

PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND MECHANISMS TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) IN SRI LANKA: A PRELIMINARY STUDY IN BATUWATTA GRAMANILADARI DIVISION IN GAMPAHA DISTRICT

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Women have become main contributors to societies around the world as they are playing many multitasking roles in their families while excelling in their respective professional fields. Although they have gained high achievements, we can identify that some women are discriminated against and rendered voiceless and vulnerable in both the private and public spheres. In the present world, many countries including Sri Lanka have understood the importance of women's empowerment and have implemented a number of policies and mechanisms to protect women from violence against them. Still violence against women is high in Sri Lanka society. Although Sri Lanka has legal mechanisms in place to protect women from violence, it is important to ask why the cases of violence have increased rapidly. Based on the opinions of a randomly selected sample of 50 women, this study examined the degree of awareness among women regarding violence against women and how human rights education could be used to eliminate violence against women. Most respondents who participated in the study knew that harassment and violence towards women are against the law (96%), but many of them maintained silence towards such violence (77%). The research findings indicate that some of the respondents have already become victims of this violence, both directly and indirectly, at their households. The findings also revealed that people's awareness about national and international legal support regarding women's rights is at a low level (89%) and that the lack of awareness regarding these types of mechanisms mainly keep the affected people in silence. Based on the above findings, this study reveals that the lack of awareness of the public is a major barrier in combatting violence against women. Also it was revealed that Sri Lanka has not yet achieved a secure environment for women both in society and in the family. Certain remedies including the provision of small group counselling at the family level, enhancing legal protection, disgracing the cruelty to women by promoting attitudinal change among men towards women, and creating awareness among both males and females mainly targeting the younger generations are necessary to combat violence against women.

Keywords: Violence against Women, Legal Mechanisms, Awareness