



PHOTO: WORKING ON THE STREETS IN LYARI, KARACHI, PAKISTAN

# Women, Work and Violence In South Asia Newsletter

## FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

## Emerging insights

### Project Update

Welcome to our 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter bringing updates and insights from Women, Work and Violence in South Asia project. The study is funded by the UK Department for International Development (UK Aid) and is focussed on three countries: Pakistan, Nepal and Myanmar.

We have now reached an important stage as the data collection and interviews for many of the qualitative components are nearing completion, some secondary data has been analysed and a quantitative survey is in process and will shortly be completed. The task of transcribing and analysing interviews is well underway and by December we expect to be able to start sharing the detailed findings. This process will be supported in the new year by in-country workshops, drafting of reports and other communications materials suited to different stakeholders, with the project due for completion on 31st March 2017.

In this edition of our newsletter we have focused on sharing some emerging insights. We have done this by carrying out interviews with research team members who have provided both insights into their activities and learning from the process, including some initial reflections on what key messages are emerging from the study.



### Gender South Asia Blog

Please also check out our project blog and the resources available for download and wider sharing at [gendersouthasia.org](http://gendersouthasia.org). Recently added posts include:

- An interview with our Technical Advisory Group member Dr Rajni Palriwala from University of Delhi
- A video interview with Menuka Thapa the Chairperson of Raksha Nepal who work to protect women engaged in the 'informal entertainment sector'
- An interview with Rekha Thapa a well-known Nepali actress, who also discusses the situation facing women working in the entertainment industry
- An interview with Fatimah Ihsan, our Pakistan research team lead on some of the emerging findings from the VAW study there
- Some brief reflections in a video blog from Dr Tamsin Bradley following a recent visit to Nepal

### What use is a job without freedom?

Zara Ramsay shares reflections on the nature of violence coming from a conversation with a woman she met in Myanmar

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### VAW Quantitative Research Overview



Dr Neetu John and Daliya Sebastian, from ICRW, discuss the quantitative research activities and some early findings from secondary research.

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### Preliminary insights from Lyari



Dr Nida Kimani shares with us insights from her field research in Lyari in Pakistan.

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By way of reminder the main research questions for the study are provided below.

## Research Question

Our overall research question is as follows:

HOW CAN APPROACHES TO INCREASE  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT ALSO  
TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?



*Workers at the Manohar Construction site where our team conducted some of their field studies in Kathmandu, Nepal*

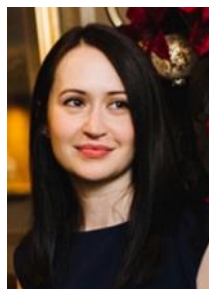
## Sub Research Questions

Based on our current understanding, our sub research questions include:

- ➔ In each field site, how does VAW affect women's economic engagement (attendance, performance, type of job pursued etc.)?
- ➔ Under what conditions or in what contexts does wage work exacerbate VAW?
- ➔ Under what conditions does wage work become empowering for women (i.e. facilitate their agency, resources, achievements) and thereby decrease violence?
- ➔ What can employers do to improve women employees' productivity while at the same time increasing their wellbeing in the workplace and at home? (wellbeing includes reduction of violence).

# What use is a job without freedom?

by Zara Ramsay



## Recounting a conversation in Myanmar

As we begin the data analysis of our qualitative research, preliminary analysis suggests:

- ➔ There is no direct link between income and either greater resilience to VAW or greater ability to mitigate it. *But...*
- ➔ Across all countries, engagement with anti-VAW women's organisations is the single biggest factor in triggering mind-set changes in women (that they recognise different forms of violence as abuse), and a heightening expression of agency directed at ending VAW.
- ➔

Below, I present a snippet of a conversation I had during a break at a UNDP conference in July, which brought together 'women leaders' from all over Myanmar. These leaders – ordinary women - had been approached by UNDP in their local areas, and given training to facilitate gender awareness in their communities. They were undergoing further training at this event.

Standing in the middle of the conference room, talking loudly over the bustle of the tea break, Khin Mya (n.b. not her real name) was eager to share her story with me. A 51-year-old woman from rural Myanmar, she spoke with energy and confidence. "I always advised my daughter to accept the shouting," she said, "and even the beatings. I would tell her to go back to her husband, send her away from my house. She would come to us crying, bruised, but we would send her back." There was a pause, as Khin Mya seemed to struggle with what she had just said. "But it wasn't our fault, you know. We didn't know that this was violence she was facing."

As I listened to the translator explain what Khin Mya had said, I watched her lively face twist with impatience as she waited to explain further. As soon as the translator paused, she resumed her rapid speech, but I had to interrupt: "Wait!. So, you didn't know shouting was violence. But what do you mean, you didn't know the beatings were violence?"

I was accustomed to sceptical responses to the idea that emotional or psychological abuse is violence. But physical harm? Perhaps I had misheard. "Surely a punch is a punch, so you must have known it was violence?," I asked, confused.

Khin Mya's eyes widened as the translator

conveyed my question. In a slightly louder voice, she exclaimed, "no, we didn't know my daughter's beatings were violence!", she continued, "of course we all felt that it wasn't nice. We don't like such behaviour. But violence... violence is a bigger idea. It is more than something unwanted - it is not to be accepted." Clearly eager not to be misunderstood, she went on: "you see, if I get angry, and I throw something at the wall in my house, is it violence against the wall? No". She shook her head vigorously and wagged a weather-beaten hand in my face. "No - because that is my wall. I can do what I want to it." She smiled and then sighed. "We were thinking the same about a wife – that she is his wife, so it's up to him to decide how he treats her."



*Fruit and vegetable sellers with novice monks on a railway platform in Shan State, Myanmar*



"So what changed?" I asked.

The expression on Khin Mya's face said that she was bemused by the stupidity of my question.

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*"The UNDP programme came to my village and educated us women about our rights," she said. We are human beings, and deserve more. Women are not only wives to be owned."*

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"And what about your daughter?" I asked. Have these ideas helped her?"

"I told her to come home, to leave him. At first she thought she would have to stay with him, because what would people think? But then a group of us explained to her that she cannot accept this behaviour. She can live by herself, make her own money. As a group, we found a way to gather money and she started her own business." Khin Mya's smiled broadly at this, clearly delighted and proud of her daughter's achievements.

"So do you feel that the answer in the end was money? That once she could support herself she was able to challenge the violence she faced?" Khin Mya laughed again, and shook her head.

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*"No. Money is important, of course, we all need money to survive. Without the business, it would have been much harder for her to leave actually, and it gave her confidence. But think - what use would it be – what use is the job if there is no freedom?"*

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Looking more serious, she leaned forward to make her final point.

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*"No, the most important thing is that we could stand together as women. Of course, there was still some gossip, some shaming because she left him. But enough of us understood, and could be there to support and encourage her. My daughter could be free of violence because of her money, yes, but it is more because of our new knowledge. Because there are women around now who understand her rights. This gives her courage."*

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## VAW: Quantitative Research Overview

by Neetu A. John and Daliya Sebastian



### Introducing ICRW

The **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)** is a global research institute with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and regional offices in New Delhi, India and Kampala, Uganda. ICRW's mission is to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. To accomplish this, ICRW works with partners to conduct empirical research, build capacity and advocate for evidence-based, practical ways to change policies and programs.

ICRW is the quantitative research lead for the *Women, Work and Violence* project which seeks to understand how approaches to increase women's economic engagement (WEE) can also tackle violence against women (VAW). In this role, ICRW conducted analysis of available Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data that include some VAW and WEE measures from Nepal and Pakistan. In addition, given the limited measures on VAW and WEE available in the DHS, ICRW designed a comprehensive survey that captures richer information on both VAW and WEE which are currently being implemented in Nepal and Myanmar.

### Results from the Nepal and Pakistan DHS

The DHS analysis was conducted in three stages. At first, we examined women's participation in work, exploring the circumstances under which women work, the type of work women typically engage in, as well as if they receive any payment for their work, and inspected the socio-economic and other key factors that may be associated with it.

We then proceeded to inspect women's experience of physical, emotional and sexual

violence from their intimate partners (IPV) and the factors that are associated with it. Finally, we examined if women's participation in work and their experience of violence were associated after accounting for key socio-economic and other relevant factors.

In Nepal, overall, one fifth (17%) of the women had experienced some form of IPV, with physical violence being the most common (10.7%), followed by emotional (9.6%) and sexual violence (7.7%). Experience of any IPV was significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. Among factors associated with IPV, while education and living in a wealthier household were protective against IPV, witnessing their father beat their mother increased the odds of IPV. Participation in the work force was high among Nepalese women, with 79% women reporting participation. A comparatively higher proportion of women from rural areas were likely to be employed compared to their counterparts in urban areas. In addition, older women, women from poorer households, those with lower levels of education, as well as those with higher household decision-making power were more likely to work, while sex of the household head and women's ownership of high value assets such as land or house were not associated with employment. However, surprisingly, there was significant association between women's work participation and experience of IPV.

In Pakistan, 32.9 % of women reported experiencing physical or emotional violence from their partners, and IPV was more likely to occur among rural women. While household wealth was protective against experiencing IPV, larger number of children, experience of father beating mother, alcohol use and husband's unemployment were significantly associated with experience of violence. Female participation in work was low, with 35% of the women reporting employment. Factors such as residing in rural areas, being older, poorer and having higher education significantly increased the odds of working. The data also showed that there were increased chances of experiencing IPV among working women. However, once socio-economic and other key factors were taken into account, the association between employment and violence was no longer significant, although the direction of the relationship remained positive.

## FAST FACTS

➔ Key facts from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data.

17%

In Nepal 17% of women had experience some form of Intimate partner violence (IPV) with physical violence being the most common. In Nepal, IPV is higher in urban areas compared to rural areas

79%

Participation of women in the workforce in Nepal is high with 79% reporting participation. There was a significant association between women's work participation and IPV

32.9%

In Pakistan, 32.9% of women reported experiencing physical or emotional violence from their partners, and IPV was more likely to occur among rural women.

35%

Female participation in work was low, with 35% of the women reporting employment. The association between work and violence is positive but not significant when socio-economic and other factors are taken into account.

## Next Steps

We are currently implementing surveys in Nepal and Myanmar, with more comprehensive measures on VAW and WEE than those available in the DHS. Our survey goes beyond IPV and measures violence from non-intimate partners. We also measure violence witnessed or experienced at workplace as well as on the way to work and its influence on decision-making around work. In addition, we have detailed measures to capture the types of work women do.

Furthermore, we measure women's ability to influence decision-making around her work, her income and other household matters.

Finally, our survey also includes questions to assess social networks available to women and their level of civic participation. Given the complex relationship between VAW and WEE, and the limited measures currently available in the DHS, our survey data will fill an important gap in understanding the ways in which VAW and WEE are related.

# Preliminary insights from Lyari



by Nida Kirmani (based on a conversation with Jon Gregson)

## Introduction

Nida Kirmani is a Sociologist based at Lahore University of Management Sciences where she is involved in teaching related to development, urban and gender studies. She completed her PhD from University of Manchester in 2007 and her PhD research was focussed on Muslim women and marginalisation in Delhi. For the last four years, she has been involved in research in the area of Lyari in Karachi, which is a part of the city that in recent years has experienced multiple forms of conflict and violence.

## Welcome to Lyari

Lyari is one of the oldest areas of Karachi. It started to take shape in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but grew rapidly with in migration when the British established the port in Karachi. There are now about 1.5 million people living in Lyari so it's almost a small city in its own right, and it is made up of several dense neighbourhoods each with its own unique character. It was 'regularised' by government

in the 1970s so it is not regarded as a slum area, but it does suffer from a very poor infrastructure. Apartments where people live are typically cramped and there are lots of electricity cuts. It is a physically challenging place to live and many complain about the rising costs of living. Health issues are less of a concern as people are close to a lot of hospitals and health care is relatively affordable but low in quality.

## A history of recent conflict

For the last 10-15 years Lyari has been conflict ridden with phases of violence influenced by competing criminal gangs, political parties, and state security forces. From 2008-13 the area was effectively run by a group that was supported by the Pakistan Peoples Party, and then in 2013 another gang war started, and since then the 'Rangers' (state para military forces) have taken control and open conflict has receded. However, there is now a different kind of state violence against suspected gang members in Lyari and Islamist groups and political party workers in other parts of the city.

Despite this turbulent backdrop Nida characterises Lyari as a fascinating multi-cultural and diverse place which is vibrant and exciting in many ways, and where she feels safe to visit. Over the years' migrants have come particularly from the Katchi area (from Gujurat) and from Balochistan, and these represent the main ethnic communities living in Lyari, but in recent years' migrants have come from all parts of Pakistan.

From time to time there are periods of tension between communities but there has been no major ethnic conflict. Most neighbourhoods have one dominant ethnic group and then many immigrants. People tend to socialise within their own community, but they often work and study together, and surprisingly many people don't visit the different areas in Lyari so there is limited interaction.

## Women's livelihoods in Lyari

Women's experience of life in Lyari can vary a lot depending on which community they live in, as the context is very multi-ethnic. Most of those interviewed as part of Nida's study have come from the Katchi community who have been in Karachi for at least 150 yrs, migrating there before and after partition with India. They represent about 30% of the Lyari community and tend to be more economically active than women of other groups. Many are working as domestic

servants in elite parts of city, or help in workshops.

For example, one woman does seasonal work with an organisation preparing chutney from mangoes, and at other times she is working from home preparing cutting beetle nuts. A lot of younger women work for low wages (approximately Rs3000 per month) as private school teachers, as this is seen as acceptable and respectable work. It is viewed as more acceptable for older women to travel distances for work further afield in Karachi, whilst younger women tend to stay closer to home. Women start working typically from late teens and among the Katchis perhaps about half of women are working to earn an income. The Baloch community are less economically active with a minority of women earning an income, though some engage from time to time in activities at home such as embroidery where they can earn a little income.

Many people in Lyari who were original settlers own their homes but some rent places to stay which can cost Rs 4-8000 per month. Whilst there are some good government schools in the area, these vary in quality, so one of the greatest financial burdens is related to school fees (since private schools are preferred) along with living expenses.

## Women, Work and Violence in Lyari

Nida's current research on this project is exploring the connections between women's economic empowerment and violence against women. She has started by trying to identify what kinds of jobs women are doing in Lyari. Through chats with friends and key contacts (for example a woman from the Katchi community working in private school) Nida was introduced to economically active women many of whom were from the Katchi community. Other contacts and friends, introduced her to women from the fisher folk community (who often originate from Sindh). In this community men have been losing their livelihoods in recent years so women are having to work more outside their homes in order to make ends meet. Nida has also spoken to some Baloch women, including one working as a nurse and a couple of lady health workers, and several women who are not economically active to gain insights into their attitudes towards work and violence.

She has conducted 28 interviews so far with women from their early 20's right up to their 70s, and has also run some small informal focus groups chats. The findings from her

study will follow soon but what follows are some initial general impressions.

## Initial Reflections

First and foremost, we have to be aware that this is a difficult topic to research. Many people can find it difficult to 'open up' about forms of violence to an outsider, and worry that the researcher may also be in contact with other people in their community – so they don't want any messages getting back to husbands, employers. So, trust has to be built and it is very difficult but some people are surprisingly open. Experiences interviewing two teachers highlight this. One teacher whose husband was known to be extremely violent and abusive spoke of her husband only in the most glowing terms, whilst the other teacher who was a widow and family breadwinner was very open about violence she experienced from her son.

Secondly the conceptual understanding of violence depends very much on who you are speaking to. One concept referred to as '*halka pulka*' conveys the notion of a light beating which many regarded as not even worth mentioning (though it is uncertain exactly what this violence involves). The urdu word '*tashaddud*' for violence has a much heavier connotation. Others regard emotional abuse as a form of violence and these aspects have come up a lot in the interviews when talking about violence. Others see economic difficulties also a form of violence, so all these aspects need to be considered and interviewees focus on different areas depending on their perspective of what violence is.

Some good news is that a change does seem to be happening in relation to attitudes to women working outside the home and being mobile in Lyari, and women are finding new opportunities to earn and use income to take care of their priorities such as their children. Based on initial interviews (with a lawyer, and women working in insurance sales and the retail sector) it seems that women who are in better paying jobs and who have lucrative professions generally have a lot more confidence and are in a position to be bolder in their relationships. One of the women interviewed who is in a bad marriage feels she has options and can take steps to divorce if she feels she has to. This doesn't mean that such women will leave their husband but it gives them a better bargaining position and more strength, whereas a woman who does not have this will not be able to consider leaving her husband however violent or desperate the situation becomes

It remains difficult for women to be economically engaged but awareness is increasing that this should be something women can do, and that going out to work does not mean you are a 'bad woman'.

Care is needed in reaching such a conclusion, as Nida reflects that the researcher (who will be perceived by others as economically active) may be hearing what others think she wants to hear, and there is also a potential bias which can arise as she is mainly seeking out women to interview who are engaged in employment.

## Events



### Recent

In October Dr Tamsin Bradley and Jon Gregson (pictured above with Menuka Thapa (Raksha Nepal Chairperson), visited Nepal to meet with Advisory group members, stakeholders and project research team members.

### Upcoming

Workshops are currently being planned for the first quarter of 2017, in Myanmar, Pakistan and Nepal to engage with stakeholders and share findings from the VAW study, as well as having an opportunity for some project wide reflection and analysis comparing findings from the three countries.



# The project team

## Implementing Organisations

The project is being implemented by **IMC Worldwide** (lead), the **University of Portsmouth**, and the **International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)**.

Additional institutional collaborators are the **Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)** and the **University of Delhi**. The main country partners are:

- In Myanmar we are working with **Myanmar Survey Research (MSR)**.
- In Nepal we are working with **Health Research and Social Development forum (HERD)** and **Social Science Baha (SSB)**
- In Pakistan we are working with **Homenet Pakistan**

## The team

The project team is made up of:

### Management Team

- Pallu Modi, Project Director
- Emma Sauvanet, Research Manager
- Tamsin Bradley, Academic Lead

### Research Support

- Suti Sahariah, Research Assistant

### Core Team Specialists

- Smita Premchander, Country lead for Myanmar and Nepal
- Fatimah Ishan, Pakistan Country Lead
- Zara Ramsey, Project Coordinator
- Neetu John and Daliya Sebastian, Quantitative Research Specialists
- Jon Gregson, Research Uptake Lead
- National research team members and Partners

### Technical Advisory Group

The project also benefits from a strong international advisory group, bring together a broad range of specialists

### Country Advisory Forums

In each of the three countries we have brought together in country experts from a wide range of stakeholder groups who advise on how best to develop the project activities within the different country contexts.



Gateway to Lyari Town, Pakistan, the focus for Nida Kirmani's field work

## Staying in touch

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### Website

Please visit our project Wordpress site and subscribe to updates:

[www.gendersouthasia.org](http://www.gendersouthasia.org)

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