



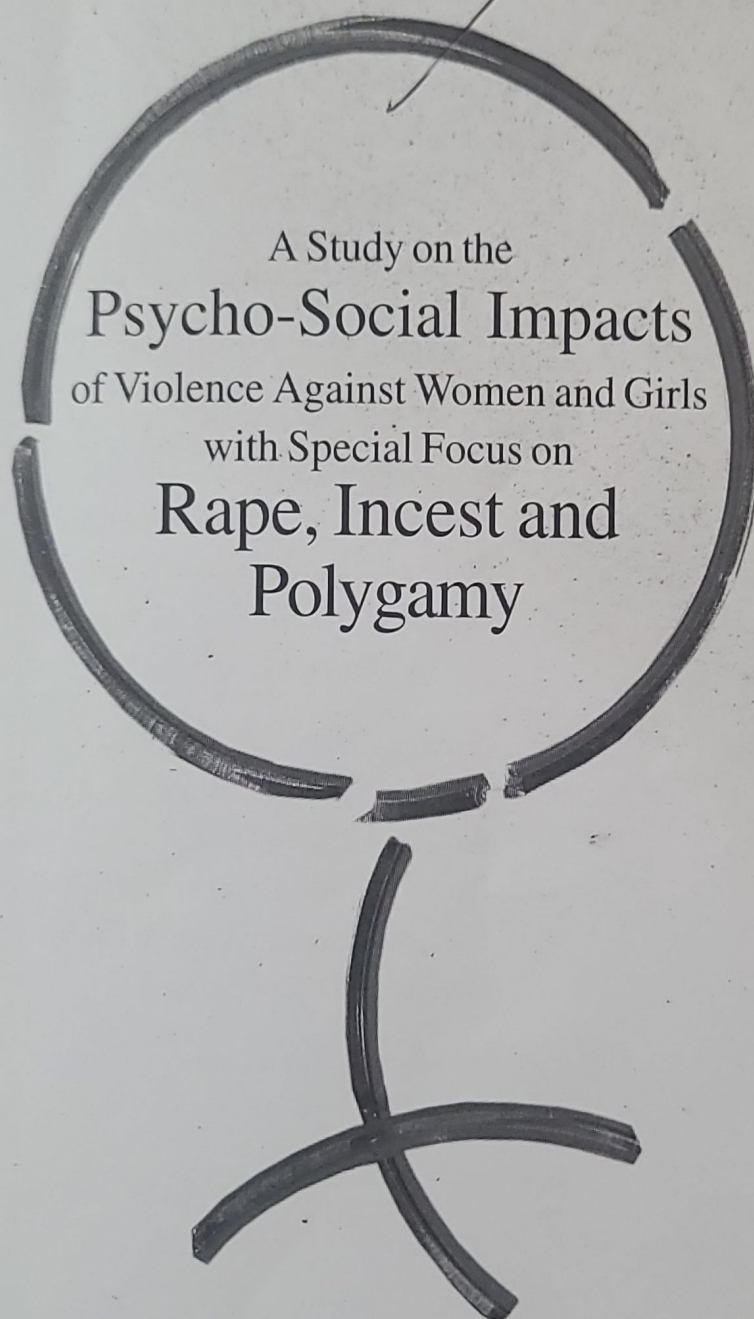
A Study on the
Psycho-Social Impacts
of Violence Against Women and Girls
with Special Focus on
**Rape, Incest and
Polygamy**

2001

Arzu R. Deuba
and
Pinky S. Rana



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Dedicated to the silent victims of violence ...

List of Abbreviations

CVICT	Centre for Victims of Torture
VAW&G	Violence Against Women and Girls
NGO	Non Government Organization
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
TAF	The Asia Foundation
CEDAW	Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police
CDO	Chief District Officer
FWLD	Forum for Women, Law and Development
SNV/Nepal	Netherland Development Organisation Nepal
FHD	FamilyHealth Division
MOH	Ministry of Health
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

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Acknowledgments

Even at the beginning of the new millennium violence against women still remains a global problem. In Nepal, it is only during the last decade that violence against women has become recognised as a gender issue. Consequently, a number of non-government sector groups as well as some government have begun to address the issue. However, there still exist many gaps, among which the lack of adequate information and factual data prevent the development and implementation of appropriate programmes targeted towards reducing violence against women and girls. This study was undertaken in response to this gap by the research team. The research team is optimistic that this endeavour will come to good use to all those individuals, institutions, and organisations from all sectors working towards eliminating violence against women in Nepal.

This present study builds on SAATHI's past experience, on-going programmes and knowledge regarding violence against women and substantially seeks to expand its understanding about its different forms. Various dimensions of violence against women, namely rape, polygamy and incest, its psychological and social impacts, as well as the status of social and psychological support being currently provided to victims in Nepal have been assessed in this study. The analysis and recommendations from the findings are crucial in that they will assist in providing directions for policy and programme formulation for minimizing violence against women, empowering the survivors and other potential victims.

On behalf of the study team and SAATHI, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to SNV/Nepal for supporting us in undertaking this study. We want to especially mention Sriyani Perera, Gender Expert, SNV/Nepal who provided valuable professional inputs all along. Kamla Bisht of SNV/Nepal who literally acted as our engine by driving us forward at every step also deserves a special word of appreciation.

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Thank you.

Arzu Rana Deuba
President
SAATHI
August 2001

Executive Summary

This research has been undertaken to help understand the social and psychological costs being borne by victims of sexual and psychological violence in Nepali society. The objective of this study is not just to examine the impacts but also to identify what needs to be done to prevent violence and provide support to the victims. It is hoped that this study will contribute towards stopping violence against women and girls inside and outside their homes. Whether the violence is in the form of polygamy, rape or incest, the impact on the victims is intense and concerted efforts are required to address these issues.

Demographic Profile

A look at the age factor of the respondents indicates that majority (39%) of the survivors of rape are less than 19 years of age. This is a frightening finding which reveals the extent of sexual victimization of children in our country. In contrast the age group of the incest survivors runs across all age groups. Thirty two per cent fall in the 30-39 years age group; 29 per cent in the 10-19 years age group; 24 per cent in their 20s and 17 per cent in the above 40 years age group. Majority (69%) of the polygamy victims are found to be less than 40 years of age. This finding in the case of polygamy indicates the need to address the young generation and make them understand the gravity of the issue. They should be warned of the dangers that can lie ahead. Furthermore, their guardians and parents must also be well apprised of the precautions that can be taken for the safety of their young ones.

Ethnicity

The results of rape reveal that girls and women from low caste and disadvantaged communities are more commonly victimized, with 42 per cent of the respondents being from the "lower" caste community and indigenous tribes. "Higher" caste women from Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar communities were less represented among the victims. But in contrast the higher caste women are more highly (48%) represented among the incest victims, as compared to the 39 per cent lower caste women. Among the polygamy victims, the respondents were mostly from the higher caste Brahmin/Chhetri (38%). However, the prevalence of polygamy was seen across all caste groups of Nepal. This comparative analysis clearly indicates the vulnerability of the disadvantaged, lower caste women of being raped, while those from the middle and 'higher' castes are more at risk of being victims of incest.

However, it is also clear that whichever strata of society women may belong to, they are at risk of becoming victims of gender violence. This finding therefore dispels the misconception that 'it only happens among the lower caste and poor communities'.

Economic Profile

In keeping with the relative young age of the victims of rape, 71 per cent said they had no income source and were dependent on others for the livelihood. In contrast, among the respondents of polygamy the majority (56%) were economically comfortable, while 44 per cent said they were impoverished and stated their income was not adequate for their needs. Most of the respondents came from an agrarian background (32%) and stated their family was supported by farm produce. The findings were similar for the respondents of incest, the majority of who belonged to comfortably off families (71%) from higher, middle or lower middle class families. It is apparent that irrespective of economic background, Nepali girls and women are not protected from gender violence. In fact, the tendency to safeguard 'family name and social prestige' among middle and higher class families may lead to further result in victimization of the victims due to the pressure to remain silent and not bring charges against the perpetrator.

Psychological Profile

The research findings clearly indicate that polygamous relationships lead to a lot of domestic discord and sour marital relations. The majority (57%) said they fought with their husbands because of the second/third wife. An overall picture of a polygamous marriage is rather morbid with mental disturbance, emotional tension and disharmony overshadowing all those involved in it most of the time. Unhappiness seems to be the dominant emotion in the lives of women in polygamous relationships. Despite the respondents being either the first, second, third or fourth wife, without an exception all of them stated being unhappy and hated the situation (28%) and wanted one of the relationships (either with self or the other wife) to break. Another marked feeling was that of insecurity either for themselves or/and for their children. In view of the lives they were living, it was natural that an overwhelming majority (86%) of them thought monogamous marriages were better. The impact of such conflict and mental stress can only be presumed as negative on all members of the family, especially the children.

Similarly, the psychological profile of the rape victims revealed the victims (56%) to be under stress most of the time. They said they felt scared and cried often. They became withdrawn, suffered from sleeplessness and felt helpless. Some of them reported feeling unable to do anything positive in life and even suffered guilt because of the incident. Some said they would never get married. An overall sense of ill-being was experienced by the victims even when the incident had happened quite a few years ago. Combined with these feelings the respondents also expressed feelings of resentment and wanted to take revenge. The impacts of rape leaves behind a deep-seated psychological mark which seems to destroy all positive things in the lives of the victims, drastically changing their lives forever.

The negative psychological impact of incest on the victim is even more intense than in any other form of sexual violence. Not only is the guilt of having 'participated', willingly or forcibly, in a sexual relationship with a blood or close relative very high, but the victim or even the willing partner resultingly harbours a lot of very negative feelings about themselves. A large majority revealed as being under stress most of the time (67%) and feeling scared (67%), while 62 per cent felt guilty and blamed themselves for the incestuous relationship and also suffered sleep disturbances (30%). 55 per cent also expressed feelings of anger and hatred towards themselves (53%), while 44 per cent even wanted to commit suicide.

The overall impacts of all the three forms of violence against women are seen to be psychologically very negative. Even though many of the victims in all three samples revealed they received support from different quarters, especially their families, yet it is clear that very few had their psychological trauma clinically addressed. The number of organisations and individuals working in the field of counselling victims of gender-based violence is limited. Moreover, those that exist are mostly in the capital metropolis of Kathmandu. Another concern that rises is the suicidal tendency of some of the victims. Considering that a recent study by MOH/FHD and UNFPA (1998) indicated suicide amongst Nepali women as the second most frequent cause of death (13%) after maternal mortality, it would not be far-fetched to correlate the negative psychological feelings harboured by the victims of sexual and traditional violence as a probable cause of suicide.

Social Profile

Despite the fact that victims in the rape sample revealed receiving support from family, friends and neighbours to report the incident to the police, yet a high 40 per cent of the respondents stated their family members were ashamed of them. Forty per cent of the community members also blamed them for being victimised. Analysing the social impacts which incest can leave on its victims the findings indicate that the relationship/incident leave the respondents feeling socially disadvantaged and complexed. A majority of these victims (58%) felt their family members blamed them and avoided them. A large number also reported not feeling like talking to others, avoiding social functions, being plagued by feelings of being treated as a social outcast and of nobody wanting to accompany them in public places. A number of them (23%) were forced to leave the home or the community after the incident came out in the open. Though a majority of respondents (58%) said their families were angry with them and blamed them for the incident/relationship, however, they also shared that their family and the larger community were angry with the perpetrator and shared their disapproval and anger (45%) and were protective of them in instances where they were seen as being victimised. The responses of friends were also not very different from that of family members and members of the community once the case came out in the open.

In the case of polygamy most of the respondents (63%) felt there was less acceptance of polygamous marriages in comparison to monogamous relationships in society. They shared that the larger society pitied them, looked down upon them, expressed surprise and even shock when they learned of their polygamous marriages. However, they also disclosed their gratitude for the support provided by family members. Family members both from the woman's own family and her husband's family, as well as friends and neighbours were seen as providing an important support system and safety net for women caught in acrimonious polygamous relationships. NGOs and the local ward member's office were also identified as playing a crucial role in helping a number of them.

These negative social reactions serve to further disturb the victims mental and emotional balance and add to their misery. The tendency

to look at the victim as being 'partly responsible' and not beyond blame was clear in all three samples of the study. Despite support from family, friends, neighbours and ward members, the victims of these three forms of violence still require a lot of psychological, economic, social and legal support. Socially based problems will prevail life-long for the victim such as difficulty in obtaining a husband if she is of a marriageable age in the case of rape and incest, of being blamed for loss of 'family name and prestige', and even being forced to move to another community. The study also clearly revealed the meagre availability of services and resources accessible to the victims to rehabilitate their lives.

The future course of action to be taken is clear, in that programmes for the victims and the family in the form of psychological counselling, social advocacy for acceptance, legal aid and economic support must be designed and implemented by both the government and NGO sectors.

Legal Profile

Rape

The percentage of reporting of rape and incest cases varied in the findings. Most rape respondents of this survey had reported their cases to the police (70%). This high percentage of cases being registered could also be due to the fact that the sample was primarily selected on the basis of police reports. However, this finding cannot be assumed in keeping with the typical socio-cultural set-up of Nepal, where due to social embarrassment and shame such cases would be 'hidden' and go unreported.

Among those rape victims who reported to the police (n=7) 25 per cent stated their case had been decided and the perpetrator jailed. Among those who accessed help from the police some (15%) said the police arrived immediately, and were dealing sensitively with them, while some (15%) said the rapists were jailed. However, respondents also shared that the police was not very helpful (46%) and let a number of rapists go scot-free after a few days. In 25 per cent of the cases they said they did not get positive responses from the law enforcement agencies.

Incest

In contrast, reporting to law enforcing agencies was found to be low amongst the incest victims, as can be expected in crimes of this nature. Only 22 per cent ($n=7$) of the incest survivors had made attempts to report the cases. The sample for this form of violence was traced by word of mouth and personal contacts of research assistants. The remaining 82 per cent were attempting to carry on with their daily lives, just as before the incident or relation. Sheikh (2000) reports that incest is barely reported for wanting to keep the family intact.

Polygamy

In a surprising finding 42 per cent of respondents stated they did not know polygamy was illegal and had thus entered into the marriage. Even among the persons ($n=21$) who knew polygamy was illegal, only 27 per cent had reported to the police. The majority (60%) did not see any point in doing so, as they knew there was no alternative besides living with the husband. Given this finding and the fact a large percentage of the sample were relatively young and illiterate, there seems to be a great need for creating awareness about the illegal status of polygamy as well as what is stated in the law in the first instance. However, given the discriminatory nature of the existing law, it is also clear that the law needs to be amended.

With regard to the law on polygamy, when apprised of the law, nearly all (99%) of the respondents thought the law which allows conditional polygamy to men but not women was not just and should be changed to not allowing men to take on second or third wives under any circumstance. The majority of respondents (81%) were also of the opinion that polygamy should be socially boycotted, while 94 per cent said polygamy should not be practiced at all. This finding reveals the extent of frustration and unhappiness in the lives of women trapped in polygamous marriages.

Existing Laws and Required Responses

There is a clear need to recruit more police women specialised to deal with crimes against women, especially sexual exploitation. Victims of both rape and incest reported that the police behaved negatively and they make them feel humiliated and blamed them for the incident. The findings show that rape victims also feel awkward, embarrassed and harassed when questioned by the policemen and prefer women to

question them while registering the case. This points towards the need to train police personnel to sensitively handle such cases.

With regard to the system of justice, it is clear that a number of legal and enforcement reforms are required. Due to the ponderous and embarrassing nature of rape trials most victims were not willing to press charges. Or even if they had initially registered a case they found it very distressing to continue. Also the very nature of the existing rape law stipulates reporting within 24 hours, a medical check-up and finding of traces of semen as necessary proof. Thus, it is clear that the time factor and lack of medical facilities will prevent justice given the rural setting and the topography of Nepal.

Most of them felt the law enforcement and justice system could be improved. The need for special courts with in-camera hearings would not only expedite the process of justice in these cases but also encourage more victims to report to the police.

Conclusions

- Sexual exploitation of young girls and women is a chilling but common occurrence in Nepali society. Most of the victims of sexual abuse are barely out of their childhood.
- Sexual violence and exploitation cuts across all class, caste, creed and religion in Nepal. However, most rape victims were seen to belong to low-class and 'dalit' caste families. While polygamy was mostly practiced by middle and lower middle class families, incest was seen in the financially better-off homes.
- All victims of sexual violence and polygamy are psychologically disturbed and live under a lot of tension and stress. The negative impacts of sexual violence last for many years.
- Though most forms of sexual violence, including rape occurs inside Nepali homes, the family still remains the strongest social institution to provide help in Nepal. Members of the family help victims of sexual violence more than any other social institutions, e.g., the community, NGOs, religious organizations, or government agencies. However, there is low support and acceptance of victims of sexual violence by the larger society and community, therefore,

many families of victims of rape move residence when they are supportive of their daughters.

- The ward level elected member's plays an important role in mediation of cases of sexual violence.
- In some cases of rape and incest action is taken by the family or community against the perpetrator, however, this 'action' is not necessarily legal action.
- Polygamy is still prevalent in Nepal despite its illegal status due to loopholes and legal discrimination favouring men. Most victims of polygamy are illiterate girls. Polygamy has a negative impact on the entire family.
- Perpetrators of sexual crimes (incest, rape and polygamy) are seldom jailed. Persons in positions of authority and responsibility (teachers, doctors) found indulging in sexual exploitation were not removed from their positions of authority even after their 'acts' came out in the open.
- The existing law on rape which defines 'women' as above 14 years is in direct contradiction to other laws which state the age of consent for marriage of girls as 16 years. This definition of women as above 14 years is also contrary to the reproductive development of girls. The legal definition of women should be as above to 18 years of age, as per international human and child rights conventions ratified by Nepal.
- Serious legal pursuance of cases of sexual crimes and exploitation of girls and women is still not common. In fact, polygamy is yet to be recognized as illegal by a good segment of the population (42%).
- The criminal justice system is slow to respond to cases of sexual violence. The police case registration and interrogation process leave much to be desired. There is also minimal support for the victims to engage in long drawn-out court cases. Support for the victims from both the government and the non-government sector is nominal. Few victims have the opportunity to access any psychological, social or economic support.

- Existing laws on sexual violence pertaining to both rape and incest casts judgment on the 'character' of the victim and discriminates punishment. For example, the law stipulates that in case of incestuous sexual intercourse with a woman who has lost her chastity the sentence should be only of one year. Character judgment of victims of sexual violence is an archaic concept which goes against the universal concept of equal human rights for all. The intensity and nature of the crime does not change due to 'character' of victim.
- There are no or few awareness interventions or support programmes targeted at prevention of sexual violence or at providing support to victims and their families.
- The government system is yet to acknowledge the psychological needs of victims of sexual violence as an issue.
- The profile of the perpetrators (psychological and social) is still an unknown factor and requires research.
- Violence against women in the forms of incest, polygamy and rape, undermines the important function of the family. Particularly, the family's role in providing shelter, protection and nurturing its members is threatened by violence inside the home. The socialization process - both the roles played as mothers and as girls is deeply disturbed by these forms of violence. The health and education of children as well as their psychological well-being is affected by violence inside the home. Hayward (2000) writes violence inside the home is one of the reasons children leave home and become child labourers or commercial sex workers.
- Violence against women is the biggest impediment towards guaranteeing women their human rights and towards their empowerment for sustainable development of the larger society. Development programmes which aim to empower women must address the issue of violence against women, barring which there can never be real empowerment of women.

Similarly, human rights of women can only be achieved when they are not tortured, beaten and raped inside the home. In the case of Nepal, raped women have even been indicted for foeticide when they tried to abort foetus as a result of rape.

- Another cost of violence against women is the economic costs incurred by women having to access the health system due to being raped and physically abused. This research has also shown girls and women who are sexually violated lose interest in education and economic activities, thus leading to economic loss to society in the long run. Besides, ill health caused by violence means they cannot work.

As the perpetrators of these crimes were not included in the sample of this study, this research cannot support or discount the 'Individually Overted Theory' of violence against women. The other two theories, 'The Feminist Perspective' and the 'Family-Oriented' theory finds more support in this study in that the violence is seen to exist within the family where the spousal relationships are not stable thus end up in polygamy. Similarly, 'The Feminist Perspective' also find support as the Nepali family structure is largely male or patriarch dominated. This domination by men and submission by women finds support in religion and tradition.

Recommendations

1. Strategy for Awareness Creation

While rape and incest are still whispered about polygamy seems socially accepted in Nepali society. However, this study clearly highlights the need to create awareness about these forms of violence against women. The detrimental effects of these forms of violence against women and girls could be prevented if the potential victims and their parents were aware of the consequences of polygamy. Similarly, if parents, guardians and potential victims knew what the 'danger signs' were many of them would not fall prey to rape and incest.

The strategy for awareness creation would have to constitute of messages and programmes suited to people at all levels and from all walks of life. Both traditional and mass media will have to be utilized to address audiences such as youth, especially young girls who are the most victimized. Parents, guardians, teacher, politicians and policy

makers also need to be sensitized to gender discriminations and gender violence. This study also strongly recommends an awareness programme in schools and campuses. There is a clear need for messages to be in different dialects and languages in order to reach a larger audience.

2. Advocacy for Victim Support

Besides creating awareness about these three forms of violence at the national level, it would be extremely important to sensitise and advocate at the policy and decision-making levels to provide support services for victims. Similarly, advocacy is required to address gaps in the law as well as to effectively enforce existing laws. Advocacy is also required to lobby with human rights groups and politicians to include these issues on their agenda. Advocacy will be required in the police force to enable more sensitive handling of cases. Similarly, lawyers and judges also need to be sensitised about these forms of violence to expedite legal reform and enforcement.

3. Legal Reforms

The proposed 11th Amendment to the *Naya Mulki Ain* needs to be passed by the Parliament as soon as possible as required legal reforms have already been proposed to the existing discriminatory laws pertaining to the variables under study. These reforms include reforms in the marriage law, rape law and law on incest.

*Some Changes Proposed in Law Related to Rape **

Severe punishment for the rapist: Presently, rape is punishable by imprisonment of between 3 years to 10 years only. The Bill proposes to increase both minimum and maximum imprisonment to 5 years and 20 years respectively. It is also necessary to increase the punishment in case of gang rape, rape of pregnant women and rape by person infected with HIV/AIDS. Rape by persons in authority should be very stringently punished.

Investigation of rape case by women police and in-camera trial: This provision relating to investigation of rape case suggests that female police officers conduct investigations and that during rape trials only relatives be present.

* Proposed by Malla, et al (2000) in 'Discriminatory Laws in Nepal and their Impacts on Women: A Review of the Current Situation and Proposals for Change' and reiterated by this research team.

Definition of rape is conservative and does not include various forms of sexual exploitations: Under the present law of rape, the definition is very narrow and limited to penetration and intercourse only. This exempts criminals from any form of legal jurisdiction in many cases. In the Bill, crimes like gang rape, rape of pregnant women and marital rape have not been dealt with.

Need to legislate against paedophilia: The problem of child molestation has received much media attention in Nepal. It is necessary to define molestation and sexual abuse of children in depth. It is necessary to include this crime under the chapter relating to rape.

Rape victim to be entitled share in her husband's property: In case of rape, women should be entitled to half of the property of the offenders as compensation and should also be entitled to the share in their husband's property. The word ex-husband should also be deleted from the existing law.

Changes Proposed in Laws Related to Polygamy

Increment of minimum age of marriage and increment in the punishment for child marriage: This provision will raise the minimum age of girls for marriage to 18 years and of boys to 22 years, and the provision will also increase the penalty and fines concerning child marriage.

Bigamy should be totally restricted without divorcing the first wife: This provision proposes to amend the current law, which permits men to remarry when their wives do not bear children within 10 years of marriage or when the children do not survive. The divorced wife's rights should also be fully protected by law. The current divorce laws make the woman forfeit all her rights to the husband's property. If the woman is divorced by her husband or if she chooses to do so, her livelihood should be guaranteed by the husband. The 11th Amendment to the Country Code states that men can marry again only if after a government recognized medical board grants a certificate stating that their wives are incapable of bearing children. The study would also like to underline this suggestion.

Equal punishment in fraudulent marriage: This provision proposes to amend the present law of unequal punishment between men and women for cases of marriage by fraud or misrepresentation. The 11th Amendment calls for an equal penalty which this study team would also like to reiterate.

Changes Proposed in Laws Related to Incest **

*Investigation of cases by women police and in camera-trial**:* Investigation by women police would facilitate the process and in-camera trials would prevent embarrassment.

*Decriminalisation of abortion**:* Termination of pregnancy caused by incest should not be criminalized and in fact should be one of the conditions under which legal termination of pregnancy is warranted.

*'Character' judgements abolished**:* 'Character' judgements of women should be abolished in all sexual crimes and the crime examined rather than the victim. The justice system should be efficient and cases of victims expedited to ensure justice. The principle of 'justice delayed is justice denied' should be kept in mind and a special court set up to deal with these cases.

4. More Effective Law Enforcement

The process of law enforcement needs to be improved is obvious. The findings of this study points towards the need to expand the cadre and services of the existing Women and Children Police Cells to all 75 districts of the country. Police personnel will also require specialised training to investigate and handle cases of such nature. Programme packages for police also should include a system of shelters for victims attached to the women cells as well as training on clear procedures for conducting investigation on these three types of VAW & G.

5. Establishing Support Services and Safety Nets

The long experiences SAATHI has working in the area of violence against women clearly indicates the need for a system of support services for victims of VAW & G. It is clear that it is not enough to create awareness of human and legal rights to potential or existing victims. When the victims realise their rights and want to be helped - institutions within and outside the government should be able to afford

**** Proposed by this research team**

them such help. Obvious help and support required include: (a) psychological counselling, (b) legal aid, (c) shelter services, (d) medical help, (e) economic support through skill training and credit, (f) counselling for family members, (g) informal or paralegal mediation services.

Existing policing services need to be scaled up to cover the entire country. Nepal's commitment to international human rights covenants such as CEDAW and CRC and democracy must be utilised as a basis for ensuring services as a right of the victimised.

6. Mobilising Communities and Networking to Prevent Violence

The study also indicates the need to create sentinel systems to empower members of the community to prevent and deal with such cases of violence within the community. Time and time again, the community has proved to be an effective intermediary institution to deal with cases of violence against women and girls. In the context of Nepal's poverty, the high rate of illiteracy of women and their meagre access to resources, arbitration by the community is a low cost and effective medium of providing social justice. The collective action of women is also seen as an instrument of empowerment of the larger community of women. To make these sentinel systems more effective a networking mechanism should be created. The network would be useful in expediting justice and in providing broader social support and acceptance to victims.

7. Empowerment of Women and Girls

A longer-term strategy is essential for the overall empowerment of girls and women. The need to develop self-esteem and confidence as well as economic independence forms the very basis of preventing the victimization of girls and women. Making education compulsory up to the high school level would allow girls to make more choices about their lives. This ability to make choices would ultimately empower them and prevent their victimisation. Thus, it is recommended that the government pursue the policy of free and compulsory education for all. It is also recommended that all development programmes regardless of the sector they are operating in must compulsorily be required to conduct training on self-esteem, building leadership, human and legal rights training for women and girls as well as training on awareness building on the issue of violence against women and girls.

Economic independence leads to real empowerment of women. Thus, it is recommended that special efforts be made to link victims of violence to economic development programmes. It is also required that violence against women focused programmes create opportunities for victims to acquire skills and funding (loans, credit, grants) to re-start their lives.

8. Monitoring Media and Follow-up of Individual Cases

There is a need to not only monitor the media but also to follow-up individual cases reported from every district in coordination with law enforcement agencies of the district such as the CDO and DSP offices. NGOs should provide support services to the victims identified through this press reports from rural areas. NGOs should also establish a network to provide help and support to victims to come to register their cases in collaboration with district police offices. A national network of like-minded NGOs should be created in this direction. The support services to be provided by these groups victims would include counselling, medical and legal aid as well as help to rehabilitate them. A proactive strategy is suggested where activists and NGOs would contact the victims themselves and provide services. However, serious-funding would be required to enable NGOs to implement this programme. On the side of the government high level political commitment would be required to initiate such programmes.

9. Coordination with Local bodies

While working at the district level, NGOs and line agencies must coordinate with the Child Welfare Board and District Committees on Trafficking. Local government funds should be tapped to create support services such as to establish shelters and safe houses and a trust fund for girls and women who are victims of violence. Activists and NGOs must lobby local bodies to convince them of the government's duties towards women's human rights and development needs, especially, those of women in difficult circumstances.

10. Establishing a Network for Victims and their Families

The adversity of the situation of the victim and their immediate family members perhaps could be alleviated by 'peer-counselling' between individuals or families in similar situations. A network could be established with the help of committed NGOs who would facilitate their meeting. This joint sharing of pain and healing could significantly contribute to the healing process of the more recent victims and their families.

11. Entry-Level Programmes and Partnerships

As it is not possible for total outsiders, whether an individual or organization to enter any community and directly address such sensitive issues, it is recommended that 'entry level' programmes be initiated to build rapport and trust with local communities. The other strategy recommended is to establish partnerships with groups already working in different communities in order to orient them to the need to address violence against women and girls as a crosscutting human right and development issue. Groups such as SAATHI could provide technical and networking support to conduct appropriate awareness creation, advocacy and victim support programmes.

12. National Level Psychological Counselling Programme

That there is a great need for psychological counselling is clear from the findings of this study. However, such services, especially those which provide professional services are almost non-existent in Nepal. It is thus recommended that a formal training programme on clinical psychological counselling be established in Nepal. Such a programme could provide training to members of NGOs, college graduates and social workers who in turn would counsel victims of violence all over Nepal.

13. Gender Sensitisation

As patriarchy and discrimination of women form the basis sexual violence and exploitation of women and girls, it is recommended that sensitisation to gender issues be conducted at all levels. Messages to create a more equal society must also be delivered over mass media. School curricula should also address this crosscutting dimension of discrimination and address it from both the male and female points of view to initiate positive change.

14. The Need for Linkages with Anti-Trafficking and Anti-Child Labour Programmes

As the findings have revealed that rape and incest leads to child labour, prostitution and trafficking, there is an urgent need to respond to the victims of rape and incest from a broader perspective. Therefore, programmes focused on child labour and trafficking must include responding to these forms of violence against women and children as an integral part of their programmes.