier started from her house!!] She got in touch with the group and narrated her sorry situation.

When some group members contacted the family her husband and father-in-law first became furious and then concerned about family reputation in the society. While Rajdev never met the woman nor contacted any male member of the family but soon things got sorted out in the family. Now the woman feels highly grateful to MASVAW members, particularly Rajdev, that their intervention saved her life. Rajdev, however, gives credit to the woman for the courage to speak out openly against the violence which created a social pressure that resulted in behavior change of the male members of her family.

In a rape case in Pratapgarh, the victim was not making any complain to the police because of fears of defamation. The youth group intervened and talked to the girl. They talked to some important local people and lodged a complaint. The culprits were taken into custody. The group then tried to help the women get government benefits meant for single women. In another case of rape of a widow in Fatehpur, the youth group intervened and supported her in lodging complaint.

Here are some more examples of how MASVAW men take social actions:

- When women were not given adequate and timely payment for their MGNREGA works, men's groups in some villages of Pratapgarh intervened. The youth group in Redigarapur village intervened in a similar situation and complained to concerned authorities. They persistently followed up until the panchayat (local council) leader was finally compelled to pay the wages properly.
- In Aurahi village, some boys from other villages used to tease girls in the village *mela* organized every year. The Aurahi youth group, along with some other adults, intervened in the situation and tried to persuade the teasers. But when the boys didn't listen they finally lodged a police complaint.
- Youth groups in Pratapgarh facilitated admission of children in school – they convinced authorities to exempt fees of some poor girls and encouraged some parents to send their girls to school. Youth groups in some villages educated widows and other single women about various government schemes designed for their benefits. Some even contacted Panchayat and other officials and ensured that the needy women get the benefits of widow pension or old age pension schemes.
- A young teacher from Pratapgarh advocated and arranged for girls' toilet in his school as he felt that the girls were facing problems in absence of a toilet.
- Another youth from Jaunpur stood against relatives when a widow was not allowed to enter in the kitchen in a marriage ceremony.
- Susheel Yadav from Jaunpur went against his family when he failed to persuade the family to allow his sister for higher education. He took his sister to the city and arranged for her admission in a degree college. Then he got her a bicycle and trained her to ride it. He has also helped this sister and some other community women to form a group and support other girls who want to study.

Bicycle rallies by men in Azamgarh on Women's Day and media campaign and street plays in Gorakhpur have been organized in support of women's issues. In the village of Birsapur Khurd in Pratapgarh district, a youth club set up by MASVAW successfully prevented setting up of a liquor shop near a primary school.

In several towns MASVAW members have sensitized existing citizen's groups and local vigilance groups on the issue of violence. Professionals such as doctors and lawyers have been told to bring to notice incidents of violence against women that they come across in the course of their practice, and shopkeepers and businessmen around crowded places like railway stations have been asked to report cases of violence. Medical shop owners in Gorakhpur have been motivated by MASVAW members not to sell expired or banned women's contraceptives.

3. Peeping Inside MASVAW

"The first and foremost message I gathered from MASVAW is that keeping a balance between a people's movement and institutionalized structures is a great challenge. I learnt that mixing the two messes up both. The other messages I received are that men also have equal urge and interest in the empowerment of women. But it is like a walk on the double-edged sword for those who are sincere and integrated." – **Runu Chakroborthy**, A well known Social Worker

MASVAW doesn't want to work with men, only as a pressure group that is protectionist towards women. It feels that gender cannot be challenged through a patronizing attitude, thus, it is also working with men as intrinsic partners in elimination VAW. It wants to work with various groups of men on beliefs and attitudes, either through training or through action.

Neither Funded, Nor an NGO!

"...I learn a lesson movements cannot be built on funded initiatives. Rahul's session on unfolding power and understand various dynamics of it in the gender relations in one of this interaction was a great learning. My discomforts with the straight jacketed notion and definition of women's empowerment could find some reasoning. Satish's session on how Patriarchy operates through various mechanisms of punishment and reward gave a deeper understanding on the same. All these learning and messages I gathered has been used in all my trainings and also understanding my own social relations." – **Runu Chakroborthy**

Establishing itself in the state of Uttar Pradesh has been no mean task for MASVAW. It has persuaded men to take responsibility for violence against women and therefore to take an active and public stand against it. It has also encouraged its members to question their own double standards and to re-define their masculinity. MASVAW has tried to get together men from women's groups, from male headed organizations, from dalit and tribal rights groups and from health and development groups. One of the first critiques of MASVAW was that men would start cornering funds for VAW. However, MASVAW is neither funded, nor is an NGO. It is not in competition with women's groups, but what it does is to play a critical supportive role for women's groups that work on VAW.

There is no membership fee for MASVAW, but there is subscription for its newspaper "Lok Abhyuday". The subscription money goes into a separate MASVAW account in Sahayog's bank and is used to pay for editing, printing and postage. MASVAW funds are also generated by undertaking global consultancy, Transparency is maintained about this fund raised with local conveners at the district level. Funds for district level activities are raised locally; the local groups offer hospitality, organize press conferences, pay for meals, petrol and sometimes even raise money for case work and fact finding. Funds for state level activities or planning are not

generated locally. This non funded structure is appreciated by all MASVAW members. According to them, those who were expecting money from outside left MASVAW, allowing the others to evolve MASVAW into a campaign mode.

Rural Membership

The membership of MASVAW is mainly rural. University student members mainly belong to the rural lower middle class. Organizational membership outnumbers individual membership in rural areas, but the overall focus of MASVAW has been to reach out to rural areas. In the earlier days, efforts were made to recruit Panchayat (local council) representatives since MASVAW had hoped that they would get active at the central secretariat level, but not too many joined MASVAW. One of the reasons was that they saw women's issues as dangerous for their own political position and were threatened when local MASVAW units questioned them about using their wives' position in PRI institutions for political and economic gains.

In Support of Women's Groups

Reaching out to NGOs has not been MASVAW's mandate. It believes that NGOs can become a catalyst, but cannot bring about social change by themselves. Male headed NGOs – that work on women's issues such as livelihoods or SHGs but not on VAW – have often been hostile towards MASVAW. It has worked with women's groups wherever possible and has always asserted that they would like to work as a support group to women's organizations. They have been especially close to autonomous women's groups. MASVAW has been one of the founder members of "Humsafar" which is a strong case work supporter from a feminist perspective.

MASVAW has been active in the "Jago Nagrik Manch" of 2005, a Lucknow based campaign of many groups to protest against murders of women. Through this campaign, youth participants put pressure on the police to take cognizance of a suicide that took place after eve-teasing (the FIR was not being lodged as the suicide occurred at home), but an arrest – without bail for 6 months – was made imminent. Similarly, MASVAW demonstrated its broad understanding of violence through protests against the Nithari massacre of children and by protesting against the Allahabad Madrassa gang rape and the sexual harassment cases in Balliya and the Benaras Hindu University.

"Personal is Political!"

MASVAW is working hard within universities to create an environment against VAW and in the belief that the situation can change. They have demonstrated that one single FIR has a snowballing effect on the state machinery, and in shaking it into action. They have also reiterated the feminist adage that "the personal is the political" by demonstrating to its members the fact that so many cases of VAW were being unearthed. This created the conviction among the local units that VAW was not an individual, personal or isolated event, but that it had to be taken up as a campaign. This understanding also led groups to demand services such as counseling centers and shelters at the district level.

Collective Functioning

The functioning of MASVAW is collective; one of the four coordinators is contacted when an initiative is undertaken by any member (usually the convener) at the district level to decide whether that program should go under MASVAW identity. When immediate action is required, such as services being provided to victim / survivor, holding a press conference on this issue, putting forth demands to the DSP, the local teams can go ahead even before consulting the central secretariat. Whenever consensus is not reached, the MASVAW banner is not used, but

members can carry forward the issue at the level of the individual or through their NGOs / organizations.

4. MASVAW's Operating Grounds

Although the focus of a MASVAW man is primarily himself, but when he begins to understand his own issues connected with women and girls, he can work it out in the society. It helps create a conducive atmosphere where violence against any woman or girl does not find support and they get more free space to operate.

4.1 Universities

The universities were chosen as an arena of work so that the youth and peers could be easily targeted. Universities are also a place where young girls often complained of harassment. MASVAW's first activities began in 2003 in the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidya Peeth (MGKVP) University in the holy city, Varanasi. The 83-year old MGKVP is also an institution split along gender lines. Professor Sanjay Singh, who was instrumental in bringing MASVAW on the campus, defines the campaign's aim: *"The aim of the campaign is to bring about male students' concepts of masculinity and its effect on women students."*

Before MASVAW's campaign, the anti--sexual harassment committee of the university was merely a paper tiger. Girls feared to move about the campus without escorts since misbehavior and molestation by boys dogged them constantly; the plight of the female staff was also not much better.

"Living in fear of severe eve-teasing everyday, we could not even lift our eyes from the ground, let alone raise our heads. Boys would tread on our dupattas (scarf) and then jeeringly ask why we are sweeping the floor. They would write dirty comments on the blackboards and in corridors, and try to grope us on every occasion. We could never dream of wearing anything other than traditional clothes on campus." – **A 23-year old Archana Yadav of M.A Social Work Final Year.**

Male mindset of both teachers and students can be best gauged from the remarks of a lecturer: *"There are biological differences between girls and boys, because of which girls need to dress 'properly'. Girls are not 'seedha' (naïve), they dress up provocatively to attract boys."*

However, through various measures described below, MASVAW's campaign left a significant impact on social atmosphere of the campus which can be seen in the observation such as these:

"We have to guard against the traditional definition of masculinity which implies that if you are a man you can dominate and subjugate people. We must redefine masculinity on the campus to refer to a sensitive man who respects women instead of trying to denigrate them." – **Mrityunjay Kumar Rai, a 24 year old student of MA sociology.**

"Earlier it was considered scandalous if boys and girls spoke openly to each other. Now it is considered completely normal and encouraged." – **Priyanka Jaiswal, a student of M.A Social Work.**

"MASVAW campaign deconstructed the concept of gendered spaces within the university as female students accessed Student's Union office for the first time in 2005. Consequently, a

number of changes were observed among both male and female students. A relationship based on mutual respect was developed among them despite of strict gender segregation practices still followed by some professors. Now male students could visualize their role as perpetrator in the cycle of violence against women.

"Students became vocal on the issue of violence against female students and some of them gave written complaints to me. These were placed before the university authority and some of the accused were punished. Many students who participated in this campaign actively are now working with many feminist and rights based organizations." – **Dr Snajay Singh, local convener of MASVAW at MGKVP, Varanasi**

Building Relationships

As a first step, MASVAW built a relationship with the faculty of the Masters of Social Work Department, raising the issues of gender equality and violence against women through them in the campus. With the help of the teachers, workshops and numerous informal sessions were organized with boys and girls at the university, focusing on issues of eve teasing.

Involving both Young Men and Young Women

In most discussions, students raised personal issues, leading to confrontations between boys and girls. The boys refused to acknowledge any eve teasing in the campus. This often led to heated debates between the girls and boys. In the end, the sessions highlighted the negative impact of eve teasing on girls. Over a period of time, it was seen that the aggression in the sessions reduced, as the interaction between the girls and boys increased. Slowly, the students who showed interest were encouraged to become volunteers of MASVAW, who took forward the campaign's activities in the campus. Later, young people also became involved in casework, providing support to survivors, supporting sexual harassment committees in their institutions and so on.

"I come from a middle class Muslim family. My first reaction when I heard of MASVAW was that it means nothing in a patriarchal society. I didn't have much understanding of the issues MASVAW talked about. I didn't feel that men were responsible. But as I had more interactions with some of the faculty members involved in the campaign, things begun to change.

I remember when we were discussing the issue of rape, I said, if women do not want it, then men can't rape. I was explained how wrong I was and that rape cases are linked to aggression and frustration in men. That caught my curiosity and I began to take an active part in MASVAW's activities in the campus. Even now I don't have clarity on some issues, for instance, I still believe that girls should dress conservatively – I discuss this issue openly in my group to understand another viewpoint. Today if some of my friends, abuse and eve tease girls, I try to reason out with them. I know they ridicule me. I also know that we can't change things immediately, but we can lessen it in the short run. At home, I feel scared to raise these issues with my father, but I try to engage my brothers and cousins in this work."

- A 26-year-old male student at MGKVP University

Building Constituency

At a later stage, the Department of Fine Arts was also influenced to take part in the campaign. Today the students take part in poster making competitions on issues of gender and violence, which helps them to start thinking of the issue as a social problem. The posters created as a result of the competition, are useful resource for MASVAW. Students also organize screening of films that raise these issues. These are often followed by discussions and debates with the audience.

The campaign has encouraged PhDs on issues of masculinities. This is an impact, a spin off of MASVAW's work in the campus. At present, two girls and three boys are doing their thesis in areas such as gender socialization process, violence against women, MASVAW, concept of masculinity in Eastern UP, and HIV/AIDS and masculinities. A long term effect of the campaign is inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum; for example, "Gender and Society" is a major subject in the MSW syllabus.

Involving Men with Power

MASVAW realizes that it needs to work with the system, involving all superiors and power heads in the university, if it wants to sustain its campaign in the campus. The heads of different departments and men holding power in various offices in the university are always invited to be part of all the activities. As a result of these efforts, MASVAW's work has been endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctor's board of MGKVP, which helps MASVAW create a stronger base in the University.

However, the relationship with the teachers has not always been favorable. MASVAW's campaigners and believers have often faced threats from other faculty members.

"These issues are always ridiculed. It has taken a lot of sustained effort to get students and teachers on board. " – **Faculty KVP University, member of MASVAW**

Replicating the Work

In Lucknow University, MASVAW is working with Departments of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work. A close link has been established with the male teachers there. As a result, the Department of Social Work in Lucknow sent a student to work as an intern with MASVAW. The intern helped mobilize a male youth group at the university, which now carries forward MASVAW's ideology.

In 2004, this work was also replicated in Chitrakoot and Faizabad Universities.

4.2 Schools

Violence against Children (girls and boys) in India

According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development initiated National Study on Child Abuse in India (2007), two out of every three children are physically harmed. Out of those children physically abused in family situations, 88.6 per cent were physically abused by parents. In addition, two out of three school going children were victims of corporal punishment. The State of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Delhi have almost consistently reported higher rates of abuse in all forms as compared to other states. Moreover, 53.22 per cent children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse. The study also shockingly reveals that every second child faces emotional abuse.

Work with Adolescent and Younger Boys

It is only logical to work with men and women at a much younger age, when they are being socialized to take on patriarchal roles in the society. In 1992, when Sahayog was holding gender trainings for teachers, the idea of including adolescent boys in their activities came out strongly. Naturally this idea was finally put into practice in 2005 when MASVAW reached out to adolescent boys in schools. Since then MASVAW has been targeting girls and boys in the age group of 8 – 12 years in junior schools and 12-19 years in high schools and ITIs (Industrial

Training Institute), in cities and villages in Uttar Pradesh. Working with children, required a change in the way MASVAW approached the issues. Therefore, it focused on creating child-friendly-age-appropriate tools and activities. Now more than 400 young and adolescent girls and boys are part of MASVAW's activities.

Adolescent Boys

Today, in ITI Gorakhpur, MASVAW engages boys in the age group of 16-19 years on gender equality and violence against women. Similarly, adolescent boy groups exist in 15 high schools and inter-colleges in Lucknow, involving boys in the age group of 12-18 years. As a strategy, even tutorial centers and coaching classes frequented by girls and boys in this age group, were targeted.

Like in universities, the MASVAW campaigners approached the principal and teachers at these schools. As a result of which, MASVAW was allowed to speak in the school assemblies, which sparked an interest in the faculty and students. Following which, an orientation and informal sessions were organized with adolescent girls and boys on gender equality.

Quiz games and flash cards are often used to break the ice with the students (See the section on MASVAW's Tools of Change). This sets the grounds for discussion on serious issues such as stereotypical roles of men and women, eve teasing, violence against girls and other sensitive issues. At times, complaints of sexual harassment have come up, which were then directed towards higher school authorities, with MASVAW following them up regularly. Discussions on good-touch and bad-touch are held, sensitively steering around the issue of child sexual abuse. Adolescent girls and boys are encouraged to ask questions which they might feel hesitant to discuss outside the group. Peer pressure, mechanisms to deal with it and positive role models are highlighted. The focus is on building a healthy, mutually respectful relationship between the girls and boys.

Those boys who showed keen interest are identified by the staff and are encouraged to form a group, supported by MASVAW's activists. The boys often organize road shows, holding posters, speak to passers by. The planning for such events is done by the boys along with MASVAW activists. One of the first few road shows organized targeted other children. With the boys group gaining more confidence today, the road shows are now targeting the common public on the streets.

The MASVAW activists also help them organize monthly meetings, where they raise their doubts and gain conceptual clarity on issues of gender equality.

"In the first year, we showed interest, in the second year, they (the boys) are showing interest. The involvement of the boys has increased today, a rapport has been established."

- A MASVAW activist, working with adolescents in schools

In conversation with three boys: Md. Anas (16 years), Ashutosh Bhatt (17 years) and Sri Prakash (18 years), studying in class 12 at Lucknow Inter College. The boys share their experience of getting connected to and working with MASVAW.

"Initially MASVAW came to our school every two weeks and held discussions, but we didn't pay much attention. We used to treat these group discussions like a free period, happy we didn't have to study. But over a period of time we thought, these people are working so hard on this issue, there must be something to it, we must try and listen... Today, if we have any free time we use it for discussions on gender equality and violence against women and girls."

From our class, four of us came forward to learn about the issues MASVAW was raising. We needed to show that all boys are not violent and that is why we formed a group. Because of some men, all men cannot be labeled violent. Later joined by three more friends, we spoke to other boys and encouraged them to speak to MASVAW about their doubts. We were given MASVAW's registration form and their Snakes and Ladders game. They told us how to use it. Through the game we hold discussions with other boys.

Today we are a group of nine boys. We speak to other boys, taking guidance from MASVAW staff. We also speak at our coaching classes, that way we can reach out to adolescents from other schools as well. We realise we couldn't have done this alone. MASVAW provides us an affiliation which motivates and supports us.

The biggest change we see in ourselves is that now we know what abuse means. The way we define abuse has changed itself. Today, we feel so connected to this work, that we know we will continue spreading the message when we go to university. This work won't stop when we pass out of school."

MD Anas adds, "I used to think badly about the concept of having a girlfriend. Now in the monthly meetings we discuss what it means to have a girlfriend. Now I understand it is a mental relationship too. "We used to think, women are inferior, but not now", points out Ashutosh. "Earlier we were indifferent, if eve teasing happened in front of us, we ignored it. Bureaucrats now we try to speak to the guy if he is alone and not in a group." says Sri Prakash.

Younger Boys

In some villages in Uttar Pradesh, MASVAW's activists are reaching out to junior and primary schools, influencing boys and girls in the age group of 8-12 years on issues of domestic violence, physical and verbal abuse and unequal division of work between boys/men and girls/women. As always, through the teachers, students are introduced to the issues through games and drama.

How Boys' Initiative Backfired!

In a school in Azamgarh district in Uttar Pradesh, a group of boys wanted to do something to prevent eve teasing by other boys in schools. They asked the principal to change the school timing, so that girls could go home one hour earlier than boys. The principal readily agreed to this demand. But as a result, the girls began to lose one hour of school everyday. This demand then had to be pulled back. This was an important learning for MASVAW staff as well. Boys need to be given proper conceptual understanding and a support system, so that they come up with initiatives.

Today, in a school in Gorakhpur, younger students have proclaimed their school to be Danda Rahit Vidyalaya (A School without Stick!). In five schools in Gorakhpur younger children have initiated a Gali Band Karo Abhiyan (A Competition to Stop Abusive Language). The idea being that all verbal abuse whether directed at boys or girls, degrade women and girls in some way. The children raise awareness on this fact and run a competition based on self and peer monitoring.

"It is difficult to speak about these things at home. My sisters make fun of me when I say I will help in the kitchen. Even my mother laughs at me." – A 10 year old boy in a school in Gorakhpur

The teachers and campaigners realize that discussions on gender equality, also need to be introduced at home, if children are to be encouraged on this path. Children are therefore initiated into simple activities like writing letters to parents, performing street dramas in the school and for parents, holding debates and competitions in schools, on issues of violence and gender.

4.3 Media

MASVAW acknowledges the powerful role of the media. It partners with the media to actively shape public opinion on gender equality and violence. It influences the media to increase the coverage on violence against women and gender inequality. It creates awareness among journalists on sensationalization of reports on violence against women.

MASVAW especially partners with the vernacular press in Uttar Pradesh, working together with them to pressurize the authorities to follow up on individual cases of violence against women, supporting mobilization of rallies and evoking public reaction and outcry on cases of injustice.

MASVAW does this by identifying, training and supporting journalists from mainstream media based in rural areas. Over 25 journalists from 12 districts have now linked with local MASVAW groups who follow-up cases following reports by these journalists. There are also a number of media persons within the MASVAW core group itself. Here is what a journalist and an active member, Manoj Singh, feels:

"Even before joining MASVAW, I was interested in writing on VAW but was unaware of the subtle issues. Of course, I never thought about changing my own attitudes towards women. After connecting with MASVAW, I was able to understand various dimensions of gender discrepancies in our society through the training and material provided by MASVAW. It also set into motion the process of self-evaluation.

MASVAW also taught me that before pointing fingers at others I must think about myself. I was always under the impression that I was a sensitive person, but discovered that there were gaps between what I thought about myself and my conduct. Previously I thought gender discrimination was human nature, but now I have begun seeing it resulting from our patriarchal social system.

Another result: my journalistic thinking changed to incorporate the gender dimension. I started writing more on women issues with extra zeal and also intervened at several instances along with other MASVAW colleagues.

I strongly feel that more and more journalists join MASVAW and contribute towards creating a gender violence free society.

*I want MASVAW to develop into a strong and permanent platform where men can freely share their feelings and discuss them. Right now, we gather only at programs and campaigns. Better if MASVAW members can regularly meet and share views on gender issues and also look inwards. The patriarchal system puts too much pressure on men. They have to perform all the time to prove they are "men". In this lone battle, MASVAW can become their companion and want it to become so." – **Manoj Kumar Singh, Journalist, Hindustan – a daily newspaper in Gorakhpur***

4.4 Work Place

With gender inequality being rampant at the workplace, MASVAW felt compelled to work in this arena. It is only by correcting the behavior of employers and men in the positions of authority any meaningful impact can be made on gender based discrimination.

Be it an industrial enterprise or participation in local elected councils, MASVAW members have tried to involve women as equal partners with men. In villages that they work in, they are trying to ensure that women get elected into *Panchayats* (local governing bodies) and other local bodies from 'women-reserved seats' are not moved aside by their men who then exercise all the powers in their name.

When MASVAW men occupy position of authority in any organization women friendly work atmosphere can be taken for granted. For example, Rajdev Chaturvedy of Azamgarh is Secretary of a social organization, Gramin Punarnirman Sansthan that works on various local issues. The impact of gender training from MASVAW motivated him to set up a gender policy in his organization so that women can work in a safe and friendly atmosphere and has implemented the Vishakha Guidelines (a set of rules ordered by the Supreme Court to ensure gender-violence free atmosphere at work places). Of about 20 permanent staff only 7 are men!

Transformation of Brick Kilns

Near Gorakhpur, a city near Indo-Nepal border, MASVAW began by approaching some of the owners of brick kilns where women were not only paid lower wages, but had to also face violence and abuses at the hands of drunken men. Rather than by names, women were often addressed through abusive expletives. They had to toil the hard work throughout their pregnancies or stay workless. Besides, most kilns were owned by owners' wives on paper but their husbands acted as CEOs and controlled all the finances.

However, MASVAW's intervention brought about sea changes in the lives of women workers. For instance, a brick kiln owner, Shesh Nath Tripathi, was lording over 60 male and 40 female workers. He first brought changes in himself and changed the whole work culture in his kiln and made it gender-just: Women workers are called by their proper names, a wage register is maintained and women workers get equal wages, alcohol has been banned in the kiln area, pregnant women are given only light work and are provided medicines. In addition, now he involves his wife in functioning of the kiln and opened a joint bank account with his wife.

His clerk jovially said: "*We threaten the workers that if anyone misbehaves with a woman we might break his legs.*" The changes are clearly felt by women workers too as echoed by a kiln worker, Lehsunia: "*I have spent several years now working in this bhatta because the conditions here are so good that I feel completely secure. Earlier, I would not spend more than an year in a bhatta.*"

Besides providing a clean and gender equitable work atmosphere, Tripathi also took steps to safeguard his kiln and workers from dacoits who used to raid, loot and molest women workers. He also holds regular meetings with other kiln owners – such as Chullu Pathak, Shambhu Singh, Heera Singh and Girish – and transformation is spreading in them in their kilns too.

The brick kilns are certainly now much safer and better places for women workers. Regular discussions on gender discrimination under MASVAW's leadership led to these changes.

Impact on University Atmosphere

"The incidence of eve teasing has reduced in the campus (after MASVAW became active here). Earlier no girls used to come here to study. Today so many of us study here."

- Girls at MGKVP University, engaged in MASVAW's initiatives at the campus

"Radical changes have taken place here since this movement was launched. To prove it has actually influenced you, unmarried boys must now have the guts to say no to dowry and married ones should treat their wives on par with themselves." – **Professor Surendra Singh, Vice Chancellor, MGKVP University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.**

5. MASVAW's Impact: Changes in Men

In 2005, a study was conducted to understand the domains of change in men as a result of interventions and association with MASVAW. During the course of the study, 27 open-ended interviews were conducted with nine active MASVAW men, including their nine "private contacts" such as wife, mother, daughter-in-law and their nine "public contacts" such as friends and colleagues. Here is what the study brought out:

5.1 Changes in the Person

1. Changed conception of violence

The study revealed that the men gained a new definition of violence, while recognizing their own violence. There is also a growing realization in most men who get involved in MASVAW activities that social change is not only about changing others but about changing themselves as well.

"I used to think that things like beating up your wife or rape constitute violence but now I think that doing something without a wife's permission or consent is a kind of violence. If a woman wants to say something and a man stops her from expressing herself, even that will count as violence." – **Amit, a MASVAW activist**

"Initially I thought I would only work with others. I didn't think I wanted to change myself but later realized that if I don't change myself first, there is no way I can bring change in others." – **A MASVAW activist**

2. New management of conflict and anger

According to the study, these men have a greater understanding of violence against women and their own culpability. The men are now practicing mechanisms to manage their own conflict and anger.

"Earlier I used to keep things in my heart. Now I write down "what I should do which I am not able to do" when I get angry. It's on pieces of paper hanging on my wall." – A MASVAW activist

3. Broader range of emotional expression

Being involved in MASVAW has given the men a broader range of emotional expression. It has given them confidence to express pain and joy, to shed tears without fear of ridicule. The men enjoy better and mature relationships with other men and women.

4. Leadership, mentoring, influencing others

Men are now taking a lead in mentoring and influencing others using formal and informal opportunities such as through workshops, appearing in local media, speaking to people on the streets, etc.

5. Violence against women interventions

A major change in men's lives is the amount of time and effort they are spending on violence against women cases. While some are part of University Sexual Harassment Committees, others follow up newspaper reports, bring media attention to cases and raise publicity and so on.

5.2 Changes in Relationships

Changed relationship with spouse

The study reveals that there is a qualitative change in the relationship with the spouse. Coercive sex has been reduced. There is also a visible change with other members of the household.

"For example today he has left me alone to sit and talk with you. This was not there earlier. I have the freedom to go wherever I want to go. I can freely talk to anybody." - **Wife of a MASAW activist**

"I wasn't doing anything before joining MASVAW. When I woke up, [my wife] would fold the bed sheets. When I brushed my teeth, she would bring the water. I thought, "This is my right. Without money I got a servant. My father purchased this servant for me." I ordered, "Do this, do that.", But after joining MASVAW, I realized actually I'm doing a very wrong thing". - **A MASVAW activist**

5.3 Consequences of change

The men highlighted the negative comments and reactions they received, while they imbibed these changes. Family conflict was common, so were abuses for doing 'women's work'. Family members also began to blame the wife. There was also lack of time with the family, as a result of being involved with public action. This led to household tension and stress.

We've lost out on many privileges and our masculinity. We don't ask our wives or daughters for water as soon as we reach home. The joint family members comment that we have become a slave of wives, but we've found new friends and have lost old ones. - **The Gorakhpur Group**

We have lost the security of patriarchy. Male privileges are lost, I've also lost my caste, because we've begun interacting with each other - that creates fear but it's a good thing. I've lost old friends. - **Student from Varanasi group**

At the same time, men highlighted the positive consequences of change such as growth in self development and self-esteem. The men were more confident, articulate and had more clarity around their beliefs. They also gained respect and recognition.

"People see me and they don't make fun of me. They admire me and try to practice it themselves. Other men take inspiration from me." - **Samir, a MASVAW activist**

We learnt about equality, equity and self contentment. Problems at home reduced as we started behaving equally. We are now able to share with our partner, earlier we never even imagined that we should discuss issues with her, we thought it's our own problem. – **The Gorakhpur Group**

Being engaged with MASVAW also leads to better marriage for both partners. Above all, their engagement with MASVAW created a satisfaction in them, knowing they are making a positive change.

6. What Families and Communities Say

MASVAW's training programs set in a process of change in the participants and it takes time and persistent efforts to change the patriarchal mindset. Participating men face a variety of reactions from their family members and the community while they are experiencing change in themselves.

At first family members, relatives and community members villagers don't really understand what the trainings are all about. Some participants get scolded for "wasting time" in "useless things." Family members and relatives ask them to do something that gives some earning.

"My father was scolding me for attending the training as he thought that there are more important things to do." – **A young man, Jaunpur**

However, men generally do not argue but when they start showing changed behaviors, the family members are first to be surprised.

"What happened to him? He is washing the utensils these days" – **Mother of an unmarried youth, Jaunpur**

When he tried assisting his wife in household chores, the young group leader from Redigarapur village of Pratapgarh was called "*meher basua*" (servant of woman) by his friends. But he told them that it is the key to the new times and if they also don't do it they will regret in future.

Sometimes the sisters or wives try preventing men from doing household work and offer to do it for them as usual because such tasks do not look good on them. But their new behavior of being gentle, spending more time at home, and doing jobs like taking care of animals etc are always admired.

Adverse reactions to MASVAW's campaigns and gender issues are often seen coming from older men or men whose authority appears threatened. For instance, some elderly men call the awareness campaign in Jaunpur, a campaign against men. Some of them also remarked that the campaigners were mostly unmarried and things will be different when they marry. "*Let them marry and see what happens.*"

A man in Pratapgarh showed his strong disbelief in the campaign and said, "*You keep on talking about women's rights; nothing will happen. We beat them (women) and we will keep on beating in future also. Put me in Jail, I will come out and beat again.*"

Men were also found questioning women's autonomy. Some men in Jaunpur also expressed fear over women's progress and said, "*What will happen to men if women progress so much?*"

Some men also remarked that the youths (men's group members) were 'mad' and that 'they want to make all villagers and the girls mad.' For some others, "men's groups were doing nothing but encouraging western culture."

Some men clearly showed their dissatisfaction and sense of insecurity over voices against VAW. A man in Jaunpur was heard saying, "*Since the campaign has begun, women are glued to it ignoring others around. Give them slight freedom and they go out of hand.*" Another commented, "*Now women are asserting and if we say them anything they threaten us by saying that they will call VAW campaigners.*"

On the other hand, there are always some men who, although do not participate in the programs but, feel that the campaign is good in the long run.

Wives are generally the biggest gainers when their husbands join MASVAW.

"Now (after joining MASVAW) my husband does not beat me. In fact, now he even counsels me why I should not beat kids. He also encourages me to go out and work. I like the fact that he trusts and respects me."

"Now my husband asks me not to wear veil (tradition of covering face by women in front of men). When I said that other women in our community still wear veil, he said don't worry about what others would say; we will do what we like. He also doesn't mind my talking and laughing with others."

7. MASVAW's Challenges

- "*MASVAW needs to work on its spread and representations at all level. I am not sure but envisioning and creating more spaces for regular and frequent dialogue amongst the members and outside MASVAW may give it some push for the next few years.*" – **Runu Chakroborthy**
- Local leadership will need to be consolidated if the campaign or 'jan andolan' (people's movement) mode is to be preserved. They also require technical skills and perspective building. Perspective building and deeper theoretical understanding of local leadership is also essential for MASVAW to remain supporter of women's groups.
- "*Wearing too many hats of similar forums at the top level is causing blurring of identities at other level. MASVAW should critically review this situation.*" – **Runu Chakroborthy**
- "*The composition of secretariat is still majorly elite and it creates a huge gap between the decision makers and people at the other levels. Sometime the visibility and engagement of these elites at the national and international forums created discomforts and tensions between these sections within MASVAW. I would like to understand how these tensions have been resolved.*" – **Runu Chakroborthy**
- The level of perspective between MASVAW members is not uniform – those who work at community level, have attended workshops, or are in local committees have better understanding of VAW issues. Areas where there isn't sustained work, the level of understanding is not adequate. Within universities or colleges also, those who have been directly involved are good – others are not, but the former have the potential of being a pressure group on the others.

- There is need for more training in democratic running of the group (elections, local and state level leadership etc). The OD process should take care of this.
- Even attention to group building and organizational process will be needed in comparison to program implementation.
- Members may be individually 'changed', but they become socially vulnerable when they challenge their own masculinity. In Varanasi, the local convener is already being targeted by his peer. Support group required. Members will also need the courage to accept challenges within their own homes.
- Over exposure at national and international levels of few individuals may lead to problems within groups. The high profile nature of the work may create jealousy for local leadership MASVAW will have to creatively engage with this challenge.
- Most members give voluntary time, but the major expense for volunteers is travel money, publication of posters fax, phone etc. No salaries are being asked for, but some contingency expenses and funds for holding meetings are very much needed.
- More resources will be needed for state level work, but there is a need to resist massive funding for MASVAW - that is the collective opinion.
- MASVAW shouldn't be allowed to become an NGO. This feeling of most members need continued respect.
- MASVAW profile has grown too fast. So far transparency and accountability within MASVAW has kept the trust among the network going. Efforts will be needed to preserve these values in the future.
- There is a need to ensure that the network does not break on issues of funds or internal politics.
- *"The only threat at this time in front of MASVAW I could conceive is of disintegration if some of the exiting decision makers lose interest in it."* – **Runu Chakroborthy**

8. Lessons Learned So Far

MASVAW's journey has been full of learning and enriched with practical experience at the field level. As the campaign gained momentum MASVAW refined its strategies, broadened its target base and incorporated what it learned along the way. Along with its supporters, it has been constantly asking the question: What really works dealing with men and boys? Today, MASVAW's success is attributed to its growing believers, who have joined the movement with a firm belief in gender equality and demonstrated it by practical application in their own life. In return, MASVAW provides them space to vent their own frustrations and feelings, supporting them in recognizing that not all boys and men favor violence and gender inequality.

It is all done with the promise of a gender-just world, which benefits men as much as women. But convincing men to give up their privileges and leadership position is far from easy. In a society, ridden with rigid gender norms, notions of gender equality evoke intense ridicule and shame. But with a strong conviction in its ideology that MASVAW is able to help boys and men deal with such criticism. Encouraging them to sustain the momentum, to not give up, and to stay away from complacency is important.

Above all, boys and men need to be helped to strike a balance between public action and private change. The former being relatively easy; however, a change within oneself requires much more introspection and commitment. Given these challenges, MASVAW has worked with the following strategies:

MASVAW: a campaign versus an NGO project

MASVAW is a campaign, a well known movement and not a project. This was a deliberate strategy, rooted in what MASVAW wants to achieve and how it wants to do so. The clarity on this has given MASVAW focus and flexibility and has removed many administrative obstacles. MASVAW does not have a specific project approach, which helps to bond non-activist people, civil society members and the media. The system of peer accountability works well here. The four tier institutional structure that has emerged within MASVAW is a result of the campaign's practical need; it is not an ideal structure of some NGO needed to monitor the campaign.

Being flexible, finding connections

Working with boys and men to end violence against women and children, requires work at different levels using innovative approaches, converging issues of gender, caste and violence, all in the rights framework. MASVAW has made connections with all these issues as it progressed.

Working with boys and men in all age groups and positions of authority

MASVAW has engaged with men at different stages in their life cycle. Starting from youth in the universities, to adolescent boys in high schools, younger boys in primary schools to middle age, and older men with power, say the brick kiln owners, and so on. MASVAW has chosen its stakeholders and target group strategically. Investing and adapting activities and tools to the different age groups, was then the next strategic step. MASVAW also deliberately engaged with men in power such as teachers, vice chancellors of universities, business owners, Panchayat members and journalists, all those who could influence other boys and men and the community.

Catching them young: working with adolescent and younger boys

As the campaign gained momentum, the need to work with boys at a younger age became obvious. Involving younger boys in this work ensured that they grew up challenging gender stereotypes, rather than following them. Although, when initiated, the campaign did not clearly focus on this group, but it was flexible and eager enough to incorporate what it learned from other networks, this provided space to girls and boys to be part of the campaign.

What's in it for boys and men?

Today at the core of campaign, MASVAW is helping boys and men find answer to – how do boys and men benefit by sharing their power with girls and women? Helping boys and men understand this, is the key to getting them support the campaign in the long-term. This means it is crucial to counsel and support boys/men to talk about the pressures they face as a result of being a boy/man and how that will change when they share their privileges with girls/women, has been crucial.

Involving girls and women

The work in the universities, schools and workplaces demonstrated the strategic importance of involving both girls/women and boys/men in the interventions for gender equality. Getting

both the sexes to interact in a healthy manner is the key to an equitable relationship. Connecting with the women's movement, dispelling their fears of working with boys and men, has also been a strategic move. Involving the girls and women, has helped make the campaign stronger.

Strategic Advocacy

Strategic and sustained advocacy are strengths of the campaign. The campaign has clear goals of whom it wants to be involved with, in areas involvement would be fruitful – where MASVAW would take lead and where the other parts of the civil society should take a lead. A consistent advocacy message has helped. MASVAW has always kept an eye on opportunities in unfolding current events for highlighting its ideologies. At the same time, the campaign is backed by non-threatening messages that encourage men to be gender equitable.

Collaboration and Networks

Today the MASVAW campaign is part of several regional and global networks, helping it to connect with the discourse on working with boys and men at an international level. As part of the global MenEngage network, MASVAW builds capacity for working with boys and men for different organizations and supports and encourages exchange of tools, good practices and approaches to facilitate changes at the field level.

9. Future Directions

MASVAW should continue to work with its twin objectives of increasing awareness in men about the VAW as a larger social issue and to motivate men to adopt new behavior patterns and provide new role models. In order to usher in larger social transformation and institutional changes, MASVAW will have to work with men across different social and economic boundaries, engaging with men in different spheres of life and in different age groups.

"MASVAW also needs to establish its own independent identity at the National level." – **Runu Chakroborthy**

As the campaign looks ahead, it becomes important to find more entry points in its work to create a comprehensive movement with boys and men. Here are some suggestions:

- It is also time to connect to other issues that affect the relationship between women and men, for instance, livelihood and HIV/AIDS.
- Other areas such as parenting – mothering and fathering – can be addressed more proactively as part of the campaign. Positive fathering can be used as an entry point for reaching more men.
- The campaign can highlight the role of men as nurturers and its importance in creating a healthy family and respectful and equal relationships.
- It may also like to take up violations surrounding female sterilization, men's role in reproduction, education and childrearing etc
- It is also time to expand its networks and use the MenEngage platform and other similar networks for larger impact and penetration at all levels.

- It should try strengthening children's participation in its campaign, especially targeting younger boys in schools and families. Its work with women and children will also help human rights practitioners find and strengthen the link between the women's movement and child rights movement.
- An increased focus is required on working with younger boys and reaching the families (at the moment the program is focused on involving the boys through the schools). The campaign also needs to develop methodologies for working with very young boys. More boy and child friendly material in local languages and tools need to be developed.
- There is an urgent need to involve more and more media persons with MASVAW. If VAW and the stories of transformation are presented correctly, not merely as sensational news item, there will be more effective impact on the society.

Today, MASVAW is striving to be a learning hub by conducting regular documentation, monitoring changes, and evaluating its work. A good way to do it is by strengthening links with the universities and academia which can also help in further research in different areas.

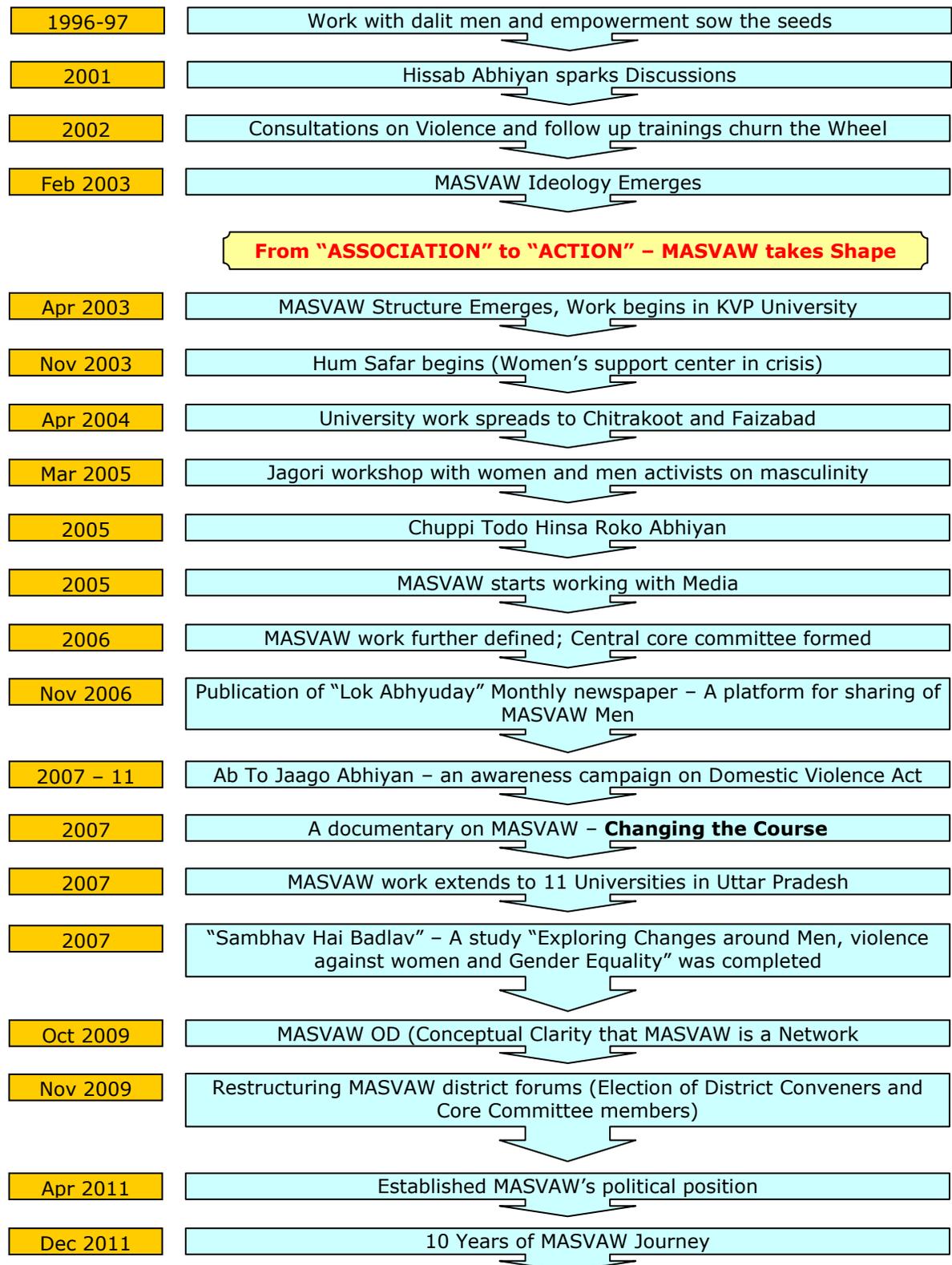
Thus far, MASVAW's campaign has rather remained concentrated in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand; of course, the positive response from various quarters and success stories are no mean achievements. However, it is now time to replicate the campaign in other Indian states and aim to create some sort of a national coalition. At the same time, it is important to retain the core strategies the campaign began with. Retaining the same campaign structure and not 'NGOising' it, is important to retain the flexibility.

As the campaign continues to spread, there is a constant need to develop and understand ideologies on working with boys and men on violence and gender equality. For instance, it should be wary of promoting the protective role of boys and men, while asking them to shun gender based violence is important. At the same time, there is a need to expand an understanding among the activists on the connection between the rights framework and gender equality.

Although MASVAW is encouraging participation of younger boys and adolescents, it is important to view children's participation more holistically keeping the focus on non-discrimination and accountability. Capacity building of the staff on child participation is crucial for meaningful and ethic engagement with children and young people. Linking adult groups and youth groups to children's groups is important to integrate the under 18s in the campaign.

To sum up, the campaign has reached a stage, where it needs a more coherent and concrete strategy to move forward. The strategy aspect needs to be formulated with the participation of MASVAW members including girls and boys, supported by the four tier institutional structure. A thorough review and impact assessment of MASVAW's activities will support the strategy development process. It is also important to strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and learning aspects of the program. Collecting baseline data, a system for monitoring change should be institutionalized and the acquired knowledge should be documented regularly.

Milestones in MASVAW's Journey



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Written feedbacks

Satish Kumar Singh, MASVAW Convener, CHSJ, Delhi, India

Dr. Sanjay, MASVAW's Regional Convener, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, MGKV University, Varanasi, India

Manoj Kumar Singh, Journalist, Daily Newspaper *Hindustan*, Gorakhpur, India

Rajdev Chaturvedy, MASVAW Activist, Azamgarh, India

Runu Chakroborthy, A prominent Social worker and feminist

Telephonic Feedbacks

Rajdev Chaturvedy, MASVAW Activist, Azamgarh, India

Santosh Kushwaha, MASVAW Activist, Banda, India

Films

Ab To Jaago, 2008, A documentary on domestic violence

Changing the Course, A documentary on MASVAW's work