

Domestic Violence in China: Research, Intervention and Prevention

Newsletter

Issue Eight

Briefs on Recent Activities

1. On August 14th, a one-day “Basic Psychological Counseling” training program was conducted by the Pilot Rural Community Intervention Sub-project. Professor Yang Hua Yu gave a lecture on psychological problems that lead to domestic violence and on methods of psychological counseling. Trainees were mainly staff members from the Anti-domestic Violence Rights and Interests Center and its working station. Further training is planned in the future.

2. On August 15th, Tina Ebreo and Apo Leong of the Netherlands NOVIB exchanged views with the anti-domestic violence project coordinator, Ms. Chen Mingxia, in the project office. They hope to expand their reach into Central and Northeast China. Ms. Chen Mingxia recommended a number of good organizations that are devoted to ending domestic violence and researching women issues in those two areas.

3. On August 29th, members of the Project Management Committee – Chen Mingxia, Rong Wenyi, Li Hong Tao and others – had a meeting with the officers of the Ford Foundation’s Women’s Reproductive Health project. In the future, Ms. Li Wen Jing will succeed Ms. Kaufman, and will be in charge of financing and directing the project of anti-domestic violence.

4. On August 30th, doctoral student in law and anthropology, Ms. Geiste, came to the project office to find some reference books and information for her paper. She is very interested in our project and appreciates our work very much.

5. On September 9th and 10th, a training program called Gender Consciousness and Legal Aid was conducted by the Center for Women’s Law Studies and Legal Services of Beijing University. All the participants expressed their desire to put the theory of gender into practice. They have experienced the power of coordination and cooperation.

6. On September 12th, a work report meeting was conducted by the Pilot Sub-projects in Beijing’s Fengtai District. The anti-domestic violence leaders group, composed of the vice director of the district, Hu Yan, and representatives from public security, procuratorial organs and the court, as well as experts from China Women’s College, listened to the report of the achievements made by two pilot programs, one in You'anmen Street and one in Teying hospital. They exchanged views, discussed

existing problems and planned future work.

7. On September 18th, Ms. Clarita Benzon, project officer of the Netherlands NOVIB visited the anti-domestic violence project office and met with the Project Management Committee and sub-project directors to discuss additional funding for the Oral History and Legal Aid Sub-projects as well as for the employment of an English secretary. Also discussed were the operation of the NOVIB women's rights and interests website and future strategies. After the meeting, Ms. Benzon attended the Fourth Expanded Session of the Project Management Committee, where project activities, a future seminar on domestic violence and training in Sweden were discussed.

8. From October 8 – 12, Swedish experts held a training course on gender and theories for combating domestic violence for network members as well as representatives of related units. On the 10th and 11th the training was held in the Pilot Urban Community Intervention community of You'anmen Street and in Tieying hospital, the site of the Pilot Medical Intervention Sub-project. In addition to giving lectures, the Swedish experts learned about the practical working conditions and existing problems in those units. On the last day of the training, the experts were invited to visit the anti-domestic violence working station in Liu Bin Bao Village of Yanqing County. Professor Tian Xiaomai, the person in charge of the Pilot Rural Community Intervention Sub-project, gave an update on their work and a group of farmers performed a play that they had written. The performance was designed to disseminate information about the new Marriage Law and the Law for the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. The Swedish visitors expressed enthusiasm for using theater as a means of combating domestic violence. All the participants of the five-day training agreed that they had learned a lot, yet there was still a long way to go to end domestic violence.

Exchange of Experiences

What further action should the mass media take to combat domestic violence?

Beijing Evening News Zhou Jiawang

Relevant investigations should be carried out.

China Women's News Feng Yuan

(To combat domestic violence, the local media) could conduct investigations in local communities. Through investigative reporting, the difference between social reality and media representation will be revealed. For example, a media report about a wife's lover is a type of sensational propaganda. Why are people concerned with this kind of phenomenon? Why does the mass media pay so much attention to violence against men? These are issues that reporters should consider.

Workers' Daily Liu Wenning

Our newspaper seldom reports on domestic violence. Such stories will be published only if they attract readers. Many men will ask, why was a woman beaten? Take as an example a husband who hit his wife because she did not come home in the evening due to heavy rain. In this case, the woman's behavior aroused people's suspicion. Her husband will ask such a question as if the woman is to blame. I think that individuals cannot change this situation.

Women of China Zhang Qi

First of all, we must make clear one principle, and that is that no matter what happens, it is wrong to resort to violence. We have already introduced the concept of domestic violence to the public, but what is the next step? There is still much that is not disclosed. If a woman doesn't intend to divorce (a husband who beats her), she will try her best not to let others know her situation.

China Women's News Cai Yiping

You have all mentioned that new problems emerged in the report on domestic violence. For example, is it possible to conduct an interview with the perpetrator of violence? How can news resources be increased? How can reporting on domestic violence be presented through a gender lens rather than merely as a sensational story? How can the old model of media reporting be transformed? These are the concerns of our network and problems we need to resolve. We are in a good position to use the anti-domestic violence project as a basis for making resources and information available. We can also conduct training and workshops to increase people's understanding of domestic violence.

China Women's News Feng Yuan

I have a few words to say regarding how to expand the media's scope and raise women's awareness. At present people usually view domestic violence as a women's rights issue and a legal issue. The means of intervening in violence, problems of health and medical treatment as well as the model of conflict resolution can all be made relevant. If we lack those points in China we can introduce foreign experiences.

Aarhus University of Denmark Wang Qi

The mass media can play a very important role raising awareness. The media should tell women how to face domestic violence. We must also consider how far the mass media can go in helping women. We should respect the outcome chosen by women themselves, letting women make their own choices.

Beijing Evening News Zhou Jia Wang

Reporting by the mass media is a process of accumulation. Though there are more reports concerning domestic violence than before, people still fail to realize that it occurs all around us. The mass media can help provide an atmosphere of greater understanding. In addition, media reporting should include a variety of angles.

Women of China Dong Yu

How will the mass media provide efficient help to women? The media must be efficient and direct. There are different levels and aspects of intervention. Sometimes the media can enlighten women through analyses of specific cases. All of these could be helpful as opposed to just focusing on police reports of crimes. We can teach children how to help themselves as well.

People's University, Department of Journalism Chen Yang

The mass media always go for news value, so there is the mindset of hunting for novelty. That is why the report that women hit men appeared. However, the total number of such reports should be controlled. Also, there should not only be one model of reporting. Women should not always be portrayed as powerless victims. Information and news resources should be expanded and the model of reporting expanded. Otherwise, not only will readers become disgusted by such reports, but reporters will also.

Gender Consciousness and Legal Aid

From September 9 – 10, 2001, the Center for Women’s Law Studies and Legal Services of Beijing University held a training course called “Gender Consciousness and Legal Aid.” Among the participants were judges from Beijing’s First and Second Intermediate People’s Court and the Haidian District People’s Court, the public procurators from the Beijing Procuratorate and the Haidian District Sub-procuratorate, staff members of Beijing’s Women’s Federation, research fellows in sociology from the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences and lawyers and staff members from Beijing University’s Women’s Legal Aid Center. All together there were more than twenty participants.

During the two-day training, participants learned basic gender theory, the relationship between gender and domestic violence and the influence of gender consciousness on legal aid work, particularly legal aid related to domestic violence. On the basis of the training, group discussions were carried out at various points during the workshop. All participants actively took part in the discussions and voiced their opinions on the legal rights bestowed to battered women and on battered women’s syndrome, which are closely related to legal aid against domestic violence at present in China. Afterwards, analyses were conducted of the cases the Center is handling. Participants unanimously held that advanced foreign experiences were an important point of reference and guidance in handling cases of domestic violence in China.

Participants generally felt that this training had opened their eyes to phenomena they had not noticed before and broadened their thinking regarding gender. Participants expressed their determination to put gender theory into practice in their work. The participatory training method allowed participants to actively take part in the training and helped them experience the strength of coordination and cooperation.

Qi Huaying, The Center for Women’s Law Studies and Legal
Services, Beijing University

The First Visit by a Group of Foreign Experts to the Anti-Domestic Violence Project in Yanqing County

Yanqing County women's federation organizations frequently use theater and other forms of entertainment to enhance people's knowledge of laws that protect women's rights and interests. Each town and village has its own performing arts publicity team. Many rural residents have been actively participating in the anti-domestic violence pilot project, writing and acting in their own plays that portray the functions of the anti-domestic-violence offices and stations in villages and counties. The lively performances have received a warm reception by the local people and have produced positive effects. The town and village anti-domestic violence offices have played a distinct role in all of these activities.

On Oct. 12th, Swedish experts visited Liu Bing Bao Village in Yanqing County to lecture as well as enjoy performances by the local people. Accompanied by Ms. Wang Shuhua and Ms. Li Zi Ping, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the County Women's Federation, respectively, the specialists returned to the county seat, visiting and giving instructions to the anti-domestic-violence office of Yanqing County. They viewed the exhibition board made by the anti-domestic-violence office and appreciated its rich, clear and persuasive content.

The Anti-Domestic-Violence Office in Yanqing County

Theoretical Reflections

My View on the Anti-Domestic Violence Project and its Network

1. Compared to gender projects I have taken part in before, this project and network are more democratic and open, in that everybody has a chance to voice their opinion and share in decision-making. This network could be called a real network because participants are not divided by grades and levels, nor are they restricted to a particular “small circle.” A large number of local people also take part in the project.
2. Finances are always a sensitive topic when it comes to project management, but in this project financial expenditures are open to the public. The amount of money we have, financial resources and allocation, and decisions regarding how money is spent are all open to the public. This shows a form of democracy and respect to project participants. Network members are not just hired hands but instead control and guide the project.
3. The network emphasizes communication of information. We set up the Project Information Center and regularly compile the Newsletter so that people will gradually gain a greater understanding of the issue of domestic violence and how best to combat it.
4. The network pays particular attention to the function of the mass media. It purposely organized the Mass Media Sub-project, which has influenced society. I am researching gender and the mass media and how NGOs can make use of the mass media. I think such information is very valuable for NGOs.
5. At times I have thought the network is a bit disorganized and has some problems, such as having to deal with too many people and having too many meetings. However, I have realized that only in this way can the network become a real network with life and growth. Organizations led by one person may avoid disorder, but such a leadership style can be seen as a type of male chauvinism. A project involved in gender research should move beyond a chauvinistic work-style and create a feminist working style and network. This should be one of the important results of this project and should affect every participant of future projects.

Bu Wei

Response to the Evaluation of the Oral History Sub-project

From the evaluation of the Female Victims of Domestic Violence Oral History Sub-project, we can see that the assessor has carefully understood our work. We feel very encouraged by the affirmation of our sub-project and will continue to develop its strengths. We will also seriously consider the suggestions offered us to improve our work as follows:

1. We have already realized from our past experience that sometimes we have to interview the offender in the same case two or three times. This is sometimes due to poor planning and sometimes because during interviews various conditions arise that prevent the interview from being completed. There have also been occasions where once the interview is sorted out, further details are needed.
2. We have made it clear that the Female Victims of Domestic Violence Oral History Sub-project is part of the general project. Here we would like to mention in particular that our sub-project has constantly had the support of the general project and other sub-projects. We realize that the general project coordinates all of the work of the project.
3. We would like to express our gratitude to the assessors for their opinions and suggestions. We will make continuous efforts in our future work.

Oral History Sub-project, Song Meiya and Xue Ninglan

Introduction to Legislation

The Decision on Preventing and Eliminating Domestic Violence Made by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in Sichuan Province

(Passed by the 19th Conference of the 9th Session of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in Sichuan Province on September 15, 2000)

The 17th conference of the 9th Session of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in Sichuan Province heard and considered "The Report on the Work of Preventing and Eliminating Domestic Violence" made by the People's Government of Sichuan Province. The meeting held that certain progress had been made in preventing domestic violence in our region, but acts of domestic violence, including hurting and damaging family members' physical and mental health through beating, binding, imprisoning, cruelly injuring and other uses of force have not been efficiently contained. In order to protect people's legal rights and interests, prevent and eliminate domestic violence and preserve the stability of families as well as society, the following decisions are hereby made:

1. State organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions and other organizations should bring the work of preventing and eliminating domestic violence in line with the construction of spiritual civilization in each unit and each trade. We must actively educate people as to the laws and regulations for preventing and ending domestic violence, and we must enhance citizens' awareness of the law and safeguarding of their own rights. We must help people know, understand and abide by the law and do everything according to the law. We must pay attention to the construction of family virtues, including promoting the new social tendency of equality between men and women and the new morality and custom of respecting the aged and caring for children in order to maintain harmonious family relationships.
2. Any organization and individual has the right and obligation to persuade families from resorting to domestic violence, and, where domestic violence is known to have occurred, to file charges. State organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions, village residential committees and other organizations must take seriously charges of domestic violence. The work unit of the perpetrator of such violence should reprimand and educate him, and demand that he correct his mistakes. Proper disciplinary action should be taken against him according to the degree of seriousness of his actions. Lower-level legal administrative organs, village residential committees and mediating organizations must actively carry out propaganda and education family virtues in order to create a civilized family. They should also mediate domestic disputes in a timely manner in order to prevent and end domestic violence.

3. Public security bureaus should take seriously those who lodge complaints of domestic violence and should investigate such complaints. Those who resort to domestic violence violate the “Regulations of Punishment in the Administration of Public Security” and must be penalized according to the degree of seriousness of the crime. Those who violate criminal law must be registered to wait for further investigation and punishment.
4. The people’s procuratorate should investigate according to the law cases forwarded to them by the public security bureaus. When there is sufficient evidence, a decision should be made to make an arrest and press charges against a domestic violence offender.
5. Where the people’ procuratorate or a victim has brought a lawsuit in a domestic violence case, the people’s court should try the case in a timely manner. The court decision should be enforced by law against the person found guilty of damaging the victim’s property in an associated civil suit. The rights of the victim should be preserved according to the law. If a victim sues for divorce, the common property of the couple should be divided according to the court’s judgment or mediation.
6. Law staff and lawyers should offer legal help and aid to victims of domestic violence.
7. Anyone who is legally obligated to stop and intervene in a case of domestic violence but fails to do so, with the result that more violence occurs should bear direct responsibility for the consequences and should thus be charged with a crime.
8. The people’s government at various levels should strengthen their leadership of the working committee on women and children. The working committee on women and children of the people’s government at various levels is responsible for the enforcement of the above decision. Organizations responsible for protecting the rights and interests of women, children, the elderly and the disabled should carry out this decision and put the law into practice.

The Decision on Preventing and Eliminating Domestic Violence Made by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

(Passed on September 8, 2001 at the 21st Conference of the 8th Session of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region)

The 21st Conference of the 8th Session of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region heard and considered "The Report on the Work of Preventing and Eliminating Domestic Violence" made by the government of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The meeting held that definite progress had been made in the work of preventing and eliminating domestic violence in this region, but acts of domestic violence, including physically and mentally injuring and damaging family members, through resorting to beating, binding, confining, cruelly injuring and other uses of force have not been sufficiently contained. In order to protect legal rights and interests, prevent and eliminate domestic violence and preserve the stability of families as well as society, the following decisions are hereby made:

1. Preventing and eliminating domestic violence, and protecting citizens' personal right are the common responsibility of state organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions and the other organizations. Every organization and individual has the right and obligation to prevent and eliminate domestic violence and to report domestic violence to the relevant department.
2. State organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions and other organizations should bring the work of preventing and eliminating domestic violence in line with the construction of spiritual civilization in each unit and each trade. We must actively carry out propaganda and education on the laws and regulations for preventing and eliminating domestic violence, and we must enhance citizens' awareness of the law and safeguarding of their own rights. We must help people know, understand and abide by the law and do everything according to the law. We must pay attention to the construction of family virtues, including promoting the new social tendency of equality between men and women and the new morality and custom of respecting the aged and caring for children in order to maintain harmonious family relationships.
3. State organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions, village residential committees and the other organizations should take seriously charges of domestic violence. The work unit of the perpetrator of such violence should reprimand and educate him, and demand that he correct his mistakes. Proper disciplinary action should be taken against him according to the degree of seriousness of his actions. Lower-level legal administrative organs, village residential committees and mediating organizations must actively carry out propaganda and education on

family virtues in order to create a civilized family. They should also mediate domestic disputes in a timely manner in order to prevent and end domestic violence

4. Public security bureaus should take seriously those who lodge complaints of domestic violence and should investigate such complaints. Those who resort to domestic violence violate the “Regulations of Punishment in the Administration of Public Security” and must be penalized according to the degree of seriousness of the crime. Those who violate criminal law must be registered to wait for further investigation and punishment.
5. The people’s procuratorate should investigate according to the law cases forwarded to them by the public security bureaus. When there is sufficient evidence, a decision should be made to make an arrest and press charges against a domestic violence offender. The people’s Procuratorate should supervise the lawsuit brought by a victim of domestic violence.
6. Where the people’ procuratorate or a victim has brought a lawsuit in a domestic violence case, the people’s court should try the case in a timely manner. The court decision should be enforced by law against the person found guilty of damaging the victim’s property in an associated civil suit. The rights of the victim should be preserved according to the law. If a victim sues for divorce, the common property of the couple should be divided according to the court’s judgment or mediation.
7. Where the people’ procuratorate or a victim has brought a lawsuit in a domestic violence case, the people’s court should try the case in a timely manner. The court decision should be enforced by law against the person found guilty of damaging the victim’s property in an associated civil suit. The rights of the victim should be preserved according to the law. If a victim sues for divorce, the common property of the couple should be divided according to the court’s judgment or mediation.
8. Law staff and lawyers should offer legal help and aid to victims of domestic violence.
9. Anyone who is legally obligated to stop and intervene in a case of domestic violence but fails to do so, with the result that more violence occurs should bear direct responsibility for the consequences and should thus be charged with a crime.
10. Work units or individual who make a remarkable achievement in preventing and eliminating domestic violence should be encouraged and commended.
11. The people’s government at various levels should strengthen their leadership of the working committee on women and children. The working committee on

women and children of the people's government at various levels is responsible for the enforcement of the above decision. Organizations responsible for protecting the rights and interests of women, children, the elderly and the disabled should carry out this decision and put the law into practice.