

In Memory of Our

Maimed, Raped and Murdered

Sisters

Medica Afghanistan
November 2015

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Preface

“I tried hard to open the door, and I screamed, but there was no one to help me...”

During the past decade we have had some notable achievements that we can cherish. However, education and legal and health services remain of poor quality and still inaccessible to a majority of the population at large, especially at the village and district levels. Further, gender-based violence (GBV) persists, despite being banned by national law and international treaties.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission’s (AIHRC) 2013 biannual [report](#) called the situation of violence against women (VAW) “alarming”. The report indicated that over 3,000 cases of VAW were registered with AIHRC during the period March to August 2012; among reported cases, physical violence was most common.

According to a statistical report issued by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, violence against women increased by 28 percent this year. In part, this increase has been the result of increased insecurity, but more importantly, the increase arises from ultra-conservative and fundamentalist views of women that have gained ground widely and quickly over the last three years. In fact, there has been a significant increase in all crimes. Afghanistan has still a long way to go to bring real change to the status of women and girls who are survivors of sexualized gender-based violence in this country.

Violence against women is a structural problem in Afghanistan, entrenched in patriarchal traditions and cultural values. Other factors such as war, poverty, illiteracy, and a weak judicial system further increase the complexity. One factor strengthens the other, and vice versa. Therefore, resistance to gender equality places itself at the heart of Afghan society and manifests itself in social behaviors.

Violence against women stems from a basic, widely held notion that women are the *second gender*. It is also by-product of a culture that does not believe in equality among citizens in general.

Women whose stories you will read in this book are housewives, sisters, daughters and mothers who have suffered rape, maiming and murder by close relatives or strangers; women who have attempted and committed suicide to escape violence; and women and girls who are living with the dreadful memories of violence. Many of these cases are recent, from 2011 onwards, and from various provinces of Afghanistan. These stories belong to Medica Afghanistan clients and a number of them have been gathered from different news outlets. The victims range from age 2 to over 40 years age, but mainly they are young adults (15-25).

A good number of these stories are from Kabul, Herat and Mazar where our lawyers and psychosocial counselors work with the victims and survivors of gender-based violence. However, some cases occurred in provinces, and clients visited our centers in one of the above-mentioned provinces.

In almost all of these cases, the justice system has failed to help women gain their rights back, to bring the perpetrators to trial, or to ensure they complete their mandatory sentence terms.

Uncovering these cases and sharing them widely is important to Medica Afghanistan; we want these women to be heard, and uncovering their stories will better help to develop a strategy for the elimination of violence against Afghan women. These stories are only a handful of many cases of violence against women in Afghanistan.

We are saddened for all the valuable women's lives lost, for all the innocent souls tainted because of rape, and for all those who suffer physical impairments, scars and mental trauma as a result of violence. The year 2015 witnessed the heinous mob murder of our sister, [Farkhunda Malikzada](#) and stoning of [Rokhshana](#). Their legacy will continue as we pursue our struggles to end violence against women in Afghanistan.

We believe that some critical actions can begin to address the root causes of poverty, improve access to basic services, and ensure that all Afghans are able to exercise their fundamental rights. We still need the support of the international community to promote women's rights at the grass roots level and to facilitate women's political participation. We seek special funding to deal with the severity of the scourge of personal and public violence. We ask for practical measures to meet commitments made under the [Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework](#). Moreover, in the context of donor support, it is absolutely necessary to bring a focus to gender issues throughout all programs, assessing the impact on women and girls, and integrating their needs and interests in order to strengthen their safety and security.

Humaira Ameer Rasuli
Executive Director

About Medica Afghanistan – A Women’s Support Organization Working to End Violence

As the role of Afghan civil society in protecting and empowering women and girls grows, Medica Afghanistan is proud to be a leader in this work. Medica Afghanistan was launched in 2002 by medica mondiale, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Germany that provides holistic support to women victims of sexual violence in crisis zones around the world.

Addressing many forms of violence against women, Medica Afghanistan quickly broke new grounds. It was the first women’s organization in Afghanistan to offer psychosocial counseling to women survivors of violence and the first to provide it to women in prison. It was the first to offer legal aid to women accused of crimes or engaged in civil disputes. It was the first to train professional people, from hospital doctors to defense lawyers, in the support of traumatized women and girls. It was the first to provide evidence of the link between child marriage and domestic violence—and to take action to end these practices.

By end of 2010 Medica Afghanistan had become a highly respected, professional organization and was officially registered as a self-sustaining Afghan national NGO.

Today, as a full-fledged Afghan nonprofit, nongovernmental organization run by Afghan women, Medica Afghanistan continues to lead the way. Headquartered in Kabul, Medica Afghanistan also maintains offices in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat while also offering training and receiving cases from many other provinces.

Medica Afghanistan focuses on improving the lives of women through direct legal aid, psychosocial counseling, family mediation services, and public advocacy for women and girls subjected to violence in the midst of war. Further, it raises awareness and builds capacity in the fields of health, education, and law.

Medica Afghanistan seeks to raise awareness on women’s rights and sensitize all those who deal with women at risk, regardless of gender. To achieve this goal, we work on sensitizing men on the key issues of gender-based violence and include them in finding resolutions. We offer advanced professional training to male and female lawyers, doctors, social workers, religious leaders, and police personnel on the multiple ramifications of violence against women. In short, Medica Afghanistan addresses the traumatic impact of all forms of violence against women upon survivors, families, institutions, and society.

Medica Afghanistan promotes women’s human rights by lobbying for change in structures and policies to produce a better quality of life for women and girls in a more equitable and peaceful Afghanistan.

For more information about our approach, team and programs please visit us on our website:

www.medicaafghanistan.org.

Representative Cases of Violence Against Women in Afghanistan

Case 01: Her husband's brother raped an eleven-year-old girl

23 November 2013, Herat:

It was her wedding night.

The girl recalled, "After the party I was in my bedroom; my husband's brother broke into my bedroom. He ordered me to keep quiet, and then he raped me. He said that if others knew about it, he would kill me."

Because the marriage had taken place in the absence¹ of the groom who was away working, her brother in law used the opportunity to commit the vicious act.

The girl was not able to speak about her ordeal to anyone. As a result, she developed mental health problems, and therefore visited a mental health clinic.

After some sessions, she was able to open up and speak about what had happened to her. The counselor helped her to cope with the trauma of the incident.

Subsequently, the girl went to the local police department and filed a complaint against her rapist.

The police arrested the perpetrator, but unfortunately, he was released on bail, vowing to Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission and the police that he would not repeat the offence.

The victim did not agree with granting her attacker bail, and she wanted the perpetrator to be punished.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 02: A 12-year-old girl was gang raped by eight men in Iran, and raped again in Afghanistan

22 December 2011, Kabul:

The girl was on her way to visit her uncle when she was kidnapped by a group of men. She was taken to a public bath and gang raped there.

When she wanted to run away with her dress covered in blood, one of the rapists called her and said that he would marry her. She thought that it was the only option she had, so she went with the rapist to his house.

His family did not agree with the marriage. After being raped again, she was thrown out of the house. Her family found her in remote place. They decided to return to Afghanistan.

¹ In Afghan custom it is acceptable for the wedding to take place if the groom cannot be present for work or any other important reason.

The effects of this dreadful incident did not end there. When in Kabul, the girl was kidnapped again, this time by a different attacker. She was taken to a tailor store, raped, and left in a gruesome condition.

After a day, the police found her in an unknown place in a bad condition, and they transferred her to a Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 03: Her husband cut off a woman's lips and nose

13 December 2013, Herat:

The woman's drug addicted husband wanted to sell her jewelry to buy drugs, but she resisted him strongly. Their dispute escalated to a physical confrontation. The wife fainted. While she was unconscious, her husband cut off her nose and lips.

He then fled the scene. Their older daughter cried out to neighbors for help. The neighbors took the woman to hospital; she was in a horrific condition.

After several advocacy actions, the Ministry of Public Health arranged for her to travel to Turkey for a nose and lip reconstruction operation. She underwent three separate procedures there.

A few months later, the police arrested her husband in Herat, but no update about his sentence was made public.

Presently, the victim is fighting mental and physical health problems, while enduring economic hardships.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 04: A 20 years old woman set herself ablaze

18 February 2013, Herat:

This woman set herself ablaze due to family problems.

She was married at the age of 15, and subsequently gave birth to two children. Her in laws inflicted violence on her. After committing self-immolation, she had to return to her parents' house in order to receive care.

Nine months passed, but her husband never contacted or visited her, and all this time the woman was separated from her children.

Now she is living with her own family and teaches at a school. She is looking forward to making enough money, so that she can hire a defense lawyer and gain custody of her children.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 05: She was seriously injured by her stepson

02 December 2013, Herat:

This case was the result of domestic violence.

The woman was quite young when her parents died. She moved in with her uncle who, after some years, married her off to an older man.

During her married life, the woman's husband and in-laws often inflicted violence on her, beating her severely. Because her uncle had sold the woman for 600,000 AFs, she thought she had no right to protest about her treatment. Instead, she lived like a prisoner.

Eventually, the violence escalated to such a degree that her stepson (from her husband's first wife) decided to murder the woman. He shot her, seriously injuring her.

She remained silent all this time. After recovering from injuries, the woman had to return to her marital home where she originally suffered from ill treatment.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 06: Her husband forced a woman into prostitution

01 November 2011, Herat:

This woman was transferred to prison when she confessed that she had murdered her husband.

She described her story: "My husband was a drug addict. He would beat me up every day. We were living in Iran. In order to pay the expenses of the house, I would work in Iranians' houses."

When she brought her wages home, her husband would forcefully take the money from her and buy drugs.

She added, "Not only would my husband takes my wages from me by force, but he would also bring some men home. They would rape me and give him a great deal of money."

Finally, she decided to repatriate to Afghanistan with her children. Her husband chased her to Afghanistan. He wanted her to continue bringing him money through illegitimate affairs with men. She protested and murdered him.

She admitted murdering her husband, and was arrested.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 07: A 13-year-old girl was raped by her father

04 July 2013, Herat:

This incident happened during Ramadan.

The girl was alone at home with her sister and their father. Their father, who already had four wives, raped her.

The girl narrated the attack: "No one was at home, except one of my sisters in the other room, and I. My father asked for a glass of tea."

She added, "I brought him tea. Then he pulled my hand towards him harshly. For one moment everything went dark before my eyes; then my father raped me."

Although she cried and begged her father not to rape her, he committed the heinous act. After the rape, he threatened to kill her if she told anyone.

She said, "When my mother returned home, my sister told her everything. Afterwards, my mother and brother went to the police station and filed a complaint against my father."

Following the complaint, police arrested her father. The court issued a 20 year sentence for him.

The girl did not agree with the court's decision because she wanted her father to be executed.
Source: Medica Afghanistan

**Case 08: An 18-year-old girl was raped by a commander and his son
20 September 2013, Badghis:**

She belonged to a poor family.

The commander paid the living expenses for the girl and her family; therefore, he was in charge of their family decisions. He even married her off to an elderly man.

The girl said, "Because he was paying our living expenses, he married me off to a man my father's age."

She added, "Since my husband's family had paid a lot of money to the commander, they felt they were justified in inflicting all kinds of violence on me. When my situation became unbearable, I returned to my own family."

The victim got a divorce and united with her own family again, not knowing that what was to come would not be any better.

Her return was not acceptable to the commander, so he raped her. His son joined as well. The commander threatened her not to say anything about the rape to anyone, but she went to police and filed a complaint against him.

The commander and his son were arrested and each was sentenced for 20 years.
Source: Medica Afghanistan

**Case 09: A woman died after setting herself ablaze
23 May 2013, Herat:**

The girl was 17 years old and suffered domestic violence inflicted by her husband and in laws. She had appealed to the court, but the court did not pay any attention.

Her mother recalled, "When my daughter was only a child, she was forced into marriage by her father. She endured violence ever since the beginning of marriage."

Her husband would beat her up every day, and the violence level increased as days passed. Finally, she went to the court and made a complaint. Instead of helping her, the court threatened her that if she came to the court one more time, she would be put in jail.

After she lost her only hope, she set herself ablaze. One week later she died.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 10: A relative raped a 13-year-old girl

23 April 2012, Herat:

The girl was raped by her uncle's wife's relative.

The young girl was alone at home. Her uncle's wife's brother raped her, and then he fled the crime scene. She was left in a horrific condition.

Her family did not keep silent; they filed a complaint against the perpetrator. However, not only did the police not arrest the perpetrator, but they also accused the girl of adultery, and put her into prison.

At the first court hearing, her innocence was proven, and she was released. Nevertheless, the justice system failed to arrest and punish the perpetrator.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 11: A 17-year-old girl was raped by her instructor

08 October 2011, Herat:

The girl was a student at a religious institution. Her instructor kidnapped her, took her to a remote area, and raped her.

The girl recalled the attack, "One day, I was on my way home when I was kidnapped. The kidnapper took me to an unknown place. To my shock, it was my instructor."

She was kept there and raped by her instructor repeatedly. "After two months I promised my instructor that I would marry him. He let me go home," she added.

Upon returning home, she reported the incident to her family. Police arrested her instructor and moved her to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center for some time, as she was falsely accused of adultery.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 12: A woman was murdered by her husband

27 December 2013, Herat:

A 23-year-old woman and a mother of two children, was murdered by her husband.

At first everyone accepted her death as a suicide, but later on the evidence showed that her husband had actually murdered her.

There had been domestic disputes going on between them; she would tolerate him, for the most part only because of their children. Finally, one night he beat her to death. Attempting to hide his crime, he told everyone that it was a suicide.

He was ready to bribe the court to hide his crime. Officials reported that there were signs of strangling on woman's body. The lawyer and the social worker accessed documents which proved that he had in fact murdered her.

Her husband was arrested, and the court sentenced him to 16 years in prison.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 13: Husband murdered a 22-year-old woman in a horrendous way

25 January 2013, Herat:

This woman's husband murdered her in a dreadful way, before the eyes of her children.

Officials said that the main reason for her murder was that she was working outside the house. Her husband was a drug addict, and he was against her working. They had argued about it several times before.

The husband, being a drug addict, was not able to earn an income for the family, so she had to work. She was working in a tailor store, and she was the main breadwinner to the family. Because her husband disagreed with her working outside their home, he murdered her.

The perpetrator was sentenced to death. The children are left without parents, and it is not clear who will take their custody.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 14: She was fleeing violence, but was raped

20 September 2013, Herat:

A 15-year-old girl was raped by a young man after fleeing home in search for a better life. She was arrested by police and transferred to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

The victim had family problems and suffered abuse from her father. She came to know a young man, and she decided to run away with him for the purpose of marriage.

She said, "I thought being with him could put an end to all my problems, so I ran away with him. He took me to an unknown place and raped me."

After raping her, he left her alone, and fled the scene. She had no idea where to go, so she went to police station, and was transferred to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 15: A 15-year-old girl was repeatedly raped by her father

04 August 2014, Herat:

The girl narrated her story, "The first time there was no one at home, except the two of us. He entered into my room, locked the door behind him, came closer to me and raped me."

"After raping me, he threatened that if I told anyone anything about it, he would kill me. That is why I could not speak about it to anyone," she said.

She said that she fell down on her knees and begged him not rape her, but he did not listen.

The rape was repeated for some time. Finally, she could not take it anymore. She went to police station and filed a complaint.

Her father was arrested and sentenced. She was moved to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

After spending a month, there she was released, and joined the police force.

She said, "I feel that I can defend myself now."

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 16: Her stepmother's customers raped a 9-year-old girl

26 March 2014, Mazar e Sharif:

The child was gang raped. A couple of years ago the girl's mother died, and she was living with her father and stepmother.

Her stepmother was involved in immoral activities. She had a gun which she used to threaten her 9-year-old stepdaughter, warning the girl not to say anything to her father about the visits of strange men to the house, or she would kill her.

After some time the stepmother told her to have sexual relations with the stepmother's customers or she would be killed. She was raped by the stepmother's customers.

A person named Akhtar Mohammad, who was an official in Chamtal District, would visit her house twice a week. After having an affair with the stepmother, he would rape the stepdaughter.

The stepdaughter wanted to describe the horrors to her father, but she was afraid of the stepmother.

The rapes continued until the child visited her grandmother and told her everything about it. Her grandmother filed a complaint with police. The stepmother was arrested and sentenced.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 17: A 16-year-old woman was raped by a stranger

16 June 2014, Mazar e Sharif:

The 16-year-old woman was married to her husband in a *baad*² marriage. Her in laws treated her badly, forcing her to bring in money through immoral activities.

She explained, “One day I went shopping with my mother in law. On the way, she took me to a house. There a man raped me. He did not pay attention when I tried to refuse his advances.”

After raping her, he told her that she should complain against her in laws to police, because they had asked him to rape her. Then, he let her go.

She went home and together with her sister in law filed a complaint against him and the rest of the family. When police came to arrest her in laws, the house was empty.

Police could not help her further. She had lost her way.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

Case 18: Two sisters, 20 and 27 years old, were strangled to death

30 November 2013, Mazar e Sharif:

Police found the bodies of two young women who had been strangled to death and thrown on the side of the street.

Their brother said that his sisters had planned to go to Kabul five days before their bodies were found. He had been in contact with them until 1:00 AM, and then the connection had broken.

Police transported the bodies to the hospital and then surrendered them to their brother.

No one was questioned or arrested in relation to this case.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 19: A woman was murdered by her husband and father in law

29 October 2013, Mazar e Sharif:

The young woman was 23 years old, married in an arrange marriage. From the first day of her marriage she encountered violence and domestic abuse. Her husband would often beat her up.

After several acts of violence, finally her husband and father in law decided to murder her. They first injured and then murdered her.

Her husband reported the case to police as if it was not he who had committed the offence along with his father.

He said, “Armed robbers broke into our house. My wife noticed them coming. They killed my wife and injured me.”

² *Baad* is a traditional custom in which a girl is married off as compensation for a crime one of her male family members has committed. *Baad* is a way to settle disputes and rivalry between two families, but the custom victimizes the woman who is forced into marriage. The marriage is usually decided by elders with representatives of both families being present. *Baad* is practiced in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

Her family filed a complaint against her husband. He was arrested and sentenced to 16 years of prison. This case happened in Chaharbolak District.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 20: A 14-year-old girl was raped by her sister's husband; she killed him

04 July 2011, Mazar e Sharif:

The girl was repeatedly raped by her sister's husband. Finally, she murdered him, and was arrested by the police.

"When my sister married her husband, they were poor, so her husband started living with us", the girl explained.

Her sister would work outside the house, and she would be left alone with her sister's husband. One day as they were alone at home, he asked her to sit closer to him. She resisted. He rushed at her and raped her.

She said, "I was in a horrible state. He threatened that he would kill me if I told anyone about it."

She could not speak about it to her family for some time, and he would repeatedly rape her. One day as he approached her, she murdered him.

The police arrested her. The girl complained, "I defended myself, and they sent me to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center."

She completed a 6-month prison term. Her sentence term was based on the fact that she killed him in self-defense.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 21: She was gang raped by unknown men

04 February 2010, Mazar e Sharif:

A 16-year-old girl was kidnapped and gang raped.

She tells her story, "One day I was hanging out with my classmate, who was also my friend. She took me to a car dealership, and she left me there."

There were some men in the car dealership. They removed her clothes and raped her. After she lost consciousness, her attackers fled the scene.

When she regained consciousness, the girl noticed that nobody was in the car dealership. She returned home in a very bad condition.

After some time she noticed health related problems so she visited a hospital. There she was told that she was pregnant. She felt shocked and confused.

She wanted to have an abortion, but the doctors would not agree to perform the procedure. One doctor did agree, but only based on a condition that she should sleep with him.

The victim did sleep with the doctor, but afterwards she developed mental health issues.
Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 22: Hairs and nails of a 14 year old bride were pulled out by her husband
15 November 2012, Baghlan:**

A man pulled out his newly married 14-year-old wife's hairs and nails, and put her in a life-threatening condition.

She was given to this elderly man in a forced marriage. He and his family inflicted violence on her; over time the abuse reached an extreme level.

"When I was very young, my father died. My mother married my uncle, without my brother's consent. My brother sold me to this elderly man for a great deal of money," the girl explained.

After her marriage she was kept like a prisoner in the basement of the house, and was the victim of domestic abuse. Her hairs and nails were pulled out. The main motive was that her husband and in laws wanted her to prostitute herself to bring them money, but she refused.

One day her brother visited her, only to find that she was living in an unbearable situation. He informed police. She was taken to the hospital and after recovery to a women's shelter in Kabul. Together, they filed a complaint against her husband and in laws. The police arrested the perpetrators and moved her to a women's shelter.

This case attracted attention in the whole country, especially among women's rights advocates. Civil society and women's rights groups advocated on the girl's behalf in order to ensure justice and to bring the perpetrators to trial.

Source: Azadi Radio [website](#)

**Case 23: Acid was thrown in the face of a young woman
27 October 2012, Baghlan:**

The son of an army commander threw acid at a young woman's face.

The man had sent a marriage proposal to her house, but he was refused. After a while, the girl got engaged to another person.

The victim said, "When my family and my response were negative to the commander's family, they came to my pre-wedding ceremony, and handcuffed my brother and father's hands."

Afterwards, they threw acid on her face. Her pre-wedding party was ruined.

Her family had to take her to Kabul for treatment, and from there they took her to India for further treatment.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 24: A 14-year-old girl was raped by a driver

06 November 2011, Bamyan:

The girl had gone outside her house with other girls to collect firewood.

She and her family lived in a rural village, and she had to go out every day to collect wood. One day when she was outside the house, a driver kidnapped her and then raped her. The driver fled the scene, leaving the girl in a critical condition. Upon returning home, she did not tell anyone about the incident.

She explained, "Since that day I was in a terrible mental condition. My stomach was getting bigger every day. My mother noticed it. She tore my stomach and brought the baby out."

Her mother sewed up her abdomen with ordinary thread (no anesthesia was used), but did not take her to hospital. Her health deteriorated day by day, and her abdomen became swollen. Then her family took her to hospital. From there, she was transferred to a women's shelter.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 25: A 22-year-old girl was gang raped

24 January 2012, Bamyan:

The young woman was a law school graduate. Due to her father's continued domestic violence, she fled with a young man to another city.

She recounted, "We went to another city. He raped me. He sold me to a few other people. Again, they raped me."

"I thought by escaping home I would have a better life, but even more repulsive things have happened to me that can never be repaired," she added.

The young woman returned to her own city, but out of fear she could not go back to her father's house. Her rapists threatened her as well. She was living in hiding. Because of the mental crisis she was facing, she visited a mental health clinic, but after some sessions she could not continue, because she was terrified of her rapists and also because she had problems walking due to the physical abuse she had received.

The mental health team contacted her. She was crying and saying that she could not move, therefore she could not visit the health clinic.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 26: A woman was murdered by her in-laws

19 November 2008, Maidan Wardak:

The young woman was 18 years old.

She had been married to a 50-year-old man in exchange for a large amount of money. After her marriage she encountered violence from her husband and the family of his first wife.

They treated her in a brutal way, to the extent that they broke her skull, and she came to Kabul for treatment.

After some time she returned to her husband's family in Maidan Wardak. This time violence cost her life; her family provided testimony that her in-laws murdered her.

Her husband did not take any responsibility for the murder and stated that she was mentally ill and had committed suicide.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 27: An 18 year old girl was injured by knife stabbing
25 December 2013, Parwan:**

The girl had refused to be forced into an engagement with an elderly man.

In her own words she said, "My family wanted to marry me off to an older man for a great deal of money. I was in love with my neighbor's son. To escape this marriage and marry my love, I ran away with the boy.

"Our families did not agree with our marriage. After running away, we settled in a garden located close to our homes. Nobody could find us for two days."

Eventually, neighbors recognized them and informed their families. Her family stabbed the girl with a knife, and murdered the boy.

When police received the information, they could not arrest the perpetrators, but in order to ensure her security, they relocated the young woman to a women's shelter in Kabul.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 28: A rape survivor has mental health issues
12 October 2010, Mazar e Sharif:**

A 32-year-old woman visited a mental health clinic where she explained that she was troubled by memories of when she had been raped by a cousin several years ago.

She had not shared her story with anyone throughout these years. Finally she was able to open up about the dark side of her life to her psychosocial counselor.

She said, "When I was 17 years old, he raped me. He ran away, and I could not talk to anyone about it. He ruined my life."

"My cousin would always talk about our marriage, and his interest in me. He lured me away and finally raped me." The assault took place close to her home.

After this incident she intended never to marry anyone. She made unsuccessful suicide attempts a few times. In her view, any girl who has been raped does not deserve to live; she should die.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 29: A 16-year-old girl was raped by a man she had known only through phone calls
22 September 2011, Mazar e Sharif:**

After the girl and man had known each other for some time, she decided to meet him in order to get to know him better.

In the meeting she learned that he was an engineer and had a construction company. The man asked her to go with him to his company and talk more there.

She said, "I agreed. When we entered to the building, he locked the door behind us and did not allow me to leave." He raped her. Afterwards, kissed her and said that he would come to her house with a marriage proposal in a week.

A week passed, but there was no news from the engineer and his phone was turned off. She narrated the whole incident to her family.

Her family married her off to her cousin, who had mental health issues. She always felt guilty for what had happened to her.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

**Case 30: A 24-year-old woman lost her toenails as a result of violence
28 February 2014, Mazar e Sharif:**

The woman's difficulties began when she and her problem was not being able to conceive. Her husband blamed her, although the defect was on his side, even if he would not admit that.

Her husband would inflict violence on her in different ways. On one occasion, he confined her in a cold place during the winter, as a result of which she lost her toenails.

He would not help her with the home expenses. She tolerated the violence in hopes that her husband would change some day. He did not change, but continued the same violent behavior.

Finally, she filed an appeal for divorce.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

**Case 31: A 16 year old who was raped, received punishment in public
30 April 2012, Ghazni:**

Although the girl had been raped, she was recognized by people, accused of adultery, and punished publicly with 100 lashes.

She said, “My cousin’s friend raped me. The local elders decided that I was the offender. They flogged me.”

According to her, she was flogged for attempting to commit adultery. The young man was not flogged at all.

After the incident, her family came to Kabul, and took her to her sister’s house. One day a driver tried to kidnap her. She fought back, rescued herself and went to a police station.

The police transferred her to a Juvenile Rehabilitation Center. After sometime she was reunited with her family.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

Case 32: Her husband cut off a woman’s genitals

03 August 2014, Takhar:

A 20 year old woman’s husband cut off her genital with a knife.

She had married him when she was 17. During their three years of marriage, he was extremely violent with her. Several times he tried to kill her, and he finally ended up injuring her in a dreadful way.

She said, “My husband abused me in several ways. One night he tied my hands and legs, and cut my genitals with a knife. He left me critically injured.”

When arrested, her husband told the police that many times she attempted to kill him, and had tried poisoning his food. An investigation carried out by the Public Health Directorate showed that his claims were baseless.

The woman was admitted to hospital.

The Police moved her husband to the detention center, and his crime file was sent to the court.

Source: Tolo News

Case 33: A 10-year-old girl was raped by a Mullah

02 May 2014, Kunduz:

The child was raped by a Mullah in a garden.

In Afghanistan, families often send their children (male and female) to a mosque in order that they learn Quran and Islamic faith through Mullahs.

Sobbing, the girl recalled her experience, “Mullah Ameenullah grabbed my hand. He took me to the garden close to the mosque. He held my hands and feet tight.

“I cried and told him that please do not ruin my future. But he did not listen. He raped me. Afterwards, he threatened me that if I told anyone, he would murder my family.”

Local officials in Kunduz Regional Hospital confirmed the case. She received treatment, and the Mullah was arrested.

Her family wanted to kill the girl, as she had brought great shame to the family. However, after advocacy conducted by women's rights groups, the family agreed not to murder her.

Source: Tolo News

**Case 34: A 2-year-old girl who was raped by a young man and died as a result
06 June 2013, Herat:**

The child was playing in a small garden close to her house, when a young man took her to a corner of the garden and raped her.

The rapist said, "When I took her to the corner of the garden, I did not pay attention to her cries. I raped her."

After the rape he left her there in a grave condition. She died as a result.

The perpetrator asked for pardon from the family of the victim and from the court. He said that while committing the act he was not in a normal state.

The court ordered that he should be executed for the severity of his crime.

It was not known whether he acted due to sexual deprivation, or family rivalry was involved in the case.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 35: Her husband killed a woman by repeatedly hitting her with a rock
16 August 2014, Herat:**

Local officials in Herat confirmed that the incident happened after the couple started a verbal fight with each other.

According to the officials, the husband was a drug addict and was not in control of his behavior.

During the quarrel with his wife the husband repeatedly attacked at her with a rock and eventually killed her.

He fled the scene afterwards. Police detained his family members for investigation.

Source: Jamhoo News

**Case 36: A Newly married bride ended her life by drowning herself in a river
01 March 2011, Takhar:**

The woman was 23 years old and had been married for only 40 days before drowning herself. She still had the color of henna on the palm of her hands when she drowned herself in Kaman River in Talqan City of Takhar Province.

Her body was recovered from the river after three days of searching. The main reason for her murder was the domestic violence she experienced during the 40 days of her marriage.

Her own family explained that during the short period of her marriage, the woman complained about her in-laws' violence, but her own family did not believe her. They encouraged her to continue her married life.

Her husband refused her family's claims; he said that his wife had mental health problems and had drowned herself as a result.

Forensic doctors said that some parts of the woman's body had black marks on them, but could not specify if that was from violence or drowning.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 37: A 27-year-old woman was strangled to death and had hot water poured over her body

10 February 2012, Baghlan:

Local officials in Baghlan Province stated that a woman's in laws reported that she died because of pouring hot water over her body.

The forensic tests showed that the main cause of her death was not the pouring of hot water over her body. However, there were signs that she might have been strangled.

The main reason for her death was not yet clear.

Her husband was arrested.

Source: Bast Baastan News

Case 38: An 18 year old girl was gang raped by armed men

24 May 2012, Kunduz:

The girl's family filed a complaint against a group of armed men who had kidnapped and gang raped their daughter.

The girl said, "Seven days ago these armed men who belong to a local commander's group, picked me from the road by force and took me to an unknown place. There they raped me."

She was kept there for five days.

Local officials in Kunduz confirmed the incident, indicating that the reason for the attack was personal rivalry. Police could only arrest two of the perpetrators.

Source: Pajhwok Afghan News

Case 39: A young girl was beheaded by a group of armed men

01 Aug 2012, Kunar:

Local officials said that the incident occurred in Suki District.

The armed men intended to kidnap the girl, but she resisted. Failing in their kidnap attempt, they became infuriated and beheaded her.

She was a student. The armed men broke into her house when nobody was there.

The motivation to kidnap her was not clear.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 40: A 22-year-old woman was killed with a hatchet
16 August 2012, Badakhshan:**

Only nine months had passed since the woman was married.

Shortly after marriage her husband began abusing her and used violence against her. One day he attacked her and cut her mouth all the way to her ears. He then cut off her fingers, and fled the scene.

After some days, he was arrested and sentenced. The exact motivation for this horrific murder was not clear.

Source: Badakhshan Local News

**Case 41: Two sisters, 19 and 17 year old were murdered by their father
01 July 2012, Helmand:**

These two girls were murdered as punishment for running away from home, in Nad Ali District.

Local officials reported that the two sisters ran away from home with a translator. They did not return for four days. When they did return, their father could not accept the fact that they had been away for that long, and so he murdered them.

It was not clear who the translator was and which area he belonged to. He fled the region and police could not find him.

The father was arrested.

Source: Afghan Women's Network Advocacy Department

**Case 42: A group of women were raped, one of them died as a result
27 August 2014, Kabul:**

This incident took place near midnight. A group of armed men stopped a vehicle carrying eight women, in Paghman District. They forced all of the passengers to leave the car, took them to another area, and raped the women.

There were four cars carrying men and women from different families, who were returning home. The women were kidnapped, and taken to a garden in a remote area.

The armed men separated the men and women. They raped the women until morning. Among those women, there was an 18-year-old girl.

In the morning, the armed men fled the scene. The travelers who thought what had happened to them was a disgrace decided that they would keep it to themselves.

The women were not in a condition to return home; instead they were taken to Istiqlal Hospital. Most of the women survived the rape after treatment, but the 18 year old did not recover and died.

After conducting an investigation, the police identified seven of the perpetrators. They were brought to trial, and five of them received execution order by court. The executions were carried out.

Further investigation was conducted to arrest the rest of the perpetrators.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 43: A woman attempted suicide through self-immolation

08 September 2014, Bamyan:

The 32 year old married woman could not endure the extreme violence against her, and carried out self-immolation.

Police transported her to the hospital. After some hours she gained consciousness, and reported that someone was after her and intended to murder her.

She was a mother of three children. Her husband had left some years ago and later married another woman. The abandoned wife was the sole breadwinner of her family.

The accounts showed that when she learned about her husband's second marriage, she decided to end her life.

Source: Jamhoo News

Case 44: An 18 year old girl was murdered by her brother with a hatchet

31 August 2014:

She was an 18-year-old girl, whose brother married her off in a forced marriage, to a 65-year-old man. This happened about seven months ago.

After marriage, her in laws treated her badly. The girl was subjected to continuous domestic violence.

After five months the girl returned to her brother, and told him she wanted to visit court to appeal for divorce.

At her own family's home, her brother's wife began mistreating her, including falsely reporting that the girl had had an affair with someone, and was speaking with him on phone.

The girl's brother and his wife continued treating her in a harsh way, putting heavy chores on her. Conflicts began to rise between them; finally her brother decided to murder her. One morning while she was asleep, he attacked her with a hatchet.

Her brother and his wife fled the house after the crime. Her mother found her brutally murdered, and informed police.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 45: A 30-year-old woman was murdered for her inheritance

05 August 2014, Herat:

The mother of four children was murdered by her husband so that he could possess her inheritance.

When no one was at home, her husband killed her by stabbing her with knife.

After having committed the crime, her husband joined an armed opposition group.

The main reason for the murder was her inheritance from her father. She did not want to take advantage of it. Her husband wanted her to access her inheritance and make use of it.

The conflict cost her, her life. Her husband joined the armed opposition group, so the police could not track him down. The police arrested his brother in order to track down the murderer.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 46: A female news reporter was murdered

17 September 2014, Mazar e Sharif:

Palwasha Tokhi Miranzai was murdered in a mysterious way. With a master's degree from Thailand, she was working for Bayan Radio Station in Mazar e Sharif. Someone entered her house and murdered her.

The reason for her murder is still not known.

Reports claimed that she was accidentally murdered by a thief who wanted to rob her house. However, some officials stated that the cause of her murder was personal rivalry.

Source: Tolo News

Case 47: A 25-year-old woman was hanged by her husband

29 April 2014:

The woman had just been married to a 60-year-old man who had already three wives. They were all living in the same house.

The three other wives mistreated her, giving her all the hardest household chores.

The violence finally reached such a level that she was hanged and murdered by her husband.

The victim's family wanted to portray it as a suicide case, but the evidence showed that it was in fact a murder.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 48: A 40-year-old woman was murdered by her husband
10 October 2014, Herat:**

The woman was murdered through being repeatedly stabbed with a stick.

She had sold a sack of wheat without her husband's permission. When he learned about the sale, he beat her to death with a stick.

Her husband surrendered himself to police afterwards.

Source: Jamhoo News

**Case 49: A newlywed woman was murdered by her husband
21 November 2014, Baghlan:**

Local officials in Baghlan released the news of a 16-year-old newlywed's murder.

She was murdered on the third day of her marriage. Her husband strangled her with a piece of cloth.

Police investigation showed that the reason behind her murder was family rivalry.

The girl had protested this marriage. Her father had married her off in front of two guarantors, who had promised that her in laws would not carry out any type of violence against her.

Police arrested both guarantors, but the perpetrator fled, taking the woman's gold jewelry away with him.

Source: Tolo News

**Case 50: A 3-year-old girl was raped
20 November 2014, Takhar:**

The incident happened in Rastaq District, in Takhar Province.

The child was playing with other children outside her house. She was raped by one of her relatives.

Her grandmother said that she found her close to the house covered in blood. She was taken to the hospital, and was transferred to Kabul for further treatment.

Police arrested the perpetrator. Her family asked the presidential palace to ensure strong punishment on the perpetrator.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 51: A 45-year-old mother was murdered by her son in an honor killing
May 2014, Parwan:**

The woman had been a widow for 10 years.

She had a grown up son, who would not support her with her expenses or pay any attention to her. She was not even taken to the doctor when she fell ill. She lived in poverty, relying on others in her village to help her.

A stranger noticed her situation and offered help. He would regularly help her and treated her well. Her son suspected that they were having an affair. He began threatening his mother and the man. But the mother and the man did not take his threats seriously.

One night the son invited his mom to his house. There he murdered her with a hatchet and cut her into pieces. He then placed her pieces in a sack and put it in that man's garden.

He began threatening the man. The man decided to file a complaint against the son. The son shot dead the stranger and fled the scene.

Source: Accounts of a psychosocial client, who is also a close relative of the deceased woman, Medica Afghanistan

**Case 52: A 20-year-old girl was raped by her boyfriend
Kabul, January 2015:**

The girl was referred to us by one of our previous clients. She had suicidal thoughts. After a number of psychosocial counseling sessions, she opened up to us and shared her story, "One year had passed since we started a relationship. One day his sister rang up and said that she missed me, and that it had been long since I had visited their house.

"Not only did we have a friendship, we also had family ties. Because I trusted these ties, I agreed to visit them. He and his sister made me unconscious through putting something into my juice. He then raped me."

The girl said that after she regained consciousness, she screamed and asked for help. Her boyfriend calmed her down and promised that he would send a marriage proposal to her house, and they would get married. Six months passed from the incident, but a marriage proposal was not sent to her house. During this time he continued to give her false promises.

One day in Ramadan, while they were speaking on phone, he told her "Don't waste your time thinking about marriage and stuff. You are a modern girl; let's have fun."

She said that after hearing those words she lost all patience and hope, and the sense of revenge awoke in her.

Next time when she was invited to visit him, she accepted, but she took her father's gun with her.

“He came closer to me and I shot him,” She said.

She was sentenced to 17 years of prison by the court, and her father was sentenced to four years for possessing a gun.

She said, “After this incident and the court order, I developed mental health problems. I am feeling better with psychosocial counseling. But I do not regret killing him. Let this be a lesson for boys who cheat on innocent girls.”

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 53: A university student was sexually abused

22 June 2015, Kabul:

The 23-year-old university student visited our psychosocial counseling center. She was complaining depression, suffering from insomnia, vague body pains, fear, tiredness, and pain in her genital area.

After some counseling sessions, the girl opened up and said that she came from a province to Kabul for studies and lived in a hostel. In Kabul, she came to know a young man; they became intimate, and would spend time together sometimes. They even discussed marriage with each other.

He had told her with affection that they did not know each other well enough, saying, “I have a condition to prove that you are clean [virgin]. Let’s get intimate for once, so I know that you are a virgin, and you had not been with someone else before.” Because she loved him more than herself, she agreed.

After getting intimate with her, he penetrated her several times through her anus. After some time the client pointed out to her boyfriend that they should marry. He made excuses for not being able to marry her. She later learned that he was a married man, and recently had fathered a baby boy.

When she asked the reason for his cheating, he told her that she was a morally corrupt girl, and that while he wanted to have fun with her, he had no intention of marrying her.

As counseling sessions continued, her mental condition has shown improvements.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 54: She suffered from violence for ten years

11 May 2015, Kabul:

One day a 28-year-old woman visited our psychosocial counseling center.

She told us her story: “When I was 18 years old I was kidnapped by a jihadi commander. He threatened to murder my family, so they kept silent. He took me to his house without a wedding.”

She added, “He had another wife before me. He was violent, and his violence against me increased day by day. I lived with that for ten years.”

She told us that he would beat her up and insult her. “The marks on my face are from his beatings,” she said.

She could not take it anymore and through one of our former clients, she was referred to our psychosocial counseling center.

Besides receiving psychosocial support, she wanted a divorce. With the help of our lawyers she received a divorce. Other civil society organizations helped her with getting a job in the government. She can support herself now, and is content.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 55: Her husband and in laws inflicted violence on a 20 year old woman

17 March 2015, Kabul:

The woman told us, “My family married me off in a forced marriage. I did not consent to the match. My in laws would insult me and always threw my lack of a good dowry into my face. They would ask why I did not bring anything to them.”

She related that she was often beaten by her husband. When he would go out to have fun, his family would abuse her. She said, “What most troubled me was that he brought women home to have fun with, and I had to greet them. After they had illegitimate relations, I would have to prepare the bathroom for them.”

She went on, “Gradually I ran out of patience. I attempted suicide several times, but always failed. Until this day I had no one to share my problems with, so I would feel a bit calmer.”

Her psychosocial counselor referred her to our legal department to provide her further support. She was determined to receive legal support and change the course of her life.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 56: A young girl was severely injured by her brother and father

December 2014, Kabul:

The girl’s brother wanted her to marry her cousin, but she was in love with another young man. Therefore, she rejected her brother’s request.

The neighbors told her brother that she had loved someone and had an affair with him. Her brother, with the help of her father, made a false statement to her and took her to their village. They intended to murder her.

They stabbed her in the neck, stomach and torso with a knife. They fled the scene afterwards. When she screamed in pain, people heard her, and they took her to the hospital.

She was treated, and transferred to a women's shelter in Kabul. She currently suffers from mental health problems including fear, nightmares, and depression.

The women's shelter she was in referred her to us. Gradually, the young woman is moving towards recovery. She decided to never return to her family. She wants to pursue a decent life beside other women in the women's shelter. She is also looking for her love.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 57: Forced marriage ruined one girl's life

Kabul:

The young woman is 25 years old. Her father forced her to marry a man who lived abroad.

She and the man had never seen or spoken to each other. After the marriage he took her abroad. There was an older lady in the house who was her husband's first wife.

Her husband told the girl that his first wife should not know about their marriage, and asked her to pretend that she was a guest. He would show her off as a symbol of beauty to his friends. He paid constant attention to her weight, clothing and beauty. She was forced to do what she did not want to do. She had to act like a doll and was controlled by him.

One day, she realized that she was pregnant. She shared the news with her husband with excitement. He became inflamed with anger and wanted her to have abortion in any way he could arrange. When he started beating her severely, she lost consciousness.

When she opened her eyes she found herself in the hospital. Her husband was discussing her abortion with the doctors. He was telling the doctors that they were partners, and did not want the child. As a result, the abortion went ahead, and the woman lost her unborn child.

When she found an opportunity, the young woman shared the story with her doctor. Her parents helped her to return to Afghanistan; however, the failed marriage and abortion caused her to develop mental health issues.

The woman is receiving mental counseling now. She does not ever want to become a toy again. She wishes to become a real wife and mother.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 58: A 16-year-old was raped by her father

January 2015, Kabul:

The incident took place while the girl's mother was attending a funeral. The girl's father raped her.

When her mother returned home, the girl told her what had happened, but her mother did not believe and cursed her instead.

In July 2015 the girl visited the hospital with her mother, because she had abdominal pains. It turned out that she was pregnant. Her mom began hitting herself and cursing her daughter for becoming pregnant.

The police arrested the father. The girl suffered a miscarriage. Her uncle and mom turned against her for filing a complaint against her father.

Fearing for her life, the girl ran away from home. She took refuge in a women's shelter.

She is receiving psychosocial counseling with us.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 59: A young woman was raped and is now awaiting justice
03 November 2014, Badakhshan:**

The woman's family publicly shared her story, and said that they have been waiting for justice for five years now.

The woman was gang raped 5 years ago. Her husband demanded that the presidential palace and relevant authorities punish the perpetrators, but so far only two of the perpetrators have been arrested.

The rape happened during the month of Ramadan. An armed group attacked the family home, and raped the young woman.

In order to rescue his family from further harm, her husband brought them all to Kabul. They were still receiving threats from the armed group, and none of the relevant authorities helped them.

Her husband demands that the president serve justice by punishing all of the perpetrators. He has said that if no action is taken on their case, he will set himself and his family on fire.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 60: A 16-year-old mother attempted suicide through self-immolation
03 April 2014, Herat:**

The girl's story came to our attention when she was brought to the hospital.

The girl was forced by her family to marry at the age of 11. After marriage, she suffered violent abuse at the hands of her in laws. Her hair was cut off, and her body bore the marks of deliberate burning.

The young mother had a 9 month old baby. Despite that, she decided to end her life, so she set herself on fire. She was brought to the hospital and her death was prevented.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 61: A 15-year-old girl was raped by her teacher

15 September 2012, Herat:

The girl was engaged at the time of the rape.

She cried as she told her story, "All the students left; I wanted to leave as well, but the teacher grabbed my hand. He closed the door, and raped me."

"He put his hand on my mouth, so nobody would hear me. He did not listen to my cries," she added.

After the rape, she was in a terrible situation, and he abandoned her.

Upon returning to her home, she shared the incident with her family. Her teacher was arrested.

She was transferred to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center, and after a period of time, she was reunited with her family, and resumed her life.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 62: A newlywed woman was raped and sold to strangers

28 December 2012, Herat:

The woman recalled the incident, "My husband was abroad. He did not return for our wedding. On the first night of my wedding, my brother in law raped me."

She mentioned the details, "After the wedding party was over, it was nighttime. I came to my room, and everybody went to sleep. My brother in law came into my room, closed the door and raped me."

After the incident, her brother in law left the house. Without telling her in laws, the woman chose to visit her own family and seek help.

On the way, she was kidnapped by some strangers, and taken to an unknown place.

They wore police uniforms and pretended that they were helping her. After taking her to another place they sold her to other people. Seven people raped her and then left her in the corner of the road.

After a lot of searching, the police found her in a critical condition.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 63: A 28-year-old woman committed suicide

06 April 2014, Mazar e Sharif:

The reason for the woman's suicide was domestic violence.

Her mother explained, "Twelve years ago, my daughter was married, and she had four children. Because of economic problems, she and her husband always had arguments."

Her husband denied that there were any domestic problems between him and his deceased wife. But their 10-year-old's statement said that the parents had an argument the night before the woman's suicide.

Her family filed a complaint with police about her husband and in laws. The husband was arrested and sentenced.

Source: Medica Afghanistan

Case 64: A 17-year-old girl was raped by her neighbor's son

10 September 2010, Mazar e Sharif:

The girl said, "We loved each other, and wanted to get married. Our families did not agree with the marriage, so we ran away from home."

She added, "We had decided to start a new life in another city, but it did not happen that way. All my dreams got buried."

When they fled from their houses, they stayed in a hotel. Her boyfriend asked her to get intimate with him. She refused and said that first they need to make *nikah*³, and then she will be able to get intimate with him.

He did not agree with her, and raped her. He fled from the hotel afterwards. She had no address to find him.

After a few days, she went to the police station and reported the case. She was arrested for adultery and sent to Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

After some time she was reunited with her family. They have not heard from her boyfriend since the rape happened.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

Case 65: A 22-year-old was raped by a young man she loved

04 February 2012, Mazar e Sharif:

The rapist was her neighbor. Before the rape, he had promised that he would marry her.

He asked her to take a few minutes and talk to him about the marriage outside her house. They went to a house where there was no one present to talk about their marriage. There, he raped her.

Afterwards, he told her that she was not a decent girl and they could not get married. He further told her that she should not tell anyone about the rape, or he would murder her brother and father.

She did not share the story with anyone, but developed severe mental health issues.

³ [*Nikah*](#) is a solemn and sacred social contract between bride and groom.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 66: A 20-year-old was raped for five years by her father
20 February 2013, Mazar e Sharif:**

The 20 year old woman visited a mental health clinic, and revealed her rape case.

Her father had two wives, and her mother died due to violence from her father.

When the girl reached the age of 15, he started raping her, and the abuse continued for five years.

The young woman said, "The situation was very bad. When people came to our house with marriage proposals, my father would reject them all. Or once they saw my father's bad behavior, they would decide themselves to leave."

After some time, she got engaged. Her father also mistreated her fiancé. The woman said that she has no hopes for living.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 67: A 17-year-old girl was sold and gang raped
23 October 2008, Mazar e Sharif:**

In order to flee her father's violence, the girl ran away from home, after taking advice from one of her friends. Instead, her friend sold her to a woman, and from there her miseries started.

The woman who purchased the girl offered her to a man who raped her.

The girl said, "After I was sold to this man, I was taken to an unknown place. There, not only did he rape me, but also there were other men who raped me."

She thought that she had lost too much respect to return to her family. Through the woman she was sold to and through her rapists the girl became involved in immoral activities.

After a year police arrested her.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 68: An 18-year-old girl's ears and nose were cut off by her father in law
28 February 2009:**

The girl was brought to Bagrami Hospital, which belonged to American troops. She was in a critical condition.

The troops were walking in the area when they found her.

After some days when her situation became stable she said, "I was married off by force. My uncle married a girl with whom he had run away. To compensate, they married me off in a *baad* marriage to that girl's family."

While she was living with her in laws, the level of violence against her increased day by day. She decided to escape the violence by running away. On the way, she was arrested and sent to prison.

When her prison term was completed, he father in law came to get her. He took her to a mountainous area, and cut her ears and nose. He left her there in a critical condition. That is when the American troops found her and transported her to the hospital.

After a lengthy treatment she was transferred to a women's shelter in Kabul. She was eventually taken to the United States of America.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Psychosocial and Health Program

**Case 69: A 14-year-old girl was kidnapped, raped and sold
09 January 2014, Mazar e Sharif:**

The girl was kidnapped close to her house. The kidnapper took her to an unknown place and raped her. Afterwards, he sold her to some other men.

The victim said, "After he sold me to some other men, they also kidnapped me. Then they left me in a critical condition in an unknown place far from the city."

The police and judicial system failed to help her by finding the perpetrators. She was left alone, and she was not even helped by her family. She suffered a mental breakdown, but she did not have money to seek psychosocial support.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

**Case 70: A 20 year old newlywed woman was sold and raped
12 February 2014, Mazar e Sharif:**

The woman was sold off by her in laws, and she was later raped.

Her marriage had taken place, based on her family's consent. After three months of happily married life, she began to suffer from things going wrong. Eventually, she was sold to a man she did not know and raped by him.

She told her story, "One day when I was home, my father in law asked me to bring tea for a guest. I brought tea; the door was closed behind us. I was left alone with the stranger."

She added, "I tried hard to open the door, and I screamed, but there was no one to help me. The man who had come to our house as a guest raped me."

The next day her father in law took her to a place where the same man was. The man raped her again. When she cried and tried to defend herself, the man told her that he had paid a lot of money to her father in law, and did not mean to force her.

The man asked her to get her separation from her husband and marry him. The case has been under work by our legal aid team, but did not have an outcome.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

Case 71: Two sisters 17 and 18 years old were raped and given in a *baad* marriage by their father

02 July 2013, Mazar e Sharif:

A woman filed a complaint against her husband for raping their daughters.

She said, “My daughters were to be married off in a *baad* marriage. Before their wedding, they were raped by their father.”

They were raped and then married off in a *baad* marriage. Her husband used violence against her so she would not speak about the attacks to anyone.

He did not admit raping his daughters, but he did admit that he married them off in a bad marriages.

After an investigation, the father was found guilty of a criminal act and sentenced to a six-year prison term.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

Case 72: A 16-year-old girl was gang raped and arrested by police

03 July 2012, Mazar e Sharif:

The girl was walking on her way when seven men kidnapped her. After being taken to another place, they raped her.

When the police were informed about this case, they arrested the girl for adultery.

She became pregnant as a result of the rapes. Although the court at first sentenced her, she was later declared innocent and released.

Her father demanded justice for his daughter from the judicial system, but the police could not arrest the perpetrators.

Source: Medica Afghanistan Legal Aid Program

Case 73: A woman was gang raped in public

20 October 2013, Baghlan:

A 20-year-old married woman was visiting her parents. One day, while she was home alone, a group of armed men took her outside the house and raped her.

Even though they raped her in public, nobody prevented them. After the rape, they fled the scene.

The police and local people who witnessed the assault could not help her.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 74: She was raped by her uncle and brother in law

02 December 2012:

The woman filed a complaint against her uncle and brother in law for raping her.

She narrated her dark story, "My family had decided to marry me off to an older man. I disagreed with the marriage. In order to escape it, I went to my uncle's house. I helped him with livestock and looked after his cows."

One day when she was in the barn and no one else was there, her uncle came and raped her.

She was raped more times, but she could not object, because objecting meant that she would have been sent back to her parents' house and forced to marry the older man.

When she could not bear her uncle's attacks anymore, she finally returned to her parents' house and was married off to her cousin.

For seven months she had a good life. But then her husband left for Iran to work, and she was raped by her brother in law.

She ran out of patience and filed a complaint against her brother in law and uncle.

When her husband learned about it, he returned from Iran, murdered her family, and fled back to Iran.

Source: Azadi Radio [website](#)

Case 75: A 17-year-old girl was raped by her brother

12 January 2015, Jawzjan:

The girl was raped by her 21-year-old brother.

The incident happened in Sheberghan. No one was at home when her brother raped the girl.

She separated from her husband few months back, and went to live with her family.

Her brother confessed his crime and said that he was not in a normal state of mind when he raped his sister, or else he would have never done something so bad.

The girl is asking the government that her brother be executed.

Source: Jamhoo News

Case 76: A pregnant woman lost her child after being beaten up by a Mullah who was doing black magic

14 February 2015, Kunduz:

The woman was eight months' pregnant and lost her baby. She was a resident of Qasaab Village of Chahardara District, in Kunduz Province.

She said, "I had high blood pressure. My in laws took me to this Mullah. Falsely saying that I had 'spirits' in my body, he beat me up. I lost my eight month baby as a result."

The local officials in Kunduz confirmed the case that her baby was lost due to her being beaten up by the Mullah.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 77: An 18 year old girl was raped by hospital guards

15 December 2014:

The girl wanted to take food to her mother who had been admitted to the hospital.

"My mom was a patient in the mental health section, and I was looking after her. I wanted to take her food, when I was asked to by a guard to visit the office of head of crimes at the hospital," she said.

She went to his office. They locked the door after her and gang raped her. No one could speak about the case.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 78: An 18 year old mother was murdered mysteriously

04 August 2012, Herat:

The evidence showed that the woman had been strangled.

Her husband reported that she committed suicide, but an investigator said that she was murdered by her in laws.

When her 7-year-old son was asked about the incident, he said, "My father and my grandfather killed my mom."

Her brother in law offered compensation to her brother to keep silent, and not follow their case with police, so that it is now closed.

The motive for murder was not clear, but police arrested her husband.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Case 79: A 32-year-old woman was strangled to death

30 April 2012:

Police found her body in a sack.

Local officials said that she was strangled to death, and her body was placed in a sack.

The main reason for her murder was not clear, but eyewitnesses said that she faced a lot of domestic violence.

According to police, her husband was a criminal before, and had completed a term in prison. It was not clear if she was murdered by her husband.

Source: Azadi Radio website

**Case 80: A young woman cut her throat in an attempt to commit suicide
20 September 2014, Herat:**

A 26-year-old mother of two children was hospitalized in a critical condition.

She had been married 10 years ago and later on separated from her husband. She was living with her family.

Since she was illiterate, she enrolled in a literacy course. She came to know a young man and he wanted to marry her.

Her family did not agree with the marriage. The disagreement caused her further problems. The young man she loved threatened her family. Her brothers became infuriated and beat her up.

The situation got tense for her, and she decided to commit suicide by cutting her throat.

She was critically wounded when she was brought to hospital, but she survived.

Source: Azadi Radio website

Expert Legal Opinion About Violence Against Women in Afghanistan

Judicial System's Response to GBV

Research shows that Afghan women encounter various problems while trying to access the justice system. Familial, local, social and tribal hostilities originate in a traditional society in which women tend to lack access to judicial system. Negligence and a lag in judicial procedures and bias in law implementation are the main reasons that deter Afghan women from approaching the justice system.

One main challenge that women face is the transference of files from provinces to the capital, Kabul. According to civil law courts, the file should be reviewed in the defendant's city of residence. For instance, if a woman wants to file a complaint against her husband to demand a divorce or wants to take the custody of her children, she must visit a court where her husband lives.

In many cases after a woman files a complaint against her husband, the husband flees to his native town. Due to the insecurity and the potential danger she might face from her husband, a woman will not find it safe or even possible to travel to her husband's native town. Cost is another challenge for women, as many of them cannot afford to travel to another province.

In order to continue her case, if a woman wants to change the court where her case will be heard, she faces a lengthy process that requires constant follow up with court officials. Often women abandon their cases and live with the consequences.

A lack of coordination within the judicial system often causes the justice to fail in women's cases. Moreover, in criminal cases and in particular cases involving violence, most women avoid filing a complaint out of fear of further harm.

According to EVAW (Elimination of Violence Against Women) Law, processing of cases involving violence will only proceed if a victim files a complaint. If a woman declines to file a complaint, her case will not be processed, and the perpetrator will not be arrested.

In many cases women either do not file a complaint or withdraw their cases due to external pressures.

Why Would A Woman Not File A Complaint?

Fear of men plays a key role in women's avoidance of filing complaints. According to a research by the [Women and Children's Legal Research Foundation](#), 46% of women fear the male members of their family and so do not file a complaint. The remaining 54% have to wait for over six months for a court's final decision because of a backlog of court cases.

The research also revealed that many women who are complainants or convicted do not have an access to a defense lawyer.

The research suggested that the capacity of police and judiciary staff must be strengthened so they can better handle cases of violence against women. It also emphasized that training workshops should be conducted for the general population so that they learn their basic rights.

The Women and Children's Legal Research Foundation also suggested that the civil and criminal laws of Afghanistan should be reviewed to ensure justice for women and girls is served. Family courts should be established to review the articles that do not serve to protect women and girls' rights. Based on our experience with clients, we affirm the need for such changes.

Medica Afghanistan's experience shows that many women are reluctant to report crimes to male police officers. The provision of legal aid in many districts has been adversely affected by deterioration of security. In places where there is access to the legal system, there are complaints about corruption, delays and biases against women in the judicial process. As a result, many women are either discouraged from seeking formal justice or drop their cases part way through the legal proceedings.

Why does the EAW Law Not Stop (s)GBV in Afghanistan?

The EAW Law was signed in August 2009, based on a legislative decree signed by former Afghan president Hamid Karzai. EAW is considered a huge step towards addressing violence against women in Afghanistan. For the first time, legislation listed the crimes against women and specified punishment for each of these crimes.

During the four years since its adoption, the law has faced numerous barriers. Its enemies, who include the most powerful legislators and policy makers, have challenged its legitimacy. However, its advocates, who are human rights and women's rights organizations, have shown extraordinary resistance, so that the law can be implemented.

The reasons why the law has not been able to prevent (s)GBV and other crimes against women are:

- Ineffective implementation is a challenge not only in regards with the EAW law, but also for other laws in Afghanistan. For a decade there has been serious criticism by experts and analysts about failures to implement Afghan laws, but such criticism has not helped the situation. Because EAW Law is a new law, its implementation is a particular challenge.
- The majority of Afghans do not accept the EAW law due to reasons that are justifiable to them. As an example, many believe that the EAW law originated in the west, and thus it is not consistent with the moral and traditional values of our society.
- The majority of judicial staff, including judges and prosecutors, express a masculine perspective hostile towards this law.
- Often women are forced to withdraw their cases and attend mediation instead. They are coerced into withdrawal either by the judiciary or by their families due to threats of death, divorce, loss of child custody or loss of alimony. Many women refer to the prosecution office and the judiciary for violence, but before their cases are completed, they have to withdraw them.

- The majority of people do not know about the EVAW law, or if they know, they cannot understand it due to lack of civil and legal information.
- The awareness-raising programs of many organizations are aimed at women. Men think that this law has been created against them, and their interests are at risk. Thus, they use violence against women even more. It is therefore helpful if both genders are included in such programs.
- Members of the Afghan parliament have criticized some articles of the law. Their criticism in the spring of 2012 created more negative views about the law.
- Administrative corruption often occurs where, despite the law supporting women, the court decides against them. Women do not have economic independence, and mostly it is men who have the economic control in the family. Administrative corruption is at a high peak. The perpetrators (men) give bribes to the courts so they can finalize the case for their benefit.
- Family dependency causes women either to not file a complaint or to withdraw it early. When a woman knows that by implementation of the EVAW law, her husband could be sentenced and she could be separated from her family, she draws her case back.
- Family threats, especially from a husband, also causes women to not file a complaint
- Article 39 of EVAW Law is a barrier towards women's access to justice because it articulates that, unless the complainant files a complaint, the criminal case will not be processed. This article means that a woman must file a written complaint if the case against her husband or any other perpetrator of violence is to proceed.

In general, cases of violence against women are less reported and recorded in judiciary than other crimes because of cultural restrictions, traditional beliefs, social norms, religious prohibitions, fear, and shame of stigmatization and becoming isolated, or receiving threats. These factors combine to make the EVAW law less effective in combating violence against women.

Farzana Amin
Senior Lawyer, Trainer

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Expert Psychosocial Opinion About the Effects of Violence Against Women

Definition of Violence and its Effects

The word “violence” is used as a synonym for “aggression.” The term refers to hostile actions that are deliberately taken against another human being and to harm inflicted on individuals and objects.

Violence affects individuals in two ways: personally and socially. On a personal level, a victim may be harmed physically and humiliated before her family and neighbors. On a social level, violence creates a feeling of distrust towards others.

The family is the basic institution that is supposed to offer security and serenity to its members. But domestic violence causes anxiety and insecurity. The consequences of domestic violence are mental and physical illnesses, and often an increase in family murders and the harassment of women and children. Domestic violence is a symptom of the increase in violence in a society as a whole.

Violence negatively impacts the whole family system. Girls who have been beaten as children or teenagers, have experienced any other type of violence, or have witnessed their mothers being beaten by their fathers tend to develop feelings of self-hatred and to become locked in the “prison of victimization.” They typically lose their appetite and grow up malnourished, or in order to escape their condition, they turn to drugs and sleeping pills. This type of victim also tends to practice self-harm and to have suicidal thoughts.

On the other hand, when boys encounter violence in childhood, they often grow up becoming violent themselves, in order to hide their past vulnerability. Unlike women, such men vent their anger not on themselves, but on others.

Experiences stemming from childhood become entrenched in the subconscious minds of men and women, to the level that later on such violence is used as a defining formula and norm in social relationships.

Violence and its repetition cause long-term effects on the psyche of the victim. Violence not only causes physical and mental harm, but also it causes economic damage to the families and to society as a whole.

Why Does Violence Occur?

The main underlying causes of violence against women are [gender inequality and discrimination](#), “influenced by the historical and structural power imbalance between men and women.” Economic dependency causes women to lack power and control, thus they become more prone to abuse and violence.

Other factors include poverty; lack of education; lack of awareness about each other’s rights, especially women’s rights; childhood experiences; and more importantly, social norms that “prescribe men and women’s roles” and gives impunity to violators of women’s rights. With

reference to power, in order to show their power, men inflict violence on women and children. This is how violence becomes an instinct and an observed human trait in social relationships.

Due to socio-economic reasons, young men suffer mental discomfort, such as fear, isolation, anger, self-hatred, and violence. In such situations, violence is used as a neutralizing mechanism. Young men think that committing violence is a way to maintain their balance and masculinity. With this mindset, they inflict violence on those who are less powerful.

Sexualized Gender-based Violence

Sexualized gender-based violence is one of the most destructive types of violence that affects mainly women and children. Rape is a forceful act of sex with someone without his or her consent. Rape is not only a physical attack, but also an assault on the spirit and social standing of the victim. Through the act of rape a victim is denied both civil rights and human dignity.

The victims of sexualized gender-based violence may experience mental disorders for a long period of time after the initial attack. The repetition of rape and violence, whether explicit or implicit, can affect significantly the psyche of the victim.

In addition to the fact that rape is a painful physical experience, its mental effects are equally serious. At a personal level sexual assault results in such effects as lowering of self-esteem; recurring memories of the rape; nightmares; anger, fear, insecurity, withdrawal from normal activities; avoidance of places, thoughts and feelings that would trigger recollections of the rape; anxiety and insomnia, a distaste for intimacy, a feeling of having lost respect, self-blame and a lack of self-confidence. According to psychologists, these experiences count as post-traumatic stress disorder. Even if the victims do not react towards their assault at first or even if they try to deny it in order to live normally, at some point they are likely to suffer these symptoms.

From a social perspective, the victims of violence (domestic, physical, mental, sexual) face many problems in their daily social lives. These difficulties include isolating self from others, avoidance of social situations, discrimination, social taboos, domestic divisions, disruption of marital relationships, turning to drugs, turning to unhealthy social relationships and prostitution, and suicide attempts. The effects are experienced not only by women victims but also their children. Their children may suffer from aggression, arguing, nagging, learning difficulties, problems with sleeping, and malnutrition. They, as well as their parents, are confined to a cycle of violence.

How Can Survivors of (s)GBV be Supported?

These victims need the support of psychologists and psychosocial counselors. Survivors must be treated with full respect, so that they can regain their sense of authority and recover their self-confidence. Survivors who are able to connect with other victims have the opportunity to share their pain, suffering, and concerns. In turn, sharing reduces the pain. Being with each other, they will gain strength, and this will help boost their self-confidence.

Inclusion of the survivors in support groups where they interact with other survivors boosts individual courage to protest against violent treatment. These groups create an environment

where survivors can safely break their silence, and with the help of a psychologist find appropriate solutions for moving on with their lives.

It is important that a family creates a safe environment without any conflict and noise for a survivor, so that she can do the exercises assigned by the psychologist. A secure family environment involves emotional, economic and psychological security, and these factors are pivotal in recovery.

Sharing and creating a safe environment will help control feelings of isolation, depression and reluctance to engage in social activities.

Despite the importance of these approaches, erasing the experience of GBV from the psyche of the survivors remains a challenging and lengthy process.

Vida Faizi
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