



Domestic Violence Conference DV SnapShots

(October 17-18, 2014)

Executive Summary of the workshops

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Contents

Background	3
Purpose	4
Workshop delivery procedure	4
Key findings	5
1. Education	5
2. Homelessness and unemployment.....	5
3. Legal system	6
4. Suicide	6
5. Mental Health	6
6. Bullying.....	7
7. Child-sex abuse.....	7
8. Crime.....	8
9. Gambling.....	8
10. Drugs and Alcohol	9
Conclusion and Recommendations	10
Bibliography	11

Background

WIN-Inspire Empower Transform Inc (WINspire), along with various small businesses and not for profit partners, organised South Australia's inaugural Domestic Violence (DV) SnapShots 'Lifting the Lid' Conference at Adelaide Football Club Training Centre, on Oct 17-18, 2014, with the purpose of raising awareness of domestic violence among South Australians (WIN-Inspire Empower Transform Inc 2014). The conference also included 10 workshops on both days that reflected upon the impact of various risk factors on DV and what else could be done to assist in tackling DV. The results of the workshops are presented in this document as an executive summary which will be followed by a complete report in 2015. It is envisioned that both documents will provide a voice from the community to the Government to identify what is currently working and to see if there are any opportunities for innovation.

Domestic violence (DV) has been declared as a 'National Emergency' (ABC News 2014). Victims of domestic violence often continue to live in fear for themselves and their family even after they have left the abusive relationship. There are many forms of abuse with some of them being physical, emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual or sexual in nature. The abuse is irrespective of gender and sexuality, though statistically women experience it more than men in Australia. One Australian woman is killed almost every week by a current or ex-partner (ABC News 2014). A woman is more likely to be killed in her home by her male partner than anywhere else or by anyone else (Parliament of Australia 2011). Up to one in three victims of sexual assault and at least one in three victims of family violence and abuse are male. The majority of violence against men is committed by other men (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). In South Australia the police have responded on an average to 27 domestic-violence incidents a day and have issued almost 3000 interim intervention orders in less than two years (The Advertiser, Nov 21st, 2013). Risk factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, financial and personal stress and lack of social support have been shown to correlate to increased risk of DV against women (Weatherburn 2011). However further research is required to determine the effects of other risk factors.

Purpose

The main aim of the 10 facilitated workshops was to discuss and understand the views of the delegates of the conference on what is currently working in the area of DV, what further education needs to be provided and what are the changes that need to be incorporated in order to make a difference, on their chosen topic. The chosen topics were various selected risk factors, as listed below, as identified by the organisers.

The following risk factors of DV were included in the workshops:

1. Education
2. Homeless and unemployment
3. Legal System
4. Suicide
5. Mental Health
6. Bullying
7. Child sex abuse
8. Crime
9. Gambling
10. Drugs and alcohol

Workshop delivery procedure

The workshops were conducted in a structured manner with delegates answering prescribed questions in booklets. Each day was divided into two sessions. Each session had 10 tables (with 10 delegates each) discussing a different topic/risk factor with assistance from a facilitator and a scribe who took relevant notes of topic discussions from delegates. The delegates were free to choose any topic they wished. In total, there were 30 table top discussions facilitated in the workshops.

Each topic had 3 questions:

- a) **Celebrate:** What is currently working well in the sector to support the reduction of DV.
- b) **Educate:** What education needs to occur in the community/government/other sectors in regards to the link of DV with this particular sector.
- c) **Change:** What changes are needed in this sector to help support a reduction of DV

The information from the booklets and discussion notes for each topic were thematically analyzed by NAML. This document only provides a summary of the qualitative information from the discussion on the above three set of questions for each topic, from all delegates in both workshops. The full report will follow in 2015.

Key findings

Following are the key outcomes of the discussions held on the ten topics:

1. Education

The participants were happy with the involvement of the community on various aspects of domestic violence. Counselling was adequate at schools and TAFE and various National Programs like White Ribbon, Lifeline H2H etc. has helped in raising awareness. But more needs to be done to help and support both victims and perpetrators. Education is needed not only schools but to all sections of society. DV should be promoted as being independent of sex as either sex can be a victim. More rehabilitation and awareness programs should be organised for victims and perpetrators.

2. Homelessness and unemployment

Participants acknowledged the fact that Australia has much better societal norms and job opportunities than many other countries. There is good education on this issue and the government is reasonably aware of the association between DV and homelessness which has resulted in the establishment of shelters like that on Hutt Street and Catherine House etc. Education campaigns needs to continue to raise more awareness including people from all walks of life. Education of men to stop blaming the women and educating the women to help them find better jobs. Supportive workplace policies must encourage women to find work as well as stay at work instead of isolating themselves with employers taking more responsibility. There was also a call for better utilisation of current housing as well as increase in funding for safe housing.

3. Legal system

The participants cheered the fact DV is recognised as a crime with placement of immediate injunction orders as Police are now taking immediate action. Media has helped in raising awareness on this issue. Increased public education around the fact that DV is an actual crime and their legal rights in this issue. Education for perpetrators on the effect of criminal records on their future job possibilities. Counsellors are also providing early support for victims. New laws are required around appropriate intervention timeframes, child support, custody, financial issues etc. Most importantly the testimonials during legal proceedings should occur in physically separate place for the victim and the perpetrators due to the fear and trauma that the victim may suffer during legal proceedings.

4. Suicide

The participants celebrated the fact that the Australian welfare system is robust enough to support the victims as compared to many countries where women have no choice but to take their own lives. People are now openly discussing about options available which in turn is helping reduce the stigma around DV. A large number of free age-appropriate services are now available like Kids Lifeline, 1800RESPECT, Sammy D Foundations etc which are making a difference. More education is required around DV being a risk factor for low esteem leading to suicide. Education regarding the fact that naming and shaming, relationship issues, coping mechanisms, same-sex relationships, stress management, etc can help reduce suicide. Early intervention throughout schooling years and training of parents as well as teachers will help. Collaboration of services and information sharing (e.g. Family Safety Framework) should occur.

5. Mental Health

Many felt that there was limited funds available for support workers and as a result many victims were in jail or hospitals. Some thought that there are not enough programs in place and government regulations were restrictive and most of the innovative ideas come from NGOs. Others thought that there is public awareness on the role of DV in mental

health and mental health (MH) organizations are helping victims. Family safety networks have led to increased awareness among people. It was pointed out that MH issues has a genetic basis and can be inherited. Robust, all round education and training involving women, young people, victims and perpetrators on building life skills, dealing with trauma, independence, and developing robustness and self-esteem was the essence of a range of self-development education which was suggested. Improved funding was highlighted and the Government have a major role in new intervention strategies, governance, new legislations etc. Besides better crisis care, backup plan to assist/support affected families, building more shelters, increase number of DV support workers is required. Spiritual, emotional and physical support to encourage resilience, durability and sustainability to withstand pressures.

6. Bullying

The participants cheered the role of media, community meetings, new legislations, zero tolerance at school and organisations like the White Ribbon in raising awareness in raising awareness against bullying and Police are now playing a more active role. Training for teachers whilst still in University as well as professionals already in the workforce, educating and empowering them around bullying management. Educating both parents and children how to prevent, identify and better handle bullying. Provide visual training through posters against bullying. Education at school and early intervention were thought to be crucial. Increased counselling services, improved communication channels, rehabilitation of perpetrators, increased resources, more campaigning and mobile apps were some of the other recommendations.

7. Child-sex abuse

Participants celebrated the fact that a lot of awareness exists around the issue of child-sex abuse and DV. Child-safe environments now exist in schools, sports club etc. Mandatory notification is now in place. Kids Helpline and Child-abuse report line are proving to be very useful. Special education at schools regarding perpetrators tactics, sexual education, how to eliminate stigma and openly discuss on this issue is required.

Promotion of how 'keep safe' and 'be aware', how to identify sex abuse, supportive and legal help, building a self-accepting and positive image, how to manage respond and act against DV etc. Raising awareness that perpetrators are very often from within the family and explain the link between DV and child-sex abuse is required. Training of school volunteers on how to identify first signs of sexual abuse. Raising awareness within multi-cultural communities also very important as in Australia people from various cultural backgrounds exists. Increased resources for providing support to affected families. Special programs need to be developed for assisting perpetrators in case they need treatments or want to confess.

8. Crime

Participants appreciated the involvement of police, government departments, social campaign and GPs in contributing in a positive way. New Injunction orders are in place, when broken the police can remove the perpetrator from the scene. The police also now need to report all DV related crimes. Social campaigns, GPs, 'stay home stay safe' programs also helping keeping people safe. Further, more education schools proposed around early intervention and how to prevent a crime. A 'statute of limitations' which is a law which sets out the maximum time that parties have to initiate legal proceedings from the date of an alleged offense should be introduced. Increased funding, more legislations, and nation-wide database of defenders in order to identify an offender, frequent release of statistics around these offences etc. is required.

9. Gambling

Participants acknowledged that majority of public are now aware of association of DV with gambling through education campaigns, release of statistics which demonstrates a 50% correlation, online resources, media and posters. Even gambling venues have started to cut the number of machines. New legislation is required for hotels/pubs to have daily limits of gambling and introduce pokey-taxes. Further new research needs to be directed towards better understanding on what leads to this extreme behavior, prevalence of online gambling and the wider impacts of gambling on the community and

mobile apps. Training of victims around a “no blame, no shame, non-judgmental”, promote the Stop → Intervene→ Change theory, how to cope under this situation, how their life can improve if they are able to successfully address this issue, provide better treatment options and tighter legislation and more government resources. Educate addicted gamblers on how to move away from gambling. Educate the bar staff on mandatory reporting. Educate children about imminent dangers of gambling.

10. Drugs and Alcohol

There is now increasing awareness of the negative influence of drugs and alcohol and its relation to DV due to public campaigns, increasing education and support at schools. Legal interventions, employer concerns and support for victims are increasing. Further education is required to inform the victims and perpetrators that drugs and alcohol cannot be used as an excuse, therapy, reasons to cope or abuse of the wife/children. Education of youth needed on effects of drugs and alcohol on their life, consequences of public drinking and under-age drinking. Neighbors need to watch out for early signs. Raising awareness of the services available, including the financial support, counselling for children growing in such homes, organisations like Relationship Australia etc. is key. More research is required to find out the cause of such risky behaviors and what needs to be done to curb it. Making posters illegal and promoting plain packaging, increasing fines and penalty, and blocking easy access to drugs and alcohol is required.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following lists the major common themes that evolved from the discussions:

- Raising public awareness on the issue through media, training programs, campaigns, posters, education etc.
- Increase support for victims around rehabilitation, emotional and other mental health issue for both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Increase awareness by via modified curriculum at schools as well as universities. Heroes, champions and celebrities in classrooms can be very inspirational as roles models for the kids.
- Advocacy for stringent legal channels, policy reforms by decision makers and increase funding for more effective programs.
- Research into why DV has reached such enormous proportions in the society and what more can be done to stop it from snowballing further was crucial.
- Capacity building, to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of professionals dealing with this situation by giving them continued training and resources.
- Establishing new rehabilitation services working in cooperation with NGOs to provide short-term and long-term support to victims and their families.
- Provide support and training to all health professionals including GPs to identify initial signs DV among their patients and come up with specialised treatment plans.

The workshops were highly successful in understanding the ethos, views, opinions and suggestions of the participants on the topic of domestic violence and its relation to various risk-factors. The discussions revealed the current status of domestic violence in this country, how the victims are coping and what are some of positive changes that have occurred to improve the situation. In addition they provided valuable insight into what more can be done to improve the situation and suggestions and ideas on how to cope with and overcome DV, in order to build a safe, harmonious and secure society.

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