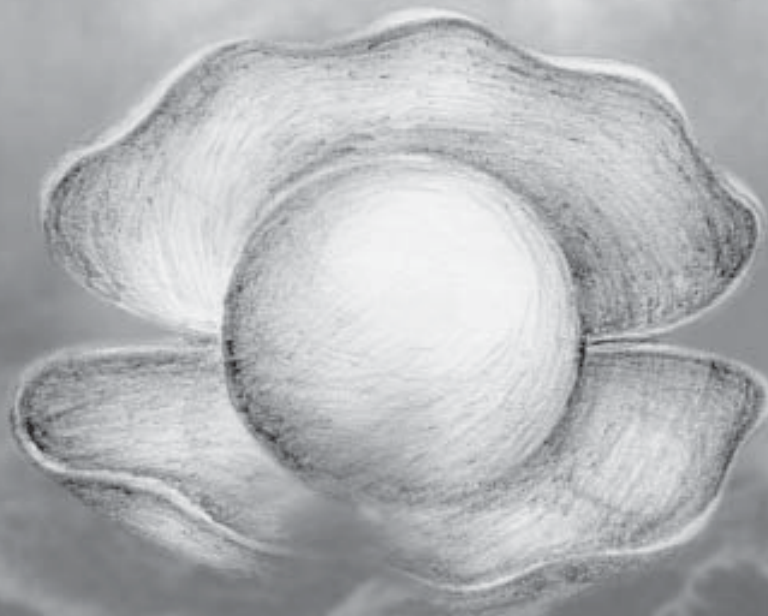


RIOTS



PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE
by COMMUNITY LEVEL HELPERS
for
WOMEN



INFORMATION MANUAL 4

RIOTS

PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE
by COMMUNITY LEVEL HELPERS
for
WOMEN

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BOOKS *for* CHANGE
Dedicated to Development
A Unit of ActionAid Karnataka Projects

INFORMATION MANUAL 4

RIOTS

PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE *by* COMMUNITY LEVEL
HELPERS *for* WOMEN

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Dedicated to
the Women of
the 2002 Gujarat Riots

PREFACE

People devastated by natural disasters often suffer greater loss and trauma in the space of a few hours or days, than many people suffer during an entire life-time. However, this suffering is even more compounded when the disaster is human-made, particularly the outcome of internal sectarian strife and riots.

Not only is there widespread, often very brutal, loss of life, limb and property and rape. It is hard to deal with the loss or brutalisation of one's loved ones, or the destruction of one's home with all one's life's saving, memories and dreams. But how much harder is this when the loss is at the hands of one's neighbours, and sometimes with the active complicity of state authorities. In such circumstances one's grief, and the challenges of rebuilding one's life and livelihoods, are further complicated by profound feelings of betrayal, insecurity, anger and despair.

The carnage in Gujarat in February-March 2002 has been one of the worst seen in the country in the recent times. Among the survivors, women and children are the most vulnerable. About 500 women became widows and 350-400 were victims of sexual assault of varying degrees. Thousands of people lived in makeshift camps for months in sub-human conditions, not knowing what would happen to them. All these massive disruption of lives of people in general and women in particular, called for a specific psychosocial interventions for women since disasters put women in vulnerable circumstances.

As part of the overall relief, rebuilding, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE was given high priority. The interventions were built in a people friendly manner utilising the community resources. This manual presents the experiences of women, a method to understand the changes and psychosocial interventions for caring for women who have experienced such trauma. It focuses on pre and post riot issues that have enhanced the vulnerability of women. The manual looks at ways in which women can be helped to rebuild their lives and master the traumatic experiences. The experience has demonstrated the importance of focussing of the needs of women as well as the value of interventions.

We sincerely appreciate the sensitivity, dedication and commitment of all members for their contributions. The Aman Pathiks, many of whom themselves were survivors of the mass violence and yet found the spaces in their hearts to volunteer for healing, peace and justice, the people of Gujarat who rose above the climate of hatred, and the Aman Samudaya team in Gujarat who provided courageous and compassionate leadership to the entire healing process: together they have played a very valuable role in bringing solace to the riot survivors.

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We gratefully acknowledge the people and the organisations associated with the Citizens Initiative, without whom the peace movement would not have been possible. Our special thanks to Aman Samudaya supporters, Fr Victor Moses s. j. of St Xavier's Social Service Society, Mira Maleek of Centre for Development, Mishra of Kamdhar Swasthya Seva Mandal, Rajendar of SAATH who braved the riotous situation and brought in the volunteers to be shaped up as Aman Pathiks. A warm remembrance on the sensitivities of Brinda Nanavati of Shantikumar Trust and Sushma J Pucadyil of INTACH, Sonal of Eklavya Foundation and Wilfred of INSAF.

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The Authors

2002

INTRODUCTION



The riots in Gujarat in 2002 have been one of the worst seen in the country. About 97,162 people were said to be affected, out of which 1,243 lost their lives, 3,583 were injured and 179 were documented as missing.¹ In the immediate aftermath of the violence, there were at least 100,000 women, children and men in the 103 relief camps in Ahmedabad alone. It is estimated that about 500 women were widowed following the riots. Reported estimates put the number of women subjected to sexual assault as 350–400. These alarming numbers call for a specific intervention for women.

Of the many groups, the impact of the riots on women (physical, economic and psychological) has special significance. The riots have put women in new circumstances, which increases their vulnerability. Many women have become widows following the riots. The Self Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA) reported that 38,900 of their members from the urban, and 52,400 members from the rural areas were affected by the riots. They reported that women were witnesses to violence, reported loss of savings and property, livelihood losses and displacement from their homes.²

Violence against women has been ruthless. Incidents of women having suffered various forms of sexual violence ranging from rape, gang rape to molestations have been documented. Investigations by different groups (see appendix) strongly suggest that these acts were deliberate, systematic, and planned. Following are some of the extracts:



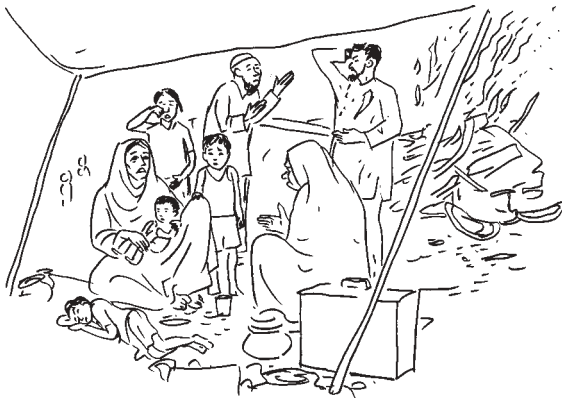
Especially the despair in the eyes of women and children – young widows who'd watched their husbands being axed to death, old grandmothers who had seen grandsons being pulled from the breasts of their mothers and thrown into raging fires, teenage girls who had managed to escape the rampaging rapists but not before witnessing the brutal killings of their brothers and fathers, toddlers whose stricken eyes told their own stories, village elders who had watched their community getting

decimated, even as policemen looked the other way. Geeta Chavda's documentary (Akrosh) told the worst story about our country, about ourselves.....³

Evidence suggests that victims studied are generally found to be acutely distressed during the first few months following the trauma. In a study carried out by psychiatrists from the Department of Psychiatry at B J Medical College, Ahmedabad it was found that a significant number of women were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Out of 300 sample cases, 113 (38%) showed symptoms of PTSD. This is characterised by anxiety, repetitive nightmares, numbing of emotions and hyper-vigilance.⁴

Following riots, women found themselves getting further marginalised as they became more vulnerable. This is seen in all conflict situations, such as the Gujarat riots. Therefore interventions specially addressing the needs of women affected by riots become important. It would help them to cope better, both with the immediate consequences, and, in their future life.

I NCREASED VULNERABILITY AND INSECURITY



When the home and community become battlegrounds, women especially experience physical and sexual violence. Not only is the security provided by the home brutally snatched away, but also the continued loss of the home assumes a different dimension for women, many of whom, before the carnage, had to spend much of their time within the home. The violence left them without the space they were habituated to and forced them to stay in the open with their

children in conditions that were vastly different from those at home. Women were scared to return to their homes and communities that no longer represented security for them. Attempts to go back to check the condition of their homes were often met with hostility from neighbours. The uncertainty of shelter, of where they will live in future, has added to the acute feeling of fear and insecurity amongst many women of Gujarat.⁵

L OSS OF PROPERTY AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Women spoke of the hardships and struggles they had undergone to build their homes. Many spoke of saving money from their regular home expense budgets for months together to buy vessels, a gas stove, a refrigerator or items such as a sewing machine that would help them supplement the family income. They were pained by the fact that they were not able to fulfill the basic needs and demands of their children while living in the relief camps. It is apparent that the

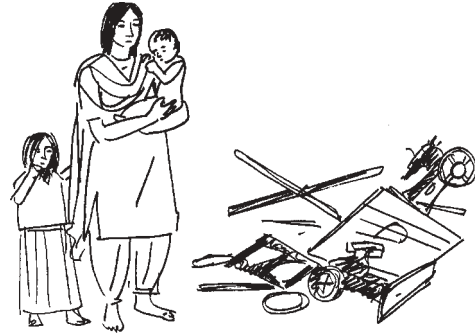


hardships faced by women due to the delays in the housing rehabilitation process are going to be far greater than those faced by men.⁵

With the entire community threatened, women in particular are paying the price: with their freedom and mobility. Mothers fear for the safety of daughters. Husbands fear for wives. And the first response to fear is the imposition of restrictions. As Muslim communities ghettoize, there is a danger of further ghettoisation of women within home.⁶

E MOTIONAL DISTRESS

The women think I am some kind of a neta (leader) to whom they can address their complaints. I put my arms around one woman who is weeping and 20 others just want a hug, to be comforted even if I cannot offer them hope, justice, money, freedom. One by one the tales of horror and brutality unfold as each one tells her story. Every story is beyond the pale, unbelievable. But each re-telling is a catharsis, the only therapy available for trauma. What a miracle that they sit here weeping silently. One would have expected screams of anguish, the madness of terrible grief, for each one of them has lost someone beloved.⁷



Women testified to feeling an acute sense of betrayal. They feel betrayed by neighbours, friends, people they have lived with, celebrated festivals with, done business with. These people, along with mobs from outside, looted, killed and burned their homes and families. How do you re-build that trust?⁶



One of our member's two daughters were to be married off recently. When I went to visit her, she was in shock. She showed me half burnt pieces of red cloth and other bridal finery from her daughters' trousseau which she had spent a lifetime collecting. She also showed me her half burnt wads of rupee notes.²

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN AFTER RIOTS: HOW IS IT SPECIAL?

Riots affect women in specific ways. The repercussions of the riots are manifold, and, at the same time unique to women. These are due to a number of factors. In the background of prevailing discriminatory attitudes towards women there are socio-cultural and political issues that work against women (Figure 1). Women find themselves in a situation which places an increased responsibility on them like for e.g., widows, or, women who carry the burden of shame as seen with victims of sexual assault. They are suddenly left to fend for themselves and their families. This makes them vulnerable economically and emotionally.

Young women may not be allowed to pursue their studies or work, as there is a concern about their safety. Girls are married at a younger age for the same reason. The diagram below explains these further.

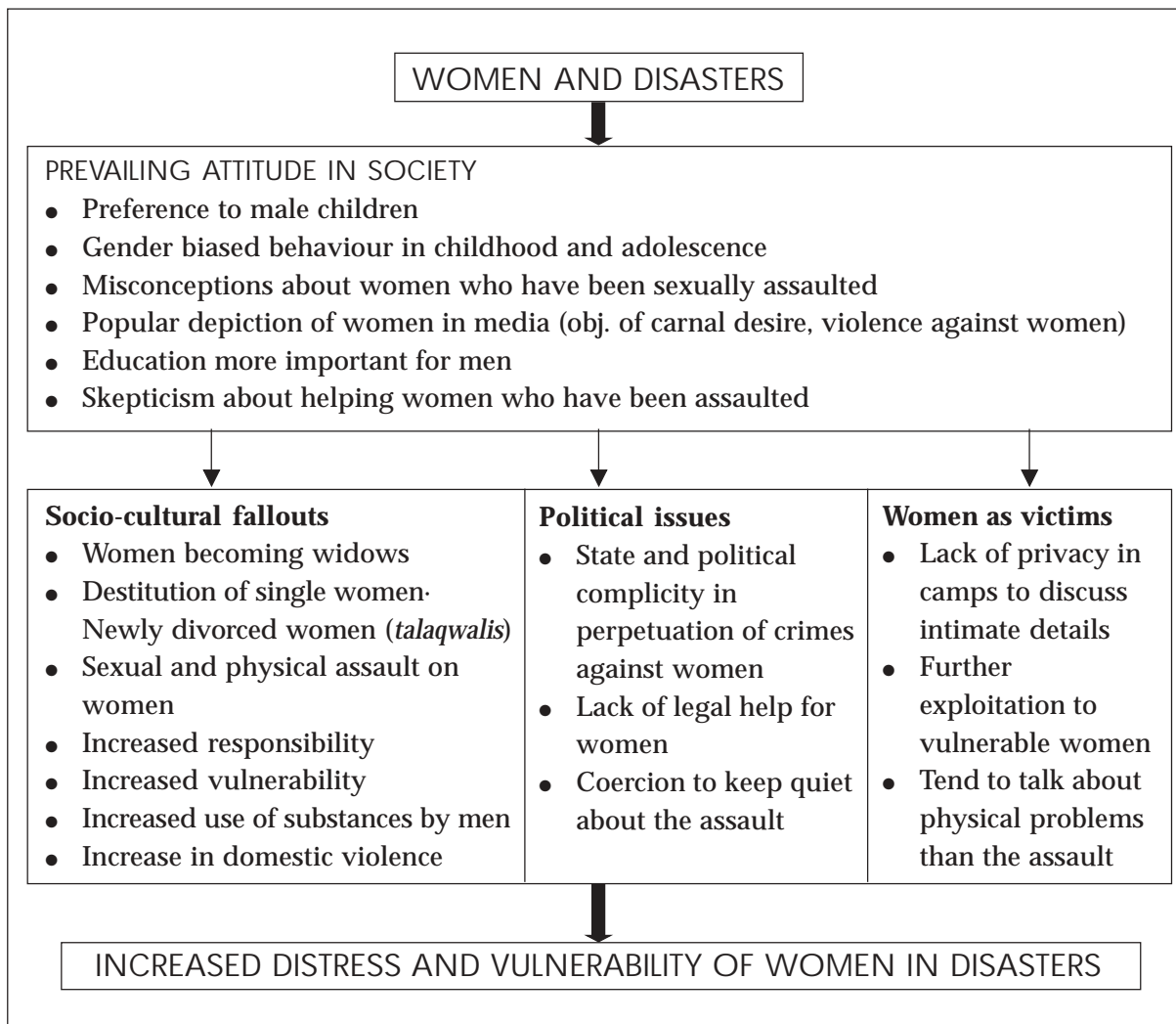


Under normal circumstances a woman facing the death of someone dear or experiencing loss of property, like in a robbery, copes with the help of her relatives and friends. She may seek help from her employers and neighbours. Usually these supports help her to reorganise life. Following the riots, women have become **widows** with young children. Women are now dealing with the grief of having lost their spouse along with the burden of increased responsibility towards their surviving family. These are what some women who survived the riots had to share. In many situations, there are women who have not seen the dead bodies of their spouses after the riots. This has added to their grief and pain by not providing an emotional closure of the event.



I saw my husband being shot by the police. I had to run to save myself. The authorities collected the bodies of those who died. Later they called us to identify his body among others. My brother-in-law went and he saw the body. I could not. My children could not either. My youngest son (who is 6 years old) asks me where his father is?⁶

There has been disruption of many things, which were once a regular part of their lives.



*I normally go (to court) by scooter. I could go, but if I don't come back, then what is the point. They haven't spared women and children this time. Women are not going to be allowed to move about freely for a long time.*⁶

Women are reporting difficulties going through the legal procedures to obtain compensation, providing food for their children and sending their children to school. Some are raising doubts about the safety of their children and themselves. This can become more anxiety-provoking especially to those women who were earlier not working outside their homes. In such cases, even day-to-day living becomes an ordeal.

*Every woman we met displayed a fear of the future for herself, her family and her community. Although fear and insecurity have permeated society at large, women contend with additional fears about sexual assault and abuse as well as fear for safety of family members, particularly children. Insecurity is far more apparent at relief camps and when women have themselves experienced or witnessed violence.*⁸



Unmarried or divorced women find themselves more vulnerable than before. They have lost their savings, home and, in most cases, their livelihood. Many have lost the social support they had in their neighbourhood and families.

He (husband) was burnt in front of the police line. If the police had taken them inside, this would never have happened. I have 6 children to bring up on my own.⁶

My husband left me five years ago. I had a small galla (stall/shop). I was managing on my income. Then came the attack on my village. My house was not burnt but my galla was burnt. I have come to the camp along with my husband's older brother and his wife. I have 3 children to support.⁶

There has been another situation arising from compensation money. Families, who have been the beneficiaries of financial aid, married their young daughters in the relief camps with an attempt to decrease their anxiety about their safety. There are reports of these young women having been **divorced** shortly after their marriage. These **talaqwaalis** now find themselves in a difficult situation. They are left without any financial or emotional security, and their families feel they are now right back where they started.

In the aftermath of riots, women have lost their spouses, homes, children, relatives, or livelihood. They have been attacked and assaulted physically and sexually. In many cases, women have gone through the loss of more than one aspect of their lives, which made their lives secure. The prevailing milieu of insecurity and the enormous task of rebuilding their lives with new responsibilities heighten their sense of loss.

All women reiterated their fears for a future where even a basic guarantee to life and property could not be taken for granted... H of Taiwada whose wrist was broken in three places as a result of police lathis on her stated that her work of making kites was at a standstill... We have reports of Muslim women hitherto employed in home and small-scale industries, not being taken back to work, post-violence.⁸

An immediate impact of the violence is the creation of female-headed households. In many cases entire families have been killed. They were dealing not only with the trauma of this loss, but facing a future with their life's savings and livelihood sources destroyed. For those who were already surviving as single women (including widows) before the violence, the future is equally bleak. Having struggled to gain economic solvency, they are now back to being destitute.⁶

Based on all of these observations, while working with riot surviving women, it is imperative to understand that **they are in a special situation, which heightens their sense of helplessness. This calls for special efforts towards recovery.**

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND BEFORE INTERVENTION

Traumatic experiences cause stress, which is often beyond the coping capacity of an individual. In such a situation body and mind react by measures to 'fight' or 'flight'. The reaction leads to symptoms that are manifested in changes in behaviour, bodily experiences or as emotional reactions. It can lead to feelings of anger, helplessness, depression and frustration. In any disaster the social support system breaks down because everyone is affected by the disaster. So having relatives or friends who could help through a crisis maybe non-existent since many of them may also be affected by the riots. They need assistance from others around them in order to help get back to a normal life. It is important that the worker understands how women in particular, would react and, the situations and experiences that would have made them more vulnerable after the riots. (Refer to Figure 1)

WOMEN AND COPING

Women are generally more vulnerable emotionally than men. This is accentuated in a disaster situation such as the riots. **Women respond to stress differently from men.** This can be seen as any of the following:

- Express emotions by crying
- Talking about the events and trying to reach out to others in the community
- Having symptoms such as fainting (*behoshi*)
- Having vague symptoms such as aches and pains as a response to stress
- Expressing their sense of helplessness
- Taking the role of a caretaker and showing more resilience under difficult circumstances.



WOMEN AND ASSAULT

- ◆ The needs of women who have been physically and sexually assaulted need to be addressed specifically owing to the sensitive nature of the issue. Various forces affect victims of sexual violence, which in turn affects their identification and treatment. As seen earlier, prevailing socio-cultural attitudes towards women who



have been raped define the manner in which the victims react to the atrocities committed on them.

- Sentiment of shame over the incident is a barrier to seek help. Women and girls are often encouraged by their relatives to keep quiet and refrain from talking about their traumatic experiences
 - Family may express it as another indicator of why it is a burden to have a girl child, further increasing the discrimination against women
 - Beliefs such as perceiving rape as violating the honour of men and not that of the women also exemplify the problem.
- ◆ Myths surrounding women who have been sexually assaulted increase the victim's sense of shame and insecurity.

Some common **beliefs regarding rape** are:

- A raped woman is dirty and sexually damaged
 - Once raped a woman becomes more sexually available
 - A woman who has been raped is worth less as a human being and less entitled to social (male) protection
 - It is worse to rape a virgin than a non-virgin.
- ◆ Many women were subjected to **verbal abuse** of derogatory sexual content along with being physically assaulted. This added to heightening their sense of low self-esteem and victimisation. These feelings have to be resolved for them to get back to their normal lives.

‘The effect of verbal abuse on women was stark, and members of the fact-finding teams believe that this area of violence against women, is perhaps underrated. Humiliation, as a result of verbal abuse, rankled for long and often carried almost as much weight as physical abuse. In almost all testimonies, women remembered abuse and slogan shouting very vividly.’⁸

- ◆ Effects of violence have ranged from death to injuries like bruises, cuts, fractures or dental injuries. It has resulted in sexual or reproductive consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy or urinary tract infections. These require urgent medical intervention.
- ◆ Women were also burnt as part of the violence on the community. The survivors of this horrific experience carry scars of both burns and the trauma. The importance placed by society on beauty and physical appearance adds to complicate the recovery process.

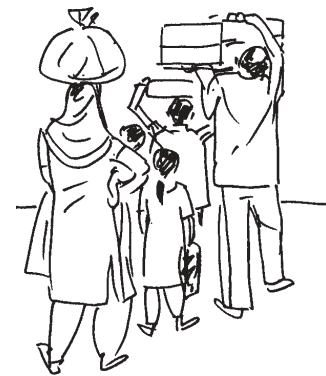
The violation of personal space and security, along with the burden of keeping quiet about her feelings, makes it difficult for the victim to recover. The focus has to be to help women by acknowledging their experience, by allowing them to ventilate in an environment where confidentiality of the highest degree is maintained.

WOMEN AND EXISTING ATTITUDES

Understanding the existing attitudes about women is essential to place the psychosocial interventions for the affected women in a larger perspective. Women go through experiences, which are discriminatory from their childhood. From giving preference to male children to facing a gender-biased behaviour in childhood and adolescence and to being subject to domestic violence in a marriage, women face difficulties. Projecting women as objects of carnal desire and depicting violence against women as part of the story in movies and literature further act as reminders and cause distress to women who are victimised. These existing attitudes of a community get exaggerated among the survivors of riots.

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

- ◆ Women consistently reported finding themselves in a situation, which placed an **increased responsibility** on them. The multiple roles they had played prior to the riots, was now felt to be more stressful. They found themselves as the primary caregiver even though their spouses were with them. Women reported that as the men were unemployed, it was left to them to look for ways to fend for their families.



Many women have taken the lead in protecting themselves and their families. Women have often made key decisions regarding safety of the family, including determining places to hide, length of time of concealment, flight, its mode and direction. During curfew, women have had to play dual roles. Since curfew was lifted for women alone, many women managed important work outside the home in addition to their household responsibilities.⁸

- ◆ Maladaptive coping in men also has a direct bearing on women. Women report an increase in the **use of intoxicating substances by men**. Women find it tougher to handle this additional pressure and its related fallouts such as discord at home and a further reduction in the financial standing at home.
- ◆ Women may also be subjected to **domestic violence** by their spouses. The uncertain nature of the situation, along with the stress of having to rebuild lives puts an enormous amount of anxiety/frustration on everyone in the family. Women find themselves susceptible to violence at home in this background.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Evidence of **State and Police complicity** in perpetuating the crimes against women has received wide coverage



in the media. No effort was made to protect women either during the riots or in the aftermath of the riots. It has been documented that in most instances there has been a complete denial of the issue by the State. In the few instances where victims of sexual assault went to file First Information Reports (FIRs) against the perpetrators, they were denied the right to file on grounds of inadequate evidence. The manner of the State abdicating responsibility towards these women can be viewed as a form of **coercion** to keep victims from seeking any legal or other intervention.

*'The State...abdicated its responsibility to protect all its citizens. Far worse it actively connived in maiming, raping, and butchering of hundreds women and children... More than five weeks after the carnage began no effort is being made to ensure punishment of the guilty. FIRs are not being lodged, compensation not given.'*⁶

ISSUES RELATING TO PERSONAL DISCOMFORT AMONG HELP PROVIDERS

Initially working with the affected women maybe difficult because you feel **ill equipped and uncomfortable** in dealing with the issue of rape and other forms of assault on women. You may not have seen any woman who has been assaulted and only heard of such instances from others. You may be **sceptical** regarding the benefits of helping women who were subjected to assault. You may feel uncomfortable discussing issues related to **female sexuality and body**. These also act as a barrier in reaching out to women with sensitive experiences such as personal violence.

REMEMBER

- Riots put women in circumstances, which increase their vulnerability.
- There are social, political and personal barriers, which impede helping affected women.
- There are short-term and long-term psychological consequences of violence on women, which lead to significant distress and disability.
- Women face losses, which affect them and increase their sense of helplessness.
- Women respond to stress differently from men.
- Victims of sexual and physical assault have specific needs.
- Existing attitudes of discriminatory nature need to be acknowledged in interventions.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS OF WOMEN TO VIOLENCE

Women who have been victims of trauma experience initial reactions such as shock, fear for their safety, emotional numbness and withdrawal. Some may deny the event; report disturbing dreams and recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, also known as flashbacks.

The long-term effects are also disabling. It affects multiple areas in a woman's life. Women may report depression, vague bodily symptoms, difficulty in forming trusting relationships, feelings of guilt, anxiety and having persistent feelings of arousal.

Initial reactions of shock

In the beginning, I was unable to understand what happened.

A woman who saw her husband being shot dead by the police and was unable to find her four children for a week after she reached the camp.

It was as if it was unreal. For a few days I kept asking myself if it had really happened to me.

Fear for safety

A 15-year-old girl who fled her home as mobs started attacking their locality said, *No place can be safe anymore.*

An 18-year-old girl had seen her sister being burnt to death by the mob and described her feelings as follows: *I feel safe in the camp. I prefer staying here as there are more people. They may attack again if we go back home.*

Emotional numbness and withdrawal

She just sits there and keeps staring. She hardly speaks to anyone. A relative describes a young girl of 8 years who was witness to her mother being sexually assaulted and burnt along with her younger brother who was 4 years old.

What is the use of talking to you .I have lost everything. Let me be.

Denial of the event

Inmates of a camp reporting about a woman who was raped and bought into the camp unconscious with injuries, *She is too traumatised to recount her own story. She says she cannot remember anything except being chased by the men.*

A woman who was sexually assaulted recounting her experiences of the day the mobs attacked her locality, *They hit me badly. After this I became unconscious. I do not remember anything.*

Experiencing disturbing dreams

Narratives of women who lost their belongings and saw their houses being burnt, *My sleep is full of dreams of fire and mobs (tola). These days I dread sleeping. My sleep has not been the same since the riots (danga). I keep getting up constantly.*

Flashbacks which are recurrent and intrusive

Distressing recollections of the event including images, thoughts, or perceptions:

A woman talks about what she witnessed during the riots, *I saw the mob, they tortured and harassed the females by making them naked, abused them physically and then killed them by burning alive. I do not know why I just feel very tired. I keep getting the same thought in my head again and again.*

These effects may recur over the first few days and resolve over a few weeks.

Depression

I do not feel like eating. Even when I eat, I eat little or nothing at all. (Bhook nahin lagti; kabhi kha liya to khaya nahin to aise hi).

All my family is gone, what do I have to live for. I feel like I can neither live nor die. What sort of life is this?

A woman who had lost 7 out of 8 members of his family in the riots, *At times I feel I should have gone too.*

Multiple bodily complaints

Half my head aches (Aadha sir dukhta hai) I feel like just lying down.

A woman whose daughter was burnt alive and another has suffered extensive burns in the camp, *After the riots (danga) I have not been myself. I have constant backache. I feel there is something wrong with my back. But the doctors say that there is nothing wrong.*



Difficulty in forming trusting relationships

The press writes that terrorists sent us bombs: they also published missile shaped pictures of the bombs. They write all lies, complete lies, and get us into trouble.

Children in a camp expressing their anger.

How can I trust anyone easily. The people who attacked us were people whom we knew. We used to go to their weddings and we even celebrated festivals together. I don't think that will happen again.

Feelings of anger and guilt

A mother reporting her daughter's rape, *I could hear the screams and cries of my daughter. My mind was seething with fear and fury. I could do nothing to help my daughter. Why did they have to do this to her? What kind of men are these?*

Women describing the state of their fellow women, who were sexually assaulted, *Aurat ne mard ko janam diya, Usne usko barbad kiya (Women gave birth to men, who in turn ruined women)*

Anxiety (feeling of tension),

including avoiding situations related to the trauma

Woman who lost her husband in the gunfire in the riots, *I can't sleep. Every noise, sometimes, even someone walking outside makes me very anxious. My heart starts beating fast, I sweat and I think what if they come back again.*

Mother of a young girl who was raped and sustained extensive burns, *She refuses to go anywhere near the locality we came from. It is very difficult for her. We are planning to change our residence.*

Persistent feelings of arousal

such as irritability, difficulty in concentrating, and an exaggerated startled response

Woman reporting her distress following riots.

Earlier I used to be very patient with my children. But now I lose my temper very soon. At times even the sound of children playing irritates me. What is wrong with me?



A Mother reporting the changes in her 16-year-old daughter. *She gets scared at the slightest noise. She does not like to leave me.*

I cannot concentrate even on my cooking. My mind keeps on going back to the day of the riots. Earlier cooking used to be something I did with ease – the details came to my mind automatically, now everything requires effort.

Specific complaints seen in victims of sexual violence

- **Constant sense of vulnerability** (*it can happen again, I am not safe*)
- **Low self-esteem** (*I am not good, I cannot get over this, I am better off dead*)
- **Self-blame** (*maybe I should have run faster, maybe I should have hidden behind that wall rather than running, I am to be blamed for what happened to me*)
- **Loss of control** (*I feel like I am going to go crazy, I feel like I don't have control over myself*)
- **Distressing feelings** such as feeling dirty/unclean, soiled and bad (*I feel dirty always, I can never be clean again, people will look at me as if I am a bad person*).

These symptoms may not be reported initially to care providers. Some survivors can report them once confidence is built up. These complaints tend to remain for a long time. Women should be allowed to talk about it when they feel comfortable.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN

Owing to numerous sensitive issues, which arise while dealing with women's issues in a post-riot scenario, it is vital that certain guidelines are followed.

Women subjected to violence and personal losses need to share problems, concerns, pain, and anxieties. Most of these include intimate details, so need to be done with a sense of mutual trust, and the clear understanding that everything shared is confidential and private. Some of what they share with you maybe information they have not even told their families.

Accept whatever the woman is sharing without trying to be judgemental. Do not try and analyse what should have been done. It is important for the person to feel totally accepted; this will facilitate more sharing. As we have seen, society would be passing certain judgements and have certain perceptions about issues. Hence, the woman needs to feel you are that one person who understands and accepts her point of view. This is extremely healing for the person, as she will be able to share her pain frankly without feeling she is being judged.

Points to keep in mind while listening to a woman's experiences

- Allow her to talk when she is ready to do so
- Do not push her to take decisions
- Keep all information provided, like the name and other details leading to revealing her identity private
- Keep files locked so that they are not accessible to others
- No information should be shared without the consent of the person who has shared the same with you, except when it is felt that the person needs medical care or the person may harm herself
- Do not give your point of view about what happened or should have happened
- Just listen to what is being said
- Support her to continue her sharing.

Owing to numerous sensitive issues, which arise while dealing with women's issues in a post-riot scenario, it is vital that certain guidelines are followed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Helping women subjected to violence and personal losses involves sharing of very intimate personal information, problems, concerns, pain, and anxieties. Most of the

information could include intimate details. This special sharing has to be done with a sense of mutual trust, and the clear understanding that all discussions and details shared are confidential and private. Some survivors may prefer not to share their experiences to the caregivers, or even to their husbands and families. Allow them to talk when they are ready to do so. She will talk when she feels she can trust the person and feels comfortable with to share. It is important to give time to women. Do not push her to take decisions. **Confidentiality means not sharing with other people any information provided by the survivors like the name and other details as it can lead to identification.** Written information or files of the survivors must be kept locked so that they are not accessible to others. No information should be shared without the consent of the person who has been victimised, except in specific circumstances such as, when it is felt that the person needs medical care or the person may harm herself.

NONJUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDE

It is likely that others have subjected women to judgemental attitude in various situations after the riots. Do not try and contemplate what you would have done in her situation. Even if she made a mistake in her judgement, she did not deserve to be victimised.

A woman, who was assaulted and burnt, mentioned how others told her in the community that she was assaulted sexually as she was a woman. She told them she wanted to put this behind her and try and start working. She was told that she couldn't do much with her life now, after all that she had gone through.

ACOMFORTING ATTITUDE

When a woman is describing her experience be comfortable. She has probably already met people who do not want to hear about her experiences including assault, especially the gory details. It is therefore important that she feels that you want to listen to everything she has to tell. In a camp situation there will be lack of privacy. There may be many distractions. However, it is important that you adopt good listening skills with the following guidelines:



Attend nonverbally:Eye contact, head-nodding, caring facial expressions, holding the woman's hands. This will let the woman know that you are with her.

Give a feedback on feelings: You may notice that the woman's voice or nonverbal gestures suggests feelings of anger, sadness or fear. This inability to identify ones own emotions can happen when someone is going through intense emotional turmoil.

Repeat ideas: At times repeat portions of what the woman has said. A sense of understanding, interest and empathy are to be conveyed to her. Reflecting also checks

accuracy, clarifies misunderstanding, and lets the victim know that she is being heard. Examples- “so, are you saying that...” or “I have heard you say that...”

Allow silence: Allow silence during the course of the interview. Silence can prompt the woman to elaborate. Simply ‘being with’ the woman and her experience can be supportive

A woman known to be very calm by nature had lost her husband in the riots. Initially she interacted well with the Aman Pathik. When she was told that various interventions were being planned for the victims she suddenly became angry and said, “What is the point of whatever they do? Will they get back my husband?” She was quiet after this. The worker kept quiet for a while and said, “You sound angry, am I right?” the woman then said that she was sorry. She also told that she has been getting angry easily since the riots.

- ◆ **Encourage expression of emotions:** Women should be encouraged to express intense emotions through anger or tears. It is an important part of healing. You should try and stay relaxed and let the survivor know that it is normal to feel such emotions. The safety valve in a cooker is very important. It takes the extra pressure out periodically and helps in getting the food cooked. The cooker would burst if the safety valve were not there.
- ◆ **Acknowledge woman’s feelings:** Help women to understand feelings as part of normal responses/coping to a traumatic event. It is important to let the victim know that you do not think she is weak, or she is losing her mind, or exaggerating. She may report an understanding of her feelings and a sense of vulnerability, low self-esteem, and self-blame along with a sense of loss of control. By letting her know that she is experiencing a normal reaction to trauma, you will be giving her hope. In other cases it may help in reducing the feeling of shame and guilt she may be having.

New Picture

A woman related how her house was burnt and she lost all her belongings. Since then she gets episodes when her heart starts to beat very fast, she finds herself sweating very much and her mouth goes dry. She said, “I feel like I am going mad (pagal).”

Worker “You are saying that you constantly feel that you are going to lose your mind. I want you to know that other survivors were able to recover from similar experiences. They went through these kinds of experiences.”

- ◆ **Highlight personal resources** and praise her for having the courage to master her problems. She has taken the first step towards trying to recover from her trauma by talking to you. She needs to know that you appreciate how difficult this is for her and how much she has accomplished already.

REMEMBER

- Maintaining confidentiality of information shared is vital.
- Be nonjudgmental and be empathetic when women share their experiences with you.
- Acknowledge feelings and help women to recognise their personal resources.

INTERVENTIONS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL

Losses due to the death of a near and dear one, separation from loved ones and material losses are an inseparable part of human existence. Under normal circumstances, everyone goes through this process without much difficulty because the family and relative as a whole join together to understand the losses. Support from friends, relatives and neighbours occur automatically.



In a disaster situation, normalcy of the social structure which otherwise plays a critical role in the healing process does not exist because each one in the area has been affected. The family as a unit no longer exists. For many this leads to a sense of isolation, helplessness and despair. Therefore, survivors have to be provided emotional support.

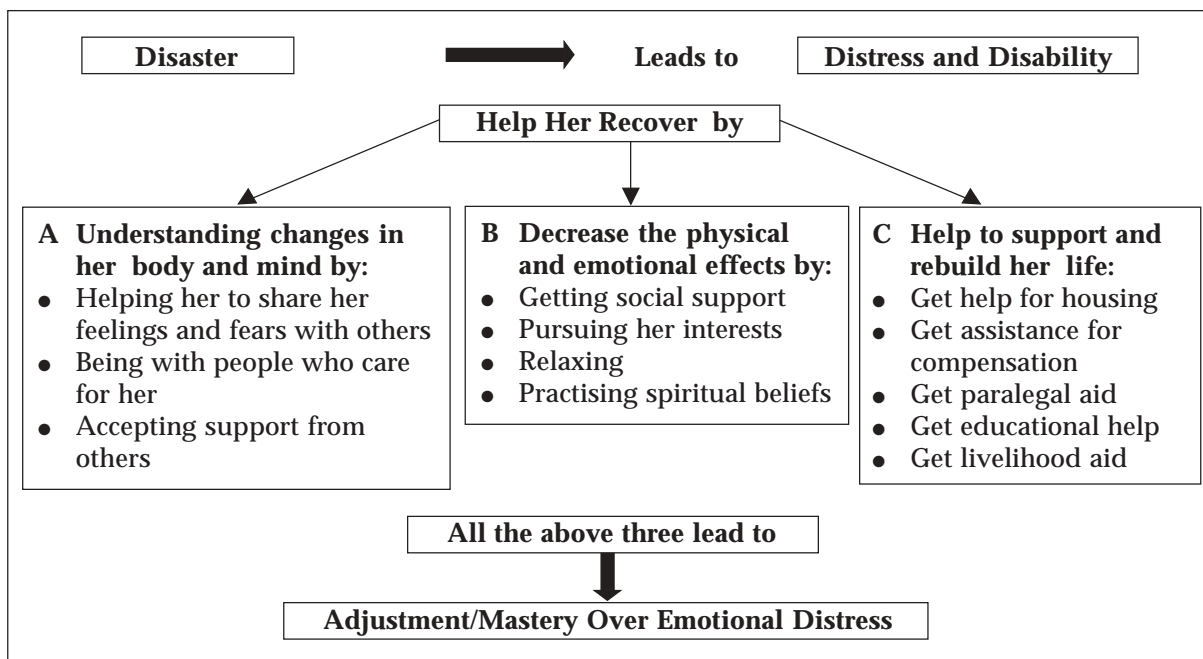
There is a need for external agencies to step in and help with the recovery and rehabilitation process. The people who step in here are both from the community itself, Community Level Helpers (CLHs), as well as from outside. There are two levels of interventions each with its own specific goal.

Goals of initial interventions	Goals of interventions at a later stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To establish rapport with women ● To facilitate the development of a sense of solidarity among women ● To note down important health complaints women are experiencing and look for any medical or psychiatric emergencies ● To help women understand the need to share their feelings and pain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To facilitate sharing of experiences within groups of women who are affected ● To re-evaluate the health complaints noted in the earlier interventions with a framework of explaining symptoms as a reaction to trauma ● To highlight the personal resources and help the woman in 'looking forward', beyond the trauma and returning to a sense of well-being

Let us look at each level that the worker can work at in more detail. We will start with how they can work with women as individuals.

This is the most critical intervention that a worker will need to make, as the individual needs to be helped to reorganise their lives and gain mastery over the trauma they have experienced. Family support and community acceptance and reintegration are also important in the whole process but basically it is the individual who needs to come to terms with the event, accept the event and then gain the strength to move on.

The community level helper has three basic tasks to carry out in order to facilitate this recovery process.



Let us examine each of these tasks in detail.

HELP WOMEN UNDERSTAND THE CHANGES THEY ARE EXPERIENCING WITHIN THEIR BODIES AND MINDS

Before any intervention can be made, it is imperative that you establish a relationship with the women; this helps them to feel understood and cared for. This will enable trust to develop between and lay the foundation on which the interventions can be made. It is very important that the relationship reflects an empathetic attitude and shows that the information will be kept totally confidential before the women really start to relate and share their experiences of the riots with you.



Some things you need to do to establish this relation

- Visit and spend time with the woman on a regular basis
- Record details about the family that would help you address the needs of the woman better, this could include (ages, marital status, occupational skills, family structure)

- Ask the woman about any health complaints she is having
- Respect her wishes if she does not want to talk
- Be sensitive and discuss her concerns and fears
- Empathise that she is not alone
- Discuss her concerns regarding her current needs
- Provide information about help and aid being provided by various agencies
- Reassure her that you are trying to understand how she must be feeling
- Praise her for her coping skills in dealing with the adverse situation
- Give time and listen well to her
- Get an understanding of life before riots and how things have changed since then.

You would have to spend considerable amount of time just being with the person. You would use this time to understand how the women have experienced the riots and how their lives have changed as a result of this disaster.

She comes to me everyday, listens to my same stories every day. Earlier I was not able to talk. Now I talk to her also. I feel that she comes to me for my benefit. Now I feel better when she visits me, sits with me – Rape survivor.

She listens to me, so I talk. In the camp people were asking again and again, what happened, they were not listening to the full story. Others as soon as the purpose was over and they were leaving. So I stopped talking to any body. – Survivor

A T THIS STAGE IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON THEIR HEALTH NEEDS

Injuries: Some women may not tell you about some of the injuries they might have sustained during the course of the assault. They might be uncomfortable about sharing this with you. You need to specifically ask them about this. If she reports injuries, treat it like an emergency. Ask her about how bad it is and whether she would like to see a doctor for this.

Obstetric/Gynaecology: Unwanted pregnancy can be a distressing fallout of rape. It is also an extremely sensitive issue. If any woman you identify has been going through with an unwanted pregnancy, you need to spend time with her alone. You may not be able to help her avert the consequences of her trauma. However, providing a safe and trusting relationship for her to share her feelings will help her.

Infections: Women may complain of having physical symptoms such as fever, complaints of white discharge/blood stained discharge, burning sensation while passing urine, genital discomfort (such as itching, burning sensation).

These symptoms may be indications that the woman could be suffering from infections affecting the genital tract. Referral to a gynaecologist/doctor

is warranted in these situations. Most of them can be treated adequately with antibiotics.

Some women may require a referral to a psychiatrist if you find:

- There are suicidal ideas or attempts
- There is severe disturbance of biological functions like reduced appetite or sleep disturbances
- The person reports having taken treatment from a psychiatrist prior to the assault
- There is information that the person had mental illness prior to the assault.

The women will slowly come to trust you and become comfortable to share thoughts and feelings with you. On your part you need to help the women understand that traumatic experiences cause stress, which is often beyond the coping capacity of an individual. In such situations, body and mind reactions are manifested in changes in behaviour, bodily experiences and through emotional reactions.

YOU NEED TO EMPHASISE

- These emotional reactions are normal responses to an abnormal experience
- The reactions are common and experienced by anyone who encounters such events
- Rehabilitation and rebuilding is a slow process and takes time.

It will help the women feel more comfortable to know these reactions are normal; nothing out of the ordinary and as time goes by they will return to their normal level of functionality.

It would be helpful to understand what are some of the reactions that women who have faced violence or been sexually assaulted experience. It would help you understand the women you are working with better.

Physical impact	Emotional impact	Socio-economic impact
Soreness Sleep disturbance Eating disturbance Gynaecological problems Injuries Miscarriages Aches and pains	Fear Anxiety about pregnancy Humiliation Degradation Disbelief Shame Embarrassment	Inability to work Listlessness Feeling isolated Feeling stigmatised Withdrawal from external life Loss of trust

Burns (heat, acid) Physical impairments (limbs, sight, voice, hearing) Injuries (bullet and others) Miscarriage Rape	Denial Anger Irritability Depression Repeated thoughts about the events Dreams and nightmares	Disorganisation and discontinuity of life routines Dealing with new societal roles, like being a widow, single parent, etc.
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Reactions in one category could lead to a reaction in the other category. For instance a girl who had got burnt around her face during the riots actually went into depression. Similarly, a woman who had lost her children in the riots lost interest in daily life. She used to keep sitting and stopped eating and had problems sleeping at night cause she could not stop thinking about her children.

Women would demonstrate some emotional reactions initially and then others would come up later.

I INITIAL REACTIONS

Emotional reactions of women who have been victims of trauma include initial reactions such as shock, fear for their safety, emotional numbness and withdrawal. Some may deny the event; report disturbing dreams and recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, also known as flashback. This is what some of the women who had experienced the riots shared.

Shock

A woman who saw her husband being shot dead by the police and was unable to find her four children for a week after she reached the camp.

In the beginning, I was unable to understand what happened. It was as if it was unreal. For a few days I kept asking myself if it had really happened to me.

Fear for safety

A girl of 15 who fled her home as mobs started attacking their locality said, *No place can be safe anymore.*

A girl of 18 who saw her sister being burnt to death by the mob described her feelings as follows: *I feel safe in the camp. I prefer staying here as there are more people. They may attack again if we go back home.*



Emotional numbness and withdrawal

Relative describes a young girl of 8 years who was witness to her mother being sexually assaulted and burnt along with her younger brother who was 4 years old. *She just sits there and keeps staring. She hardly speaks to anyone.*

What is the use of talking to you. I have lost everything. Let me be.

Denial of the event

Inmates of a camp, reporting about a woman who was raped and bought into the camp unconscious with injuries, *She is too traumatised to recount her own story. She says she cannot remember anything except being chased by the men.*

A woman who was sexually assaulted recounting her experiences on the day the mobs attacked her locality, *They hit me badly. After this I became unconscious. I do not remember anything.*

Experiencing disturbing dreams

Narratives of women, who lost her belongings and saw their houses being burnt,

My sleep is full of dreams of fire and mobs (tola). These days I dread sleeping.

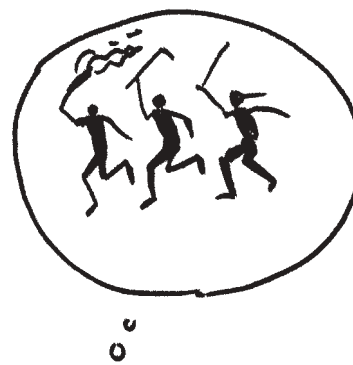
My sleep has not been the same since the riots (danga). I keep getting up constantly.



Flashbacks which are recurrent and intrusive

Distressing recollections of the event including images, thoughts, or perceptions.

A woman talks about what she witnessed during the riots, *I saw the mob, they tortured and harassed the females by making them naked, abused them physically and then killed them by burning alive. I do not know why I just feel very tired. I keep getting the same thought in my head again and again.*



These effects may recur over the first few days and resolve over a few weeks.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

The long-term effects are also disabling. It affects multiple areas in a woman's life. Women may report depression, vague bodily symptoms, and difficulty in forming trusting relationships, feelings of guilt, anxiety and having persistent feelings of arousal.

Depression

I do not feel like eating, even when I eat I eat little or nothing at all. (Bhook nahin lagti, kabhi kha liya to khaya nahin to aise hi).

A woman who had lost 7 out of 8 members of his family in the riots, *At times I feel I should have gone too. All my family is gone what do I have to live for .I feel like I can neither live nor die. What sort of life is this?*

Multiple bodily complaints

Half my head aches (Aadha sir dukhta hai) I feel like just lying down.

A woman whose daughter was burnt alive and another has suffered extensive burns, in the camp, *After the riots (danga) I have not been myself. I have a constant backache. I feel there is something wrong with my back. But the doctors say that there is nothing wrong.*

Difficulty in forming trusting relationships

Children in a camp expressing their anger. *The press writes that terrorists sent us bombs: they also published missile shaped pictures of the bombs. They write all lies, complete lies, and get us into trouble.*

How can I trust anyone easily? The people who attacked us were people whom we knew. We used to go to their weddings and we even celebrated festivals together. I don't think that will happen again.

Feelings of anger and guilt

A mother reporting her daughter's rape, *I could hear the screams and cries of my daughter. My mind was seething with fear and fury. I could do nothing to help my daughter. Why did they have to do this to her? What kind of men are these?*

Women describing the state of their fellow women, who were sexually assaulted, *Aurat ne mard ko janam diya, Usne usko barbad kiya* " (Women gave birth to men, who in turn ruined women)

Anxiety(feeling of tension),

including avoiding situations related to the trauma

Woman who lost her husband in the gunfire in the riots, *I can't sleep. Every noise, sometimes, even someone walking outside makes me very anxious. My heart starts beating fast, I sweat and I think what if they return again.*

Mother of a young girl who was raped and sustained extensive burns, *She refuses to go anywhere near the locality we came from. It is very difficult for her. We are planning to change our residence.*

Persistent feelings of arousal

such as irritability, difficulty in concentrating, and an exaggerated startled response

Woman reporting her distress following riots. *Earlier I used to be very patient with my children. But now I lose my temper very soon. At times even the sound of children playing irritates me. What is wrong with me?*

Mother reporting the changes in her 16-year-old daughter. *She gets scared at the slightest noise. She does not like to leave me. I cannot concentrate even on my cooking. My mind keeps going back to the day of the riots. Earlier cooking used to be something I did with ease and automatically, but now everything requires effort.*

SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS SEEN IN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- **Constant sense of vulnerability** (it can happen again, I am not safe)
- **Low self-esteem** (I am not good, I cannot get over this, I am better off dead)
- **Self-blame** (maybe I should have run faster, maybe I should have hidden behind that wall rather than running, I am to be blamed for what happened to me)
- **Loss of control** (I feel like I am going crazy; I feel like I don't have control over myself)
- **Distressing feelings** such as feeling dirty/unclean, soiled and bad (I feel dirty always, I can never be clean again, people will look at me as if I am a bad person).

These symptoms may not be reported initially to care providers. Some survivors can report them once confidence is built up. These complaints tend to remain for a long time. Women should be allowed to talk about it when they feel comfortable.

Once the women have understood that anyone who survives a disaster experiences certain reactions and that these can be overcome, then they are ready to move to the next stage of being helped. You as the worker need to help the woman reduce the emotional reaction she is experiencing. This will enable her to move beyond the pain and help normalise her life.

HELP WOMEN REDUCE THE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS THEY ARE EXPERIENCING

There are a few things that can be done to help a woman reduce the negative effects of such emotional reactions that maybe hampering her functionality. The first step is to help her accept the changed life situation. Then once she has acknowledged the fact that her life has changed in some way, help her talk about her pain, feelings and fears. All this will help her move to the next stage wherein she will be able to resume some normal life routines that will help her normalise her life to a great extent.

Accepting the change

Following an emotional event, it is very common for individuals to deny that something serious has happened in their life. It is at times helpful to deny the losses and changes. However, without acceptance, healing and rebuilding can get delayed.

For example, a person with a broken bone has to accept that she needs help. Only this acceptance will lead the person to take medical help and subsequently follow physical

exercises to recover the normal movement. Denial can lead to abnormal union of the bone and long-term disability. One of the first steps in recovery is acceptance of the event and how it has changed life. This will help start the rebuilding process.

Part of this will happen as you spend time with the women and discuss with them what their life was like before the riots and currently how they are rebuilding their lives. When they start thinking about this they would have to think about their losses and pain. They would realise how their life has now changed and whatever they have lost (money, family, friends, occupation, homes) will never be the same. They need to start rebuilding with whatever they currently have. This fact will bring up a lot of painful memories and feelings of helplessness and loss.

You need to encourage this sharing to happen continuously so that they are truly able to deal with their emotions and this will help them overcome the debilitating impact these emotions are having on them.

Sharing thoughts, feelings and concerns

Help them understand and feel that you are there for them and keen to listen to their story. Tell them that sharing your experiences, feelings and thoughts with someone you trust will help to decrease whatever they are experiencing and will help them get relief from the emotional stress they would be feeling. Feeling that these reactions are weaknesses and avoiding seeking support will be harmful.

For instance, in a pressure cooker the safety valve is very important. The safety valve helps the extra pressure to be released, failing which the whole cooker would burst. It systematically and periodically takes the extra pressure out slowly and helps in getting the food cooked.

Pressure
cooker
Picture

YOU NEED TO EMPHASISE

- It is important to slowly and repeatedly give expression to tensions, pain, anger or other emotions that you are experiencing.
- It is important to realise that rebuilding your life following the disaster depends upon your ability to accept the losses as early as possible. It will help you to accept the current situation and thereby work towards reconstruction of your life.
- It would help to find people within their family/relatives/friends with whom they could do this sharing.
- You are available to spend time listening and being with them should they want to do some sharing with you.

For instance, if you are feeling guilty about not having done enough to save your child while you were fleeing and these thoughts have been bothering you, then it will hamper your daily life, you would find it difficult to sleep, could feel depressed. Sharing this with someone will help reduce the stress in your mind and reduce the guilt. A few instances of how women have been feeling about what they experienced during the riots.

Guilt

A 30-year-old woman lost two children aged 5 and 6 years in the riots; they were burnt and killed in front of her. She herself was beaten up and has burn injuries on her back. She said, *Achcha lagata hain jab koi aata hai*. She is currently residing in her new home that has been rebuilt after the riots destroyed her earlier home. While talking, every now and then her mind returns to her two children who she lost and she breaks down. She talks of her son who she said was a very special child as he was a result of a lot of prayers at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. *She says, What did the children do to anyone? They were so innocent. They could have taken me (un masoomo ne kya bigada tha kisika, mujhe le jate)*. She shared her memories with the Aman Pathiks and felt relieved (*Sukoon milta hai*).

Picture

Concern and worry

A woman expresses her thoughts about the situation. *What do you think? These children who have seen so much of killing will when they grow up.*

Picture

Anxiety

A woman who used to earn her living by sewing. But now when she hears the whirr of the sewing machine she screams; it reminds her of the rioters coming and closing in around her house. Loud voices or noises also really upset her. *Oh god! Tell them to stop, I cannot take this.*

Picture

Humiliation

A middle-aged lady talks about how helpless she felt when she came to this camp. *When we came here we started feeling like beggars, having to sit in line for tea, for food, etc. We did not feel like eating. We just came here like orphans (lawaris) wearing whatever clothes we had on.*

Picture

Helplessness

A woman expresses her loss and feeling of helplessness. *I lost my home; one son had got married; both homes have been looted. Now we have no support; only these camp people are there.*

Picture

Sadness and guilt

A woman who felt helpless watching other women being molested expresses *When the rioters (tola) came I was hiding with other women. They started cutting up people, burning homes and doing bad things to women. We were watching but could not do anything. I really think about that time and feel bad.*

Picture

Listlessness and loss of interest in life

A woman talks about what she witnessed during the riots. *I saw the mob they tortured and harassed the females by making them naked, abused them physically and then killed by burning them alive. I do not know I just feel very tired. I keep getting the same thought in my head again and again.*

Picture

Recurrent thoughts about the event

Even now I remember it (Abhi bhi yaad aata hai).

Picture

I have never been able to talk so clearly about what happened with m. Today for the first time I am feeling little free to talk all about my self.

I wanted to talk, but where is there someone to hear our stories. Once I talked to a person all about the fateful day, but suddenly he told, - 'Why are you telling me all about this; I cannot help you any way.' He was honest and he did not want to hurt me, still I felt bad, as though I am telling my story to convince others. But you are the first person to give so much time just to talk to me, I am feeling better.

I feel guilty, I am so weak that I have not been able to save them. They were killed in front my eyes. I was naked so I was not able to go out and save the person; still it would have been better to make an effort and die. I have lost my sleep, I get images only of that day whenever I close my eyes. Nobody understands my pain. What should I do with money or sewing machine. Please do understand me as you come every day. I do not want to live. - Rape Survivor.

Once the women have been able to share their pain, this repeated sharing would take away the pain and help them feel a little bit at ease. They would not now be overwhelmed with the pain and grief rather they would now be able to start thinking about what to do next. At this stage you can start initiating work that would help her to rebuild her life in a new manner.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A HELPER

- Facilitate sharing of experiences with you/with others whom they are close to.
- Sensitise family members about the need to spend time helping women share their concerns
- **For those willing to talk immediately**
 - ✓ Listen attentively. Do not interrupt.
 - ✓ Acknowledge that you understand the pain and distress by leaning forward.
 - ✓ Look into their eyes.
 - ✓ Console by patting on the shoulders/touching/holding their hand as they cry but be sensitive to community norms about touching members of opposite sex if you are a male worker.
 - ✓ Respect the silence during your interaction; do not try to fill it in by talking.
 - ✓ Keep reminding them, "I am with you". Its good you are trying to release your distress by crying. It will make you feel better.
 - ✓ Do not ask them to stop crying.
- **For those unwilling to talk**
 - ✓ Some women may be very angry or remain mute and silent.
 - ✓ Do not get anxious or feel rejected. Remain calm; tell them you are here to help them in the best possible way.
 - ✓ Remind them that you understand how they feel, the pain and suffering they are going through. 'It is true that pain is so much that you feel there is no point in talking about it. I can imagine how you must be feeling.
 - ✓ Maintain regular contact and greet them. Ask them about their welfare.
 - ✓ Maintain interaction by reminding them about the pain of separation, distress of being alone, helplessness, isolation. This will help them to feel their pain and get it out of their system.
 - ✓ Acknowledge that you understand their distress; the frustration, emptiness and also the subsequent anger because of the vacuum created by the loss.
 - ✓ Share their grief and console them that losing someone dear is terrible and unfortunate.
 - ✓ Make them understand they are not to blame for the tragedy and need not feel guilty.
 - ✓ Tell them you will return the next day or in a couple of days.
 - ✓ Tell them you are not upset or angry because she did not talk. Meanwhile ask her to think about whatever has been told. "Memories of good days you spent with each one must be alive in your mind and coming back again and again. You must be tense inside. Try and let the steam out; that will make you feel better."

HELP THE WOMAN ANALYSE HER PERSONAL RESOURCES AND SEE HOW THOSE CAN BE TAPPED

There are a few simple things that can be done to help women look at their personal resources and see how they could use them to rebuild their lives.

◆ **Get support from people around**

Everyone feels better with emotional support that comes from others around him or her. **Social support networks are extremely important for feeling secure and cared for.** It is essential to try and rebuild some of these support systems that may have been disturbed due to the riots.

There are three levels of support available to her:

- the immediate family and people within who can help her overcome some of the trauma. This could be parents, husband, children, siblings – depending on the structure of the family the woman is living in, age and marital status of the woman.
- her extended family and friends and relatives and neighbours who could be of help.
- aid agencies, community level helps and others who have stepped in to help survivors of the riots. The woman needs to be aware of the kind of aid and help available and then know how to access the same, like receiving sewing machines, compensation claims, educational aids for their children, etc.

CIRCLE OF CARB



Some examples of how woman have used various social supports available:

For example, older women used to come and sit together and say their prayers and discuss the day's happenings together. The younger girls joined sewing classes and spent time together.

A 28-year-old woman was left her in laws and husband. The rioters caught her and beat her up. She was taken to the hospital and once her husband came to see her but left without taking her back. Then after a week or so her parents came looking for her and took her home. Currently

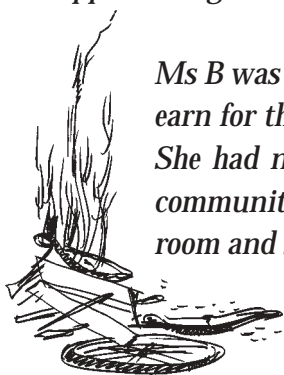


she is with her parents who supported her during this trying time. Her in-laws and husband are not too keen to take her back since she is burnt.

The community level helper was able to give support by trying to get the girl back with her husband. At the same time she also tried to get some vocational options organised for the woman in case her in-laws do not accept her back. She got her enrolled for sewing classes.

Ms X lost three children during the recent riots. Some relatives came in from her village to spend time with her. This helped her tremendously as she had help while settling into her new home that had been reconstructed post riots.

Ms F was asked to shift with her family to her parental home after the riots. It was extremely healing for her to know that there were people to care and look after her. She talks about this support as a great help in enabling her to deal with the pain she suffered during the riots.



Ms B was physically challenged and only had a young son aged 8 years who used to earn for them by selling at the railway station. Post riots they lost their livelihood. She had no relative to help her tide over this situation and it was then that the community level helper found her space in a hostel for women where she has her own room and stays with her son.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A HELPER

- Be available for support as an important element from the third circle
- Help the woman to map out people who could help her out
- Enable her to be aware and access of help available at the third level.

◆ Externalise interests and get back to routines

It is very important to make **constructive use of their time** even though normal life routines are disrupted. They are engaged in activities and their minds are meaningfully occupied. Physical movement helps in feeling better and energised.

Find out whatever interests them or how they used to spend time prior to the riots and try and replicate some of that now. Getting back to routines is a great way of dealing with the stress and the emotional reactions. The more women engage in activities/recreational activities, greater will be the normalisation of their life. It is important for them to take control of their mind and let it get involved in non-tense situations and experiences in order to recover faster.

Here are some instances when people have been able to structure their time into meaningful activities that is contributing to their recovery.

A 32-year-old woman at the relief camp:

I have started cooking our own chappatis. Sometimes if they require help with cutting the vegetables then I even help out with that. It gives me something to do the whole day. Also we make the chappatis the way we like it.

A woman talking about her daughter who participated in running a programme for children at the relief camp:

The 'Bal Muskaan' programme is good. My daughter goes there. Earlier she used to just keep sitting. Now at least she looks forward to going to the session. She has something that takes her mind away from the painful memories or emotions.



A woman sharing about the mass weddings at the camps:

The greatest time we had was when weddings were on. It felt like a big family preparing for a wedding. There was a lot of laughter and fun. In the 'Haldi' ceremony and putting 'Mehendi' we for sometime forgot all our pain.

A woman had a sewing machine, which she used to keep at home and stitch clothes. But during the riots everything was burnt and looted. She said that the clothes that were kept for stitching were also burnt. She has hired a sewing machine and continues her stitching.

She was feeling that her face is looking very bad so she cannot go out of the place. I made her come to the school with her niece, as when she is involved in something, the losses do not keep troubling her so much. Initially she was not interested, but one day I took her with me, and soon she started coming with me and also helping me to manage the children in the class." - Community level helper

I myself am the worst victim of the riot. I was not able to do anything initially. Then they involved me in cooking and supervising the distribution. This helped me to start thinking about something beyond those days' incidents. Now I feel much better to work as an Aman Pathik, though there are lot of problems in my family. - Community level helper

That lady knows sewing but was not doing work. Even after getting the sewing machine she said that she was not able to forget those incidents. The memories kept bothering her. So I involved her in the sewing class to help others learn. This made her come out of her recurring disturbing thoughts and within fifteen days she started sewing herself. She felt happy to join in the group with others and told she will do the work regularly. - Community level helper.



After joining in the SAHARBARU shop I am getting out of the house. Now I feel I can do something for my children. Before this, I was not able to think anything else except the loss and death of the day” - Survivor.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A HELPER

- Help them understand the need to structure their time
- Help them in accessing things needed to set up their routine and to pursue their interests
- Help them set up a daily life routine

◆ Choose a positive lifestyle

Acknowledge and admit that you will not be always functioning at your usual level of efficiency for a few weeks/months. Try and follow a regular routine and get involved in some activities - homekeeping/rebuilding activities to engage your mind productively. It is important that you adopt a positive lifestyle to rebuild your daily life. This means you need to:

- Have at least 8 hours of sleep
- Take rest during the day if you feel like doing so
- Avoid smoking, avoid alcohol or other intoxicants
- Make sure that you eat your meals on time
- Make time everyday to relax
- Have a good time by gathering together at a central place, playing games, reading, listening to music, singing, performing prayers
- Follow routines
- Meet more people
- Move out of your homes
- Show yourself to a doctor if you are feeling unwell
- Practice your spiritual beliefs.

Relaxation is the opposite of tension. Engaging in recreational activities like listening to music, spending time with children; making time during the day to lie down for sometime; going for walks, and spending time just being at peace with oneself is very beneficial to help with the recovery process. Simple things like applying henna on the hands, cooking a special dish, etc., would be things that help in relaxing.

Here the person has been able to see that restarting routines helps people feel better. This understanding has to be brought in among the woman we are working with. Also if the women are mothers or wives, this understanding would set in motion a ripple effect of them better managing their homes and families.

UNDERTAKE THESE RELAXATION EXERCISES

Sit in a squatting position with hands on the knees. Then take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds and slowly exhale. Do this for at least 5–10 minutes slowly. Repeat this twice a day.

Another exercise: Lie down flat on the floor. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. This should be done for 5 minutes several times a day. Concentrate on fresh air that is coming in and the warm stale air that is going out of your body.

A 42- year-old woman:

My husband has recovered from his eye operation which he had done while still at the camp. Now that he is better he has started going for his walks. He goes daily in the morning and in the evening. At least he does some exercise. Apart from that he also goes once in a while to see our house that is being rebuilt. For myself I have got involved as an Amanpathik in this programme. I have started cooking here itself; we make our own food and then all of us get on with our tasks for the day.

In our country religious belief or belief in a power greater than man is an integral part of our being and this gives us great relief and support during testing times. They may feel like questioning this power at times to ask why they are suffering and why they had to go through the pain but at the same time they would find strength in the same power to get through the crisis they are facing. So it is important to practise whatever spiritual belief they have as it has tremendous power to heal pain.

This strength was seen when some survivors shared with a lot of enthusiasm how in their home their holy book had survived the attacks and remained unscathed. Another related how when they ran out she carried the holy book with her.

There was a group of old women at the relief camp who came together daily to sit and pray together. They stated that reading their books gave them a sense of peace and helped them take their mind off the suffering and pain.

After they gave me the Koran, I felt I could get back my life. I had not been able to save my holy Koran but only saved myself.- Survivor.

I was not going for a long time. But she asked me to go and also took me one day with her. Now I go each Friday. Really she is the last hope for all.- Survivor.

We started reading the Koran in a group as she told us to do. She came and started with all of us. We feel better after reading the Koran. –Survivor.

I used to do regular puja, but as everything is lost, I left doing all things. She forced me to start with the photo, which was not burned. After that I am doing regular puja. Though it is

not like earlier, still I pray to God not to make people suffer anymore like this. She also talks with me about Asharambapu, I like to talk now.- Survivor.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A HELPER

- Help them understand the need to follow a routine
- Enable them to start following a personalised routine
- Monitor and support this process

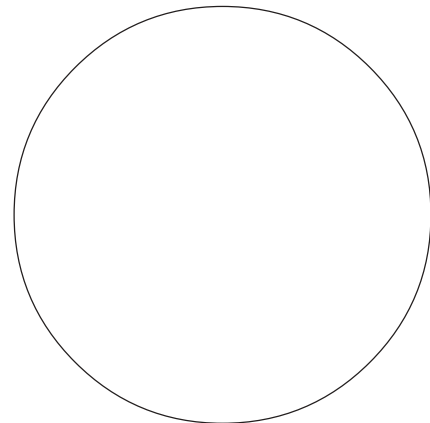
Working with women as individuals is not enough. Their families form an essential part of their lives and the needs of the women in relation to their families are critical in helping women rebuild their lives.

SOME INITIATIVES TO HELP WOMEN FEEL EMPOWERED

Discovering their circle of support

Help them analyse for themselves people/agencies from their immediate family, their neighbourhood and relatives and then the larger community who can be of good support to them. Help them list down what sort of help they would be seeking from each of these sources

Repeat this same exercise periodically to help them see how their system may have changed and to ensure that they do have things that can help them in the road to rebuilding their lives.



Enlisting your positive qualities

This exercise will help them become more aware of the qualities that make them individuals and unique in themselves. These can be a source of good self-esteem and help them feel positive about themselves.

The list should include physical attributes, emotional aspects, skills they have, their intellect, etc. It should be comprehensive and not just focusing on one aspect.

At a later stage while groups have been together for sometime this can also be done for each other within the group members:

Your force field analysis

Help each member to think of an aspect/people in their lives who are helping them cope positively with the current situation they are going through and those aspects that are hindering that process of rebuilding. Then they need to look at things, which will lower the negative forces and help them move towards faster recovery.

Good sharing

Involve each member to come in daily and share something positive in his/her life. That week for instance it could be that they have been able to get their child back into school/ were able to not cry for that one day/ got their sewing machine/ prepared some special food. This will slowly enhance the goodness in their life and defocus on the suffering and pain that may be present.

Picture

You are not alone

This would involve sharing some personal pain for that week and others who have felt similarly could also contribute. Then there would be a round of sharing to see how still others have been able to overcome such pain. This would set into process a series of peer learned initiatives that would help in the healing process and the women would feel the strength of many with them.

You could choose to do individual work with one woman/ with small groups of woman at a time. Each has its own advantages:

Individual work would be beneficial when	Group work would be beneficial because
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The family norms or cultural norms prevent the woman from leaving her home, e.g., a widow has lost her husband and cannot leave or some woman who is injured and needs to be at home to recoup, or has just delivered.● A woman who is still traumatised and needs special attention to help her ventilate and requires much more a care and holding to help her start relating with the external world● There are health concerns, which the woman may feel too embarrassed to share openly in a group● The problem of that particular woman is too complex and she needs additional care and attention to deal with all issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Women in the process of group work discover that they are not alone● Group processes become sustaining in themselves because peer support is available● Peer sharing provides insights into how others in similar situations have coped and have had a chance to incorporate the same into their lives.● Groups are ideal to meet functional needs like organise training sessions, awareness building

People who have experienced sexual or physical assault would need some special inputs to help them deal with the emotional reactions they may be experiencing. Some of what can be done is given below:

This section has drawn heavily from the book and needs to be included in the ref. section ' Treating the trauma of rape – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for PTSD '10

Reconstructing meaning and explore the feeling of self blame

Working through a traumatic event not only involves accessing and integrating the emotions associated with the trauma, but also involves working through the meanings and thoughts the victim feels about herself and the world after the riots.

The **main goal** of this phase is to help the woman to come to an understanding about the reality that acknowledges the impact of the riots on her and, also allows her to remain productively and pleurably engaged in her life.

AN EXAMPLE

One of the group members feels he is to be blamed. Advice him, *So they came and attacked you when you were doing your household work. There was no one at home. It was totally unexpected. So let us think about this again and examine if you are to be blamed.* Ask others in the group to get involved in the discussion.

The feeling of self-blame is seen especially in women who have been sexually assaulted. Establish within the group that the **women are not to be blamed** for the assault perpetrated on them. Within this framework allow women to express their feelings of self-blame.

Collect details about the view society/community had about women in general, prior to the riots:

Have a discussion about what it means to be a woman in the society. Explore whether women experienced sexism in daily social interactions prior to the riots. It might be in reference to how women do not know to handle finances, about sexist jokes which make women look incapable, or the objectification or degradation of female sexuality (for example - the representation of women in popular cinema, or, about eve-teasing when women do venture out of their houses).

This will help women to develop a sense of solidarity among themselves. They will sense a feeling of 'we are not alone'.

Understand their views about men prior to the riots and post riots

Riots and assault destroys all sense of normalcy, positive feelings about oneself, the world and other people. It sets off the creation of negative views regarding

various issues. You need to keep this in the background every time you deal with issues regarding women. For example for some women, the offenders (who killed members of their family or assaulted them) might have been people they knew, like their neighbour.

FOR EXAMPLE

Have a discussion about how they viewed men prior to the assault. Ask them to name men who they think are supportive, for example, their brothers or father. Could they trust them? What do they mean by men 'being supportive' or 'unsupportive'? Then, have a discussion about how they view men now, after they have been victimised? What are their views about the men whom they trusted prior to the assault? Do they view them as being supportive? Do they think that things may improve for them if you involved the men in their lives?

Help recollect the trauma

Survivors of rape can feel extremely vulnerable after understanding that they have to go back to an environment, which is threatening. Symbols of objectification and degradation of women would be stressful and frightening. Encourage the victims to address their fear of being re-victimised. Give them alternative views. Encourage members of the group to contribute to the discussion.

FOR EXAMPLE

You could start the discussion by saying, So there are members of our group who feel that they cannot go back and live in the community. They are worried that they may be attacked again. Their fear is real . But then, does that mean that you will give up the prospect of re-building your life? Do you want to feel victimised for the rest of your life? Or do you want to try and re-establish your position in the community. You have dealt with sexist remarks earlier. Can we try in the group to explore the possibility of dealing with these kind of issues in the community."

Do not say that the complaints she is experiencing are only in her mind.

As you now know there can be many responses to a severe trauma such as those which women faced during the riots. Women may complain of various physical symptoms like aches and pains, which after a physical examination by a doctor may not find any specific disorder. **Do not defocus on the complaints or tell the victim that nothing is wrong with her.**

You need to help her understand her complaints by:

- Explaining how symptoms can be a result of increased perception of normal body functions

- Explaining that any sort of stress can enhance the perception of normal body functions which she might be interpreting as indicative of disease
- Sharing negative findings on physical examination and investigations using simple non-technical terms.

TECHNIQUES, WHICH CAN BE USED TO REDUCE SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS

Anxiety/ feeling that they are going crazy/palpitations

Ask members of the group to hold each others hands, close their eyes and keep taking deep breaths. Tell them that they should try and breathe through the nose. If their mind is unable to do this ask them to say aloud that they are now taking deep breaths. After a few such sessions (15–30 mins, 2–3 times a day ,for 3–4 days) ask them to do the same exercise and start thinking of the events which led to the assault. Tell them that initially it will give rise to intense anxiety but slowly they will find that they can breathe regularly and think of the events too. Encourage members to try this exercise when they are alone too.

Having repetitive intrusive thoughts about the event

Tell members that there will be moments when they get intrusive thoughts about the event when they are doing something, and, they cannot do their breathing exercises to calm themselves down. There is a simple technique to reduce this symptom.

Ask group members to think about a distressing thought. Ask them to think about it for 2–3 minutes. Tell them you will shout ‘STOP!’ very loudly, and that you will then take it from there. You can hit the desk or clap your hands along with shouting, ‘STOP!’ Start with asking them to think about a thought NOT associated with the assault. Progress to thoughts associated with the assault. Do this over 30–45 minutes.

When they go home ask them to put a rubber band around their wrist (make sure you tell them it is a comfortable, well-fitting one, not very tight). When they get the intrusive thoughts ask them to snap the rubber band lightly, and tell herself, “STOP!”

Intense distress at exposure to cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event

Thoughts and beliefs about oneself and the world undergo a drastic change after the riots and its impact. Women may feel that the world is entirely dangerous or, that they are unworthy people who cannot cope. The goal of this part of the treatment is to help women evaluate their thoughts and beliefs about the world’s safety, about themselves, and, to identify the unhelpful thoughts and beliefs that make them more distressed.

Ask the group whether they felt that the world was a safe place and that they were able to handle challenging situations before the assault. Ask them if they are now anxious and afraid of being alone at home, going out or being with a man. Respondents will most likely

say yes. Have a discussion about their beliefs, for example, they need not be afraid of all men. Some of them may have supportive families and the fear of being constantly vulnerable may be detrimental to their well-being.

Rebuilding confidence and self-esteem

Women, especially those who have been victims of physical or sexual assault may feel low on self-confidence and self-esteem. Restoring these issues may take a long time. However, you can aim at starting the process.

FOR EXAMPLE

You can highlight the personal resources (may be measurable resources like the woman being employed, or other personal resources like being able to handle a large family effectively or just having a supportive family) of the victim. Praise her for having the courage to work on her problems (tell group members that just the fact that they are sharing their feelings requires a lot of courage).

Role-play – *it consists of acting out behaviours, rehearsing lines and actions, and pretending to be in a specific set of circumstances. Role-playing is a way to learn new behaviour and words for old ways of doing things; it is a chance to practise before the event occurs.*

After describing this to the victim, ask her to describe any non-assault-related situation in everyday life, which upsets her. Examples you can give to her are – talking to your neighbours, using assertive behaviours to make point at home, going to the market and making a purchase. Next, ask her to name some assault-related situations in everyday life. Examples you can give her are to tell a family member about the assault.

Pick one example for each person and start. Example: Ms P feels that her neighbours are not talking to her as before. She feels that her neighbour dismisses her opinion, unlike before when they used to have a discussion. P does not feel confident anymore. To demonstrate the role-playing skill to P ask her to play the neighbour, and you should play the role of P. Next, ask P to play herself while you play the role of the neighbour. After one role-play ask P to comment on her performance and you should give a feedback too.

Points of discussion could be on non-verbal behaviours such as the tone of the woman's voice, her posture and her facial expression; it could include a discussion on the verbal behaviour like the words she used.

Try this technique for the same situation for three times encouraging her to become more confident in her behaviour. At the end of these sessions tell her to talk to her neighbour in a manner she should talk. Tell her that though she may not get it fully right in the beginning, she will eventually be able to.

WORK WITH THE FAMILY

The family is the primary unit of care and support for all individuals. In stressful situations the role of a family as a caregiver becomes even more critical. They are the best people to give support and comfort. Solicit the support of caring family members to help the woman to cope with her life.

SOME STEPS THE FAMILY CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN TOWARDS RECOVERY

- Being together as a family
- Not sending the women away for safety as the separation can cause anxiety to them
- Taking time to sit together share the experience of losses
- Touching and comforting the women, it makes them feel cared for
- Getting in touch with other relatives to come and spend time with her
- Making time for family recreation using what is available like the radio, television, visiting religious places, playing with children, engaging in sewing
- Resuming normal activities of the pre-disaster days as a family
- Restarting activities that are special to the family like having meals together, praying, playing games, etc. All this will help get a sense of normalcy back to her life.

CARE AND SUPPORT FOR A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAS EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE OR BEEN RAPED

WHAT FAMILY MEMBERS CAN DO TO HELP

- Acknowledge her anger and pain; let her express anger towards the people who violated her, as it helps in releasing pent up tensions and emotions.
- Do not let her feel isolated.
- Try to get her back to daily life activities
- Let her pursue interests like sewing, etc. This will stop her from constantly thinking about the experience.
- It is important to be very supportive and understanding to help decrease the pain she is experiencing.
- Most importantly give the person space and comfort to talk about the experience as often as she wishes.
- Let her know that she was not responsible for what happened.
- Look at support that she might require like livelihood, or medical care for other physical problems to help her recover.

It is important to take special care of her. Anyone who suffers painful and hurtful experiences reacts physically and emotionally. Women who have faced violence keep thinking all the time about those painful experiences from the past. They feel as though they are undergoing the same experiences again. Difficulties in falling asleep, nightmare and physical pains are common. They can lose interest in life and feel tired all the time. There is a tendency to get angry over small things or change moods quickly. They feel humiliated and weak and often may feel afraid or nervous and may have strong feelings of revenge.

Our culture and religion discourage us to talk about rape and related issues. The problem remains hidden and creates psychological pain and suffering for the person who was raped. People who have been raped often feel ashamed, humiliated, dirty and soiled. As family members you have the responsibility of ensuring that they feel cared for and are able to share their pain and experiences with you.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO AS A HELPER

- Enable family members to understand the support they need to give women in their family
- Help the woman to start engaging with her family
- Help the family deal with the special needs of women who have been violated or assaulted

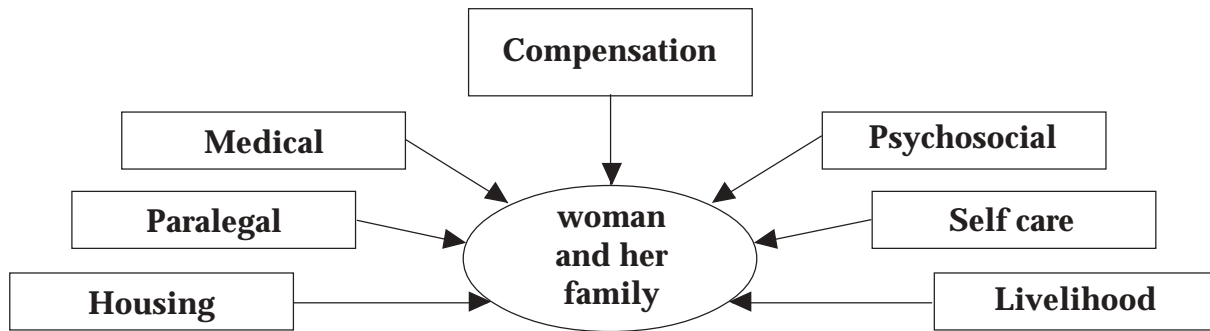
OFFER HELP USING THE SPECTRUM OF CARE

The most important step in the psychosocial care and recovery process is to recognise that psychosocial care is essential for the entire population experiencing a disaster. We are looking at a holistic intervention care model that covers all aspects of care for a woman who needs support. There is a need to understand that there are many aspects to psychosocial care. Just like an umbrella there is a need to cover all the aspects rather than focus on giving emotional support for violence and sexual assault alone.

While the focus maybe on the woman, the helping process needs to address the family. The woman cannot be helped in isolation. The worker needs to use the spectrum of care approach in trying to see how the family can be helped. Even while working with the woman you need to focus just not upon psychological support of helping her share pain but in helping her move beyond that to rediscover life. The spectrum of care can be used to see how she can be helped.

Under this approach there would be seven basic issues (listed below) that the CLH would be looking at, identify needs and attend to specific problems. Referrals need to be made accordingly and a commitment for long-term work given.

Umbrella of care would cover issues related to



Ms R had lost three young children during the riots. In helping her the worker spent considerable time helping her share her pain and dealing with the loss of losing three family members at one go. Later the worker moved to helping her husband in settling compensation claims and filing for housing support.

Then the worker even gave a referral for a doctor to help her surviving child who had major burn injuries to recover. In addition, the worker also helped the woman access a sewing machine and restart her sewing activities.

If one looks at the above example the usage of the spectrum of care is very well demonstrated as the worker used the medical, psychosocial care, livelihood and paralegal avenues of reaching out to the woman and her family.

There is a need to move and work at the community level to enable the women to fully recover and rebuild their lives.

WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY

The community as a whole can think of actions not only on how to best rebuild lives but also take steps to prevent further occurrences. It may not be initially seen to directly affect the woman but would do so indirectly. The community strength can help with sustaining the process of reconstruction of people's lives and continuous support.

Women who have been widowed and women who have lost important members of their family need the support of the community. Some initiatives could be undertaken for **providing relief** and being involved in the rebuilding of these women's homes.

In one situation a woman who had lost her husband was observing 'Iddat'. Since she was alone and could not go out of the house during this period of mourning for about 45 days the community was involved in helping her get food for that entire month.

Similarly a larger number of the homes that were rebuilt were done by the large community based organization, which had taken on this task.

In another place when the survivors returned home community members who had not been affected lent them utensils to start their kitchens and start cooking till they settled down.

One member gave personal donations to run a relief camp for over 3 months. Other businessmen were also seen to be involved in such contributions.

Sewing machines were being distributed by one organisation.

Other initiatives could be to aim at **bringing back a sense of normalcy** within the larger community and to bring back hope and confidence among survivors.

Rebuilding of a mosque and starting prayers to bring back hope and spirit was another community initiative seen in one area.

Community celebrations of Iftar gatherings were seen during Ramzan. All these were initiatives to bring back confidence and a sense of normalcy among the survivors of the riots.

Still other initiatives could be taken to **prevent communal hatred** from being spread within the community and the message of peace to be spread all around.

When some community members asked the members of the Muslim community to vote for a particular party then other influential people from the Muslim community came out openly against such propagandas.

When the terrorists attacked the temple shrine then the members of the Muslim community condemned it.

Dealing with sensitive issues of sexual violations and physical assault in a society, which is conservative and patriarchal, is very delicate and needs to be handled very gently. Anything that could hurt the sentiments of the community, as a whole needs to be avoided.

Simple measures such as organizing women to be together, have regular meetings to discuss pressing needs among themselves, having prayer meetings may help in bringing comfort to these women.

Often, girls and women who have been victims of rape may be kept in isolation. People may talk about them in a disapproving way. The community may also carry a sense of helplessness as they were unable to protect their women and families. People in the community may speak ill of her.

In both scenarios it would help to contact the elders in the community or any leader of the community and arrange a meeting to discuss the problem. Seek their help to reduce and stop negative attitudes towards victims and their families. Explore the possibility of involving religious leaders in increasing the sense of security to single women and in the reintegration of the victims to the society. Their help can be sought to educate men and members of the community to be compassionate and in dealing with the negative outlook people have about the women who have been assaulted.

SELF CARE

It is important for the CLH to understand that he/she is involved in work that is going to make demands on his/her physical as well as emotional life. The daily stress can cause internal tension within them. It is important for them to understand this aspect and take some preventive actions to enable them to cope with this stress.

An analogy of a tree is useful to understand this. Unless the tree has strong roots to support the tree will not be able to give shade to others. This is applicable to you too. There must also be some sources of sustenance and nourishment in your lives.

SOME THINGS TO DO FOR YOURSELF

- Listen to each other's feelings.
- Do not take anger too personally.
- Avoid criticism unless necessary.
- Give each other comfort and care.
- Encourage and support co-workers.
- Reach out to others when you are feeling low as well as look around and support others if they are down.
- Develop a buddy system with a co-worker. Agree to keep an eye on each other's functioning. Check for fatigue and stress symptoms. Take a break when required.
- Get some physical exercise daily.
- Regularize your life leaving enough spare time for rest.
- Listen to music, read books, watch television everyday.
- Try and eat frequently and get enough sleep.
- Practice relaxation techniques frequently.
- Stay in touch with your family and share your thoughts and feelings with them.
- Keep a diary of your activities and experiences.
- Keep one day per week only for your personal work and relaxation.

SEEK HELP IF

- *You find it difficult to leave your work even for a short period.*
- *Your sleep, appetite is disturbed.*
- *You are unable to enjoy things.*
- *You want to avoid going to work.*
- *You are easily irritable.*
- *You cry easily.*

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A m a n P a t h i k s

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Yousuf Bai Mansoori, Zakir S Kazi

WHAT WE KNOW...

- ◆ Intense emotional reactions in the face of these events are expected and normal.
- ◆ There is a trajectory of responses over time most often starting early and subsiding within weeks and months. But for some people, the onset of responses may be delayed. In others, the reactions may become long-term leading to considerable disability.
- ◆ Responses will be highly individual in nature, often quite intense and sometimes conflictual. The vast majority of reactions are in the normal range and the intensity will diminish for most people over time without the need for professional help. Support from family and friends is critical. For some, however, the degree of exposure may lead to more serious and prolonged reactions.
- ◆ The range of feelings experienced may be quite broad. People may describe intense feelings of sadness followed by anger. Others may experience fearfulness and hypervigilance to the environment among numerous other reactions.
- ◆ There may be temporary disruptions in normal coping mechanisms for many people and some may go on to develop problems with sleep, nightmares, concentration, intrusive thoughts and a preoccupation with reliving the events. These reactions are generally short lived but if they persist, professional consultation should be sought.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- ◆ Create opportunities for people to talk and share experiences in supportive groups. This is often done best in familiar surroundings such as religious places, schools or community centers.
- ◆ Provide accurate and practical information especially concerning the larger recovery efforts. Special attention to the needs of relief applicants is necessary as relating to the rules and regulations of the relief organizations during the crisis can be overwhelming.
- ◆ Give particular consideration to the needs of special groups such as children, those who have been most intensely exposed or had a history of previous events (exposure to trauma), rescue workers, and people with pre existing mental health conditions.
- ◆ Children and adolescents will need the support of their caregivers. This support should reflect accurate concerns, and diminish any words or actions that would increase the child or adolescent's anxiety. Caregivers should offer reassurance as to their presence and availability during this time. Exposure to television, movies or print matter that offers too graphic depictions of the destruction or victims should be limited.
- ◆ A percentage of people, as high as 30%, who experience the most direct exposure to the events may go on to develop more serious mental health concerns and should be referred for services if they develop persistent issues.

Overwhelming feelings are to be expected and can stress individuals, communities and nations. There are many actions that can be taken at the level of governments, international NGOs and local groups to appropriately and effectively support victims of such a catastrophe.

WHO, October 2001

INFORMATION MANUAL 4

RIOTS

PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE
by **COMMUNITY LEVEL HELPERS**
for
WOMEN

Disasters pose a monumental challenge to the total community. There has been a gradual acceptance of the need for psychosocial care. The recent Gujarat Riots have left behind a trail of anger, anguish, betrayal and emotional scars that pose an enormous challenge of normalising the children's feelings and activities.

The information booklet is unique because:

1. It addresses normalisation of emotional reactions.
2. It carries a large amount of relevant field experiences.
3. It is based on the actual work of over 200 Amanpathiks.
4. It is user friendly, based on field level pre-testing and community interviews.

It is a collaborative effort of professionals, voluntary agencies and survivors.



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