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## **Best Practices among Responses to Domestic Violence in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh**

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### **Introduction**

Violence against women has been recognized as one of the eleven critical areas of concern by the Indian government in its 1995 Country Report for the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing. This is a significant change from just over two decades ago when the 1975 landmark "Status of Women in India" report did not even include violence as a chapter. Yet, few concrete estimates of the magnitude of violence in India exist. The number of cases of violence against women that are reported to the police under legal classifications of cruelty, torture, and dowry death, give just a small indication of the problem. Torture and cruelty by husband or in-laws constituted the major kind of crime amongst all reported forms of violence against women in 1995, accounting for 29 percent of all reported cases. Further, these reports had increased dramatically, from 21,106 in 1991 to 36,219 in 1995. There is an urgent need for organized responses on the part of the state as well as the non-governmental or voluntary sector to address the epidemic of domestic violence.

However, there are few studies that document the existing responses to domestic violence or assess their effectiveness. A study on institutional responses to domestic violence was undertaken by the Women's Studies Unit at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, in 1997-98 to fill this gap. In reviewing the above national statistics, it was noted that the two states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra together account for 29.7 percent of total registered crimes against women. Further, Maharashtra registered the highest number of cases of torture and cruelty by husband and/or his relatives and Madhya Pradesh is a close second. This research study was undertaken by Tata Institute in order to analyze the range of government and non-governmental responses to domestic violence in these two states, to identify "best practices" and to suggest criteria for evaluating effective responses to domestic violence.

## Scope and Methodology

This research study has consciously addressed issues related to research design, and attempted to develop a suitable methodology to study domestic violence. The study has been largely exploratory in nature.

The choice of the locale of study was dictated by a number of valid factors. As shown above, both states are regarded as crime prone regions with a high incidence and prevalence of crimes against women. But their similarities end here. In terms of development indicators, Maharashtra has a strong track record whereas Madhya Pradesh is counted among the least developed states. The voluntary sector in Madhya Pradesh is of recent origin and the women's movement is still in its nascent stages. Maharashtra, on the other hand, has witnessed various reform movements and has been the center of a vibrant and active women's movement. This contrast shows a context for different responses in the states and provides an opportunity to explore socio-culturally appropriate interventions. These regional variations have also been reflected in the different approaches to data collection adopted for the two states.

The methodology was designed to interweave a quantitative survey of field practices with a qualitative analysis of purposively selected samples of government and non- governmental responses. The absence of a directory of NGOs for Madhya Pradesh led to a pilot visit in several districts to locate agents and agencies that would be key informants and to arrive at possible areas of inquiry. This process yielded a rounded perspective on the range of responses to domestic violence in Madhya Pradesh. In contrast, a well-documented directory of NGOs exists for Maharashtra. From a total of 301 NGOs listed, the 128 that were reportedly working on the issue of domestic violence were contacted through a brief questionnaire on their activities and willingness to participate in the study. The same process was followed in Madhya Pradesh after the pilot visit. Twenty NGOs from Madhya Pradesh and 74 from Maharashtra responded. The actual selection of districts was dictated by different factors in both states. In Maharashtra, the pilot questionnaire defined the areas of research in terms of the NGO sector. But, in Madhya Pradesh, districts were selected based on a combination of factors such as areas with visible people's initiatives, those showing poor female development indices, areas with high crime rates, or substantial tribal populations. A total of 13 districts in Madhya Pradesh and 18 in Maharashtra were covered in the search.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, using an interview guide developed out of the categories of inquiry that emerged during the pilot visits. Secondary data sources such as government policies and

programs, reports of various departments, and plans were also analyzed to contextualize the responses.

This research study has thus concluded that a methodology combining a quantitative measure, such as a survey, and a qualitative analysis of purposively selected samples, is an effective strategy for obtaining an approximate representative sample of the entire range of interventions. At the same time, this combination makes for an inquiry that is sensitive to the variety and complexity of responses possible.

During the course of the study, the absence of a sound database on domestic violence and specifically on responses to domestic violence became apparent. This lacuna needs to be addressed for strengthening advocacy as well as for developing a deeper understanding of the issue.

### **The Range of State and Non-Governmental Interventions**

A broad overview of the range of responses to domestic violence reveals innovation and concern on the part of the state as well as the NGO sector to address the issue of domestic violence. For the purposes of this study, domestic violence was defined as physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse experienced by an adult woman within her home. The universe of research encompasses both state and NGO responses to domestic violence (figure 1: Charting the Universe of Research is missing). State responses covered included a) judicial responses, such as legal aid cells, family courts, women's courts; b) police responses in the form of All Women Police Stations, police counseling cells, special cells maintained by NGOs within police stations, and community policing initiatives; c) welfare responses such as shelter homes and counseling cells, and d) a few innovative experiments at the local level. The range of NGO responses varied from provision of alternate shelter, counseling, community mobilization, and education and awareness efforts to advocacy efforts.

### **State Interventions**

Foremost among state interventions have been the criminalization of domestic violence and the passing of several amendments to address the issue of dowry harassment and dowry death. Other measures have involved efforts to make legal services more accessible to women. This has resulted in the setting up of Legal Aid Cells, Family Courts, Lok Adalats or Peoples' Courts, and Mahila Lok Adalats or Women's Courts. Attempts to make the police more accessible to women have taken the form of All Women Police Stations. Police counseling cells, community policing initiatives, and special cells run by NGOs at police stations have also sought to address different needs of women experiencing

abuse. Among the other state responses have been counseling cells and shelter homes. Certain states initiated district-level programs to address the additional needs of income generation and employment.

### **NGO Interventions**

Ideologically, various organizations are positioned differently on women's issues. Their understanding and activism on other issues like poverty, casteism, illiteracy, and alcoholism inform their positions on the issue of domestic violence. However, responses in the NGO sector have attempted to address the practical as well as the strategic interests of women.

While some organizations have reached out to affected women directly with legal aid, family intervention, alternative shelter, and economic programs providing income-generating opportunities, many others have refrained from tackling the issue of violence head on. Those organizations operating with an understanding of the structural nature of domestic violence seek to empower women through education, legal awareness, asset creation, and mobilization of strong women's groups. Innovative methods to build community awareness and support include street plays, exhibitions, mass meetings, organizing elderly women to welcome every new bride to the village, and mock funeral processions publicizing violence. By attempting to make domestic violence a part of public discourse, the NGO community has begun to deconstruct the myth of the private nature of the problem.

A significant feature of NGO activity, especially in Maharashtra, has been its outreach to diverse socio-economic groups including the upper and middle classes that have been largely invisible as seekers of state services. Given the limited options for Indian women outside of marriage, however, the NGO community has often placed greater emphasis on reconciliation when addressing the needs of women experiencing abuse. Viable alternatives for long term shelter and strengthening individual economic capacity are still limited.

There have also been effective partnerships between the state and NGO sector. The special cells for women and children that work from the police station, as well as counseling cells located in police stations, are examples of coordination between the police and the NGO sector. This collaboration integrates valuable NGO experience with the state's financial resources to provide more sensitive and professional services to women victims. Although this partnership can sometimes limit flexibility in agenda-setting and operations, it can also infuse sometimes conservative state structures with more innovative NGO leadership.

## **Close Analysis of Responses to Domestic Violence**

Generally, this research seeks to understand the factors deemed critical to implementing an effective response to domestic violence. Such factors include: the particular perspective and approach to domestic violence, the range of services offered, and the quality of these services. What follows is an analysis of these factors in relation to specific intervention strategies. Overall, the number of state and NGO interventions providing both immediate and short-term supportive services appear to be larger than those offering long-term preventive services. The research also shows that the overwhelming majority of strategies are aimed exclusively at women.

### **Legal and Judicial Responses**

The state's perspective and approach to domestic violence has the widest impact upon responses. Most of the state responses seek to mediate solutions to the problem of domestic violence in a manner that does not lead to the breakdown of marital relations. State initiatives include community-policing initiatives such as the Mahila Dakshata Samiti (women's advisory boards), police counseling cells, All Women Police Stations, family courts, and legal aid boards. The overriding concern in each of these efforts is to identify and work out solutions to immediate conflicts within the matrimonial household. This tendency is partly dictated by the field reality that many women may not necessarily opt for a break in the marriage, and partly by the state's own view that marriage is an inviolable institution that needs to be preserved.

**Judiciary.** In the last decade, the government of India has responded to domestic violence with several amendments in law. Most of the amendments have characterized domestic violence as dowry harassment and dowry deaths. Of these, Section 498A has been groundbreaking in highlighting the criminal dimension of mental and physical cruelty inflicted by the husband and/or his relatives for reasons that may extend beyond "unlawful demands." It is believed to have a strong deterrent value because of its immediate repercussions. Section 498A classifies domestic violence as a cognizable offense, which means that the accused can be arrested without a warrant. Therefore, it serves in deterring the abuser from inflicting harm on the woman. It also gives the woman leverage to negotiate a solution to her plight.

However, the implementation of Section 498A has raised many problems. "Willful women," it is claimed, misuse this law provision to take revenge against their husband and in-laws. Furthermore, police officials are hesitant in filing complaints under this section because of its potentially harsh impact on the husband's family. There are also several practical constraints in seeking recourse

under Section 498A. The complainant cannot realistically hope to gain access to her matrimonial home once she files a case. Thus, women without alternate shelter and financial support cannot exercise this option. The husband's family also often proposes withdrawing the case as a precondition for an easy divorce. As a result of these and other factors, conviction rates under this law section are very low. Analysis of court decisions in one particular district of Maharashtra, Yavatmal, for example, shows that only 2.2 percent of the cases brought under 498A during the period of 1990-96 resulted in conviction.

It is the strong deterrent value of Section 498A that has to be recognized in any discussion of best practices. One of the most important steps in bringing the issue of domestic violence from the private sphere to the public sphere is stressing its essential criminal content instead of projecting it as exclusively an internal family matter. Keeping it within the family not only makes it less amenable to legal intervention, it also prevents women from seeking relief. By their very nature, the judicial and the executive arms of the state are legal entities with the power to criminalize and take punitive action against offenders. This scope of the law should be leveraged to prevent domestic violence. Since the Government of India is one of the signatories to the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it is thereby obligated to respond with genuine and meaningful legal strategies to combat domestic violence.

Other interventions within the judiciary such as the Lok Adalats and Mahila Lok Adalats (Women's Courts) are constrained by their lack of punitive power. As a result, these bodies function primarily as conciliatory mechanisms and rely exclusively on mediation counseling to bring the erring parties to an understanding. Interviews with key informants suggest that, even as conciliatory mechanisms, they do not effectively serve their purpose. While counseling has its own value in dealing with marital discord, it may not be an adequate response in all instances of violence. Hence, the state's excessive dependence on it needs to be more critically explored.

**Law Enforcement.** In keeping with efforts to encourage reporting of crimes against women and more sensitive handling of such cases, the creation by the state of All Women Police Stations is an important step. These stations have great value in making police services more accessible to women and India is perhaps one of the few countries where such an effort has been made systematically. Such interventions may have been designed for the socio-cultural environment of a particular region and this partly justifies the need for All Women Police Stations in a state such as Madhya Pradesh, where women are very reluctant to approach male police officials.

However, these All Women Police Stations are seen as token measures and suffer from several inadequacies. The ingrained male bias in the police system against the capabilities of women prevents female staff or complainants from benefiting fully from the stations. Female officers are seen as incapable of physical combat. The stations suffer from lack of adequate personnel, infrastructure, support, and cooperation. For instance, the study observed that the Mahila Police Thanas in Madhya Pradesh are not operating at full staff strength. Several vacancies have not been filled and they are poorly supplied in terms of vehicles, equipment, toilet facilities, water supply, and competent personnel.

Beyond a lack of personnel, women's issues are not seen by police officers as hard core police work and, hence, there is a tendency to dismiss the work of the AWPS as secondary. Opportunities for training and skill development are few. And, since there is limited interface between mainstream police officials and women who work in the Mahila Police Thanas, exposure to other aspects of policing is minimal. This is later held against policewomen in matters of promotion. Mahila police stations appear in fact to be seen as punishment postings, outside the ambit of real police work, both by male officials and female officials. In addition, the implicit pressure to register all complaints pertaining to women at the AWPS only creates problems for women who may be unable to travel long distances and robs them of the right to approach general police stations for redress. In the absence of proper training and sensitization, it is unlikely that the police stations are going to become more effective in handling cases of domestic violence just because more women have been recruited. The Mahila Police Thanas are an example of an innovative response that has failed due to the lack of a wider integrated policy to facilitate the process of implementation.

### **Supportive Services**

State policies, staffing, and budget decisions have a powerful impact on the development and sustenance of widespread supportive services for women suffering from domestic violence. These services may include alternative shelters, child-care facilities, counseling, income generation projects, and education programs. Although many non-governmental organizations also offer different types of support for women, they are still influenced by state funding and agendas.

One of the most significant short-term welfare responses of the state to domestic violence has been the provision of alternate shelter through short stay homes, often in partnership with the voluntary sector. However there are several drawbacks attached to the functioning of these homes. Research data shows that in seven of the shelter homes surveyed in Madhya Pradesh, only 112 women

accessed shelter services despite a combined capacity for 370 residents. Government-run shelter homes, often perceived as shelter for a woman and her dependents, usually restrict both the number and age of the dependents as well as the mobility of residents. The ambience is typically one of strict policing and not particularly conducive to recovery from the emotional trauma that women experience with an abusive partner. Further, recreation facilities and infrastructure for residents is often lacking. Shelter homes sponsored by the state but managed by voluntary agencies are less restrictive, yet there are still relatively few childcare arrangements and working women may thus be forced to take the children with them or make separate arrangements. Despite these drawbacks, the provision of alternative shelter is a critical element of a strategy to address gender-based violence in a concerted way. However, the state appears to place shelter homes and other supportive services as a priority below remedial counseling. For example, in 1997 only 0.03 percent of the total expenditure of the Central Programme, Social Welfare Board in Madhya Pradesh was set aside for the maintenance of shelter homes whereas in the same year, 6.9 percent of the funds were set aside for counseling activities.

Other factors that impact the provision, accessibility, and sustainability of short-term and supportive services include location, staff morale, degree of institutional commitment, and the dynamic between state and voluntary sectors. For example, urban areas are more likely to garner state attention. In general, government services to women suffering from domestic violence in rural areas exist in policy but not in practice.

The staff morale and working conditions of state run and sponsored agencies also determine the quality of services offered. Salaries are very low and service conditions highly noncompetitive. The remuneration paid to visiting specialists and other personnel is abysmal. In the case of legal aid boards, the hearing fees paid to lawyers are unrealistically low and there is alleged corruption among even those advocates who volunteer their services. The terms of work are not likely to attract competent professionals from the field.

The degree of institutional commitment is also a crucial factor in the sustainability of intervention by local government bureaucracy. In Madhya Pradesh, for example, there have been several innovative schemes to provide supportive services such as income generation, skill building, or education and literacy programs. However, it has been found that such strategies depend largely on the personal motivation and interest of the executing officials. The transfer of officials committed to the programs can cause a virtual halt in services.

The relationship between state and voluntary sectors appears to be a key factor in implementing effective strategies. Programs where voluntary agencies have collaborated with state agencies have shown success. However, many NGOs are dependent solely on government funds for their operation, and this impacts their actual performance. Field evidence does indicate however that those interventions that have combined the legal mandate of the state and the expertise of the voluntary sector have shown promising results. A good illustration of this is the Special Cell for Women and Children in Mumbai, operated by the Tata Institute of Social Science, and counseling cells located in police stations.

Equally important to this type of partnership have been the efforts by NGOs to creatively draw from the range of available government schemes. In the case of income generation and economic self-reliance programs, the approach of the voluntary sector, particularly at the shelter homes, has been to try and utilize government resources for production and marketing. For example, a few of the NGOs studied have utilized government schemes such as the Khadi and handloom industries board to secure contracts and sell the finished products. Many of the income-generation programs in government-run shelter homes, on the other hand, offer limited traditional skills building such as stitching, tailoring, and knitting. Further, the research shows that in some instances, these government-run programs are simply non-functional.

### **Efforts to Rebuild Women's Well-Being**

In addition to this hesitation to intervene proactively, few strategies exist that address women's trauma, or that help women rebuild their lives and their self-esteem. For instance, psychological and medical services and facilities are virtually non-existent among both sectors. Counseling that focuses on the practical rather than on emotional and therapeutic rejuvenation is observed to have a limited value in building the woman's sense of the self and such therapeutic counseling was found to be nearly absent. Thus, psychological concerns surrounding a woman's fears of further abuse, the dilemmas she may be facing about continuing to stay with the abuser, concern for her children and her own negative self identity largely go unaddressed. This more comprehensive attention to her needs is simply not on the agenda of most of the counseling cells sponsored by the state, nor are there counselors skilled or trained to facilitate this process. Opportunities to upgrade the skills of counselors through regular training and chances to network with other professionals are for the most part limited as well. It may also be noted that social work curriculum and training does not necessarily provide specialized inputs in women-centered counseling.

Moreover, the need for immediate and effective medical care has not been adequately addressed by either the state or the NGO sector. At state run shelter

homes, for example, apart from an initial mandatory health check up to rule out diseases, women cannot go to even a civil hospital for health problems unless there is an emergency because of lack of transport and strict rules surrounding mobility. Services for the mentally ill are also very poor<sup>5</sup>. Medical check ups are seen by some shelters as necessary only for the gynecological and “moral health” of the residents. The study cites the case of one caretaker of a particular shelter home who proudly admitted that she personally checks whether the girls are having their periods!

### *Preventive Services*

State intervention in the area of preventing domestic violence has been cursory. At best, there have been limited state initiatives focusing on legal literacy and the dissemination of information on legal services. However, general outreach to women within communities is low and many women remain unaware of services that are available. The state agenda has occasionally favored taking proactive, progressive steps to combat certain traditional community practices such as that of community prostitution. The research has examined, for example, initiatives taken against a form of community prostitution practiced by the Bedia tribals of Madhya Pradesh. Even in the face of strong opposition from the tribals, the state instituted several schemes and programs to stop this community-condoned form of prostitution. Such concerted action stands in sharp contrast to the government's reluctance to assume a similar stand on domestic violence. Again it is evident that the state remains hesitant to step into what is conceived to be the private sphere.

### **Determining Best Practice**

The identification of best practices involves recognizing successful programmatic and policy components of responses to domestic violence by examining the impact and outcomes of existing efforts. The first step is to identify the characteristics of a quality and effective response. The analysis of contemporary NGO and state services suggested that quality and effective interventions are those that exhibit the following characteristics: cultural specificity in design, wide-ranging and diverse services, easy accessibility, multiple funding sources, and an emphasis on collaboration with various sectors and on a holistic treatment of the problem. Ethical and moral leadership as well as community mobilization also surfaced as characteristics of effective programs.

Integration of all of the best practice criteria is essential for delivering effective responses to domestic violence. For example, state responses such as All Women Police Stations, Family Counseling Cells, Family Courts, Lok Adalats and Mahila Lok Adalats have each attempted to make primarily legal and reconciliation

services more accessible to women. However, they still lack adequate institutional support and training. Further, they are unable to provide a holistic treatment of the problem and typically offer only a small range of services. By promoting “reconciliation”, these services place the family itself outside the scope of critical inquiry. Alternatively, voluntary action has provided a wide variety of innovative responses to domestic violence. Many NGOs have extensive reach (including remote and rural areas), have mobilized community awareness, and have used a range of strategies to prevent domestic violence as well as to rebuild the lives of women victims. However, without financial autonomy, the voluntary sector is forced to compete for funds against each other. This can inhibit effective efforts to work collaboratively. Similarly, organizations that depend upon the state for financial support may have to adopt a less critical stance toward state-directed approaches, and this can inhibit innovation, cultural sensitivity, and community support.

The research shows that those models of intervention that have integrated strategies from both sectors and provide a diversity of services create the most successful overall response. The development of such an integrated response to domestic violence should be informed by a multi-layered strategy that empowers women through education, legal literacy, and enforcement of legislation on minimum age at marriage, inheritance of property, and maintenance rights of women. For example, a successful coordinated response may combine preventive strategies involving the community; remedial strategies that empower the woman to seek legal remedies and help rebuild her self; and recuperative services which work either directly or through referral networks to develop long-term viable livelihood options. In short, services that facilitate a movement from being a victim to a survivor of domestic violence are the most sustainable.

With these factors in mind, the analysis points to the following areas for action:

**Criminalize Violence:** It is imperative that the state recognizes the criminal nature of domestic violence and takes adequate measures to criminalize the offense. State reluctance to delve into what it sees as the private sphere is placing increasing numbers of women at risk. The state should utilize its legal mandate to take strong punitive action against wife batterers. The present mandate in India is effectively limited to dowry-related violence.

**Promote a Holistic Approach:** A set of integrated responses that address the practical as well as the strategic needs of women provide the most meaningful and sustainable options to women facing abuse from intimate partners. This principle should inform the design and implementation of all intervention strategies dealing with domestic violence. Identifying primary and secondary

stakeholders related to domestic violence is essential. At present the main actors involved include those associated with the judicial process, income generation, and education. Those in housing, child protection services, the private industry, and trade unions are some of the other stakeholders that need to be sensitized and involved in developing a well coordinated, well-rounded response to domestic violence.

**Coordinate Responses:** Greater coordination among various government departments, among agencies in the voluntary sector, and between the government and the NGO community can prevent duplication of services and ensure better utilization of scarce resources. A very important component of collaboration is disseminating information on what each sector has to offer and maintaining a steady flow of information. This coordination is currently lacking and should be promoted.

**Institutionalize Responses:** Responses to domestic violence cannot and should not be dependent on the personal motivation and commitment of individual implementing officers. They should be institutionalized as one of the key welfare activities of the district. Institutionalized responses to domestic violence will ensure better continuity and also reflect state commitment to combat the problem.

**Integrate Gender into Community, State Agencies, and Development Paradigms:** Women's access to and control over resources should be recognized and adopted as a primary indicator of development. Such a gender sensitization of all stakeholders should become an important component of effective responses to domestic violence. It should form part of the curriculum of training of the police, judiciary, bureaucracy, policymakers, social workers, counselors, and other service providers. Here again, it should be reiterated that gender sensitization should not be targeted at policymakers alone but also at implementers at all levels. Analysis of the existing training curriculum of all stakeholders should be undertaken to identify where and how gender concerns can be incorporated.

**Address the Batterer:** State agencies as well as the NGO sector should work towards developing batterer-centered programs that address the perpetrator of violence. This has been attempted successfully in several locations throughout the world and has shown promise for replication.

**Enrich the Existing Database:** It is also strongly recommended that the existing database on domestic violence be enriched with rigorous empirical research on the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence. Wife battering has serious cost implications for health, legal and economic systems. Detailed research and

analysis of these inter-linkages also needs to be undertaken to highlight the severity of the issue. Research should attempt to collate and analyze the potential of existing programs and schemes (both state and NGO) to address the issue of domestic violence, and suggest mechanisms for developing linkages as well as mechanisms to convert this potential into action plans. Such a study would yield more results if attempted at the state level.

**Disseminate Information:** Many women are unable to escape domestic violence because they are unaware of available services and agencies working in this area. Therefore, disseminating information on the range of services available is essential.

**Raise Public Awareness:** Another area to address in this context is that of generating public awareness on domestic violence as a violation of human rights and debunking the popular notion that transactions within a marriage are outside the realm of community intervention. Educational strategies aimed at changing attitudes, beliefs and biases of law enforcers, the judiciary and citizens need to be developed and implemented.

**Ensure Accountability:** Mechanisms to enhance the accountability of the state and NGOs that work with women facing domestic violence need to be instituted. Such a system will provide the checks and balances required to monitor the quality of services that are offered. One of the reasons for the abysmal living conditions in state run shelter homes, for example, is a lack of accountability to the shelter residents, the state machinery, and to the taxpayer.

**Improve Service Conditions of Service Providers:** It is imperative to upgrade the work conditions of service providers to attract competent and qualified personnel. This will also help to professionalize services and institute better accountability. Non-competitive work conditions reflect an attitude of charity that does not necessarily foster empowerment of the affected population.

**Develop and Train Staff:** The issue of developing new skills and training of service providers has to be addressed decisively. Opportunities for networking and learning from each other's experiences should be encouraged and nurtured. This area has been addressed to a larger extent by the NGO sector than with state agencies, where training is often a one-time input. Regular training is more common for senior officials than those in the lower ranks. However it is at these levels that practitioners are more in need of regular skill upgrades since they are directly in touch with the client group. Caretakers and wardens of shelter homes are a particularly important segment to target.

## Notes

The study found wardens at one shelter home complaining that cases of mentally ill women are a "headache". Staff are clearly ill prepared to handle these cases. It was shocking to note during the course of data collection, the case of a particular government shelter home where the warden keeps a jar full of medicines that are given to all the girls who show any kind of psychological problem.

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