

MASVAW - Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women A Journey Towards Gender Justice



Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) is an alliance of men and organizations working on gender issues, committed to reacting to and reducing incidents of violence against women. Through cultural and advocacy campaigns, MASVAW raises awareness and recruits new network members who will work for institutional changes in gender relations. MASVAW is primarily active in the state of Uttar Pradesh (India).

MASVAW started in 2001 when activist-men involved in supporting a state wide campaign on violence against women realized that this issue was not just a women's issue but an issue that involved society at large. In order to focus men's attention on this issue, and to build a larger coalition of concerned and active men, a series of meetings were held and the MASVAW campaign was launched. Male workers and activists in these social development organizations have been the backbone of MASVAW, and starting from these nuclei, the message of MASVAW has now spread to schools and universities, to villages and to urban communities. Farmers and businessmen, students and teachers, journalists and their readers from segments of society are all associated with MASVAW.

MASVAW men groups are now active in 40 districts of Uttar Pradesh and three districts in the neighboring state of Uttaranchal.

Perspective and Objectives

MASVAW understands that violence against women is not only a women's issue but an issue of concern for society at large. We also hold that it is the responsibility of all members of society, men and women to ensure a violence-free society for women. Men are culpable not only as those who most often inflict the violence, but also as those who endorse it through their silence. Therefore, men's role in preventing and eradicating this pervasive form of social injustice has to be more pro-active. Starting from this belief MASVAW works towards gender justice and seeking gender equality in society with the twin objectives of:

- Increasing awareness among men about the different forms of VAW and that VAW is a larger social issue
- Motivating men to shun violence, protest against violence, support survivors and provide new role models

Processes and Campaigns - MASVAW has grown from a thought and a resolve to a state wide campaign. This became possible since some men from different walks of life have been ready to change, to reflect and work towards a better world for themselves and future generations. The catalyst for this change has been a series of workshops on gender, men and masculinity; training programmes for creating a cadre of facilitators who have reached out to tens of thousands of youth and men in hundreds of villages. Youth groups and men's groups have been formed in rural communities, in colleges and universities, where men discuss events in the daily newspapers, issues from their own communities, reflect on their own lives and then decide to take action.

Youth Mobilisation -MASVAW has initiated activities with male youth in schools, colleges and universities in the cities of Varanasi, Faizabad, Chitrakoot and Lucknow. These include workshops, debates and poster competitions, film-shows, taking a pledge and road-shows. The road-shows are an innovative mechanism to reach school and college going youth in public places and engaging them in topical discussions on violence against women. Youth who become interested and involved become organizers of future activities. These youth also become involved in casework, providing support to survivors, supporting sexual harassment committees in their institutions and so on.



Capacity building workshop with men's group



University Youth Meet

Campaign Against Sati - 'Sati' or widow immolation is an ancient Indian custom of compelling the widow to join her husband in his funeral pyre. This practice was outlawed over a hundred and fifty years ago, but it is still glorified as a form of idealized woman-hood. There have been sporadic reports of Sati from the Bundelkhand region of UP in the last few years. MASVAW groups in the four districts of Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba and Hamirpur have started a campaign against Sati through identifying cases, stimulating public discussion on the glorification of Sati in collaboration with other social groups in the region.

Violence Prevention Watch Groups— Over a hundred watch groups have been organized in villages across UP and Uttaranchal. These groups intervene in cases of violence within the village, provide support to survivors and ensure that local schools and colleges are violence free zones.

These groups observe the International Women's Day (8th March) and Montreal Massacre Day (6th December) through meetings and cultural programmes and taking a pledge.

"AB TO JAAGO" (Wakeup Now) Campaign - MASVAW as a network has taken the initiative to organize and participate in several campaigns primarily intended to ensure the involvement of the stakeholders and the youth of rural India. **"AB TO JAAGO"** is one such campaign which aims at targeting the issue of domestic violence and raising the voices of the general public against it. Several women all over India are subjected to domestic violence, yet are unable to take any action against it either due to the lack of knowledge that they possess about their rights or because of other causes which prevents them from raising their voices against the male dominated society. To shatter such false beliefs and to empower women against domestic violence the campaign AB TO JAAGO looks to involve people to work relentlessly for this cause. Many different activities have been organized by this campaign which includes rallies, candle marches, stakeholders' meetings, organizing meetings for youth groups, poster competitions, essay competitions and cycle rallies. The campaign lasted from the 25th of November to the 10th of December. We celebrated important days such as International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women on the 25th of November, World Aids Day on the 1st of December and International Human Rights Day on the 10th of December. engagingmen@googlegroups.com



Campaign activity in school

Winds of change- some examples (Uttar Pradesh, in India)

- When a female student was harassed by a teacher in a university in Varanasi in UP, a group of male students support her to file a police complaint against the teacher.
- A woman was burnt for dowry and the incident was reported as suicide in a village in Eastern UP. A delegation of men from three neighboring districts met the district administration repeatedly and ensured that a case of homicide was registered and the culprits were arrested.
- A man regularly beat his wife at home and the rest of the village would silently watch her cries. Having raised the issue with the villagers, now he has been asked by the youth in his village to stop beating his wife or to leave the village
- A father-in-law pushed his daughter-in-law off the roof when she objected to his sexual advances. Both her legs has to be amputated to save her life. A citizen's group from Gorakhpur, supported her with hospitalization, helped her register a case and have even arranged for prosthetics to help her regain her life and

- Over 25 journalists from 12 districts have now linked with local MASVAW groups who follow-up cases which are reported by these journalists.
- District forums provide mutual support to members and associates to work together and also organize film shows, workshops and discussion.

For more information please contact:

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