

DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE PUNJABI COMMUNITY

RESEARCH ON SEXUAL ABUSE OF WOMEN IN THE PUNJABI COMMUNITY

FINAL REPORT
November 2005

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Sexual Abuse of Punjabi Women

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Foreword

Millions of women across the globe become victim of one form of abuse or the other irrespective of social or educational class they belong to. Violence against women takes various forms from domestic violence and rape to child marriage and female circumcision (genital mutilation). It has no cultural boundaries or educational boundaries. It is prevalent everywhere in all cultures. However, the rates may vary.

Violence in all forms must be condemned. However, sexual abuse is one which must be dealt with severity. It is one of the most heinous forms of violence which destroys the women socially, emotionally and psychologically and has enormous long lasting consequences on women's personality and health. Owing to the paucity of research and the taboos surrounding admissions by men of sexual abuse against women, the actual numbers of cases of violence will probably never be known. The Punjabi Community which is one of the largest ethnic minorities in the Region of Peel is no exception. Despite the size of the population in Peel Region, the rate of admission of violence is low, especially with this minority group.

Punjabi Community Health Center with the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation has endeavored to conduct research on this sensitive topic which explored the complex issues surrounding sexual abuse in the Punjabi community. We were not trying to determine the prevalence and extent of sexual abuse of women in the Punjabi Community but rather we were looking at exploring and dealing with the complexities of sexual abuse. This study used qualitative data to delve deeper into these complexities. The study highlighted for us the cultural barriers, the shame, stigma, ostracization, the roles of the legal and judicial system, language barriers, lack of awareness of the service providers and lack of cultural appropriate service delivery. This is the first study that has been undertaken for the Punjabi community on the sexual abuse of women.

This study, we hope, will provide researchers, academicians, women's rights activists, policy makers, organizations working on women rights, etc. an overview of issues surrounding sexual abuse in Punjabi community and at the same time help in identifying issues, developing programs and bridging the gaps in policies and program implementation.

This research is dedicated to those women who have suffered in silence and had the courage to share their pain, hurt, and suffering with the research team. This research is dedicated to all women who are working to make this world a better place for all to live in peace and harmony. I sincerely thank all women who provided us their support and trust. Without their participation this study would not have been possible.

Baldev Mutta

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the product of sustained efforts of the Punjabi Community Health Center which decided to initiate the research on sexual abuse of women in the Punjabi community. The research has benefited from the expertise and efforts of a large number of individuals and organizations in the Region of Peel and Toronto. The women who participated in this study need to be specially thanked for providing the research team their personal and sensitive information. Without their support and contribution, this research wouldn't have been possible. We are thankful to all those who strongly believed in this initiative and worked with us to address the concerns of women.

We are thankful to Mr. Baldev Mutta who conceived this project and created conditions for it to be implemented. He made sure that the study was scientifically sound and would prove useful information to persons and organizations working for and with women.

We are also thankful to Ms. Amandeep Kaur under whose supervision this report was completed. Her timely suggestions, critique, and helpful hints contributed immensely towards the completion of this report.

We are thankful to Dr. Amarjit Singh for reviewing the research report and providing very useful and timely suggestions. In addition, the report was also strengthened by incorporating the suggestions of Dr. Joan Oldford and we thank her for her contribution.

We are thankful to our volunteers who assisted in a variety of capacities to have this research project completed.

We are thankful to all women who participated in this research study.

THE REPORT ORGANIZATION

The research endeavors to present the findings and recommendations to variety of readers in a most comprehensive way. The material is hence organized in a certain format. This is a research study that uses qualitative data to understand and highlight the complexities of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women. The research used personal interviews and focus group methods to elicit information from the participants. The research was based on the principles of Participatory Action Research.

The chapters in the report are organized in a way to present information in most precise and comprehensive form.

The chapters present the following information:

- Chapter 1 - presents the executive summary.
- Chapter 2 - presents the general introduction.
- Chapter 3 - presents the introduction to the project, and the history of Punjabi Community Health Centre (PCHC).
- Chapter 4 - summarizes the findings of the research.
- Chapter 5 - presents the summary of recommendations.
- Chapter 6 - presents the review of literature.
- Chapter 7 - entails detailed interviews and focus group discussions
- Appendices

CHAPTER 1

Executive Summary

The Research study titled ‘Sexual Abuse Amongst Women in the Punjabi Community’ was an attempt towards the development of a comprehensive service delivery system for this minority group to tackle sexual abuse. This participatory research is an exploratory study taken with the objectives of determining the complex issues surrounding the sexual abuse of women in Punjabi community, to initiate a process of discussion about sexual abuse, to identify support measures, to involve women into gathering more information about sexual abuse and to create and generate a momentum to talk about this issue in the community.

Methodology

The research team:

- Worked in a cooperative and collaborative manner from beginning discussions to the analysis of the data and the compiling of the report.
- Adopted the principles of participatory action research.
- Formed the steering committee which consisted of women who guided the research, reviewed the tools for the data collection and participated in approving the research report.
- Reviewed the existing literature related to sexual abuse. There was a dearth of information available on sexual abuse of Punjabi women. Given the limited time and resources, the team made every effort to review as many as research reports and articles possible.

- The scope of the study involved Punjabi women living in Toronto and the Peel Region. The sample comprised women who accepted to share with the interviewing team their personal experiences or those that they had witnessed. The research team worked in a cooperative manner to collect information on the research topic.
- Three focus groups and one-to-one interviews of eleven women were undertaken for collecting information on sexual abuse prevalence in the Punjabi Community. The focus groups comprised 8-10 women. In-depth information was sought to understand the issue and how it has impacted the women. Their understanding, comments, and suggestions were noted by “scribes” and no tape recorders were used.
- Extensive literature was reviewed to collect the information. It revealed that sexual abuse is the most common form of violence that the Punjabi women are subjected to.

Major Findings

All women who participated in the research study were aware about the issue of sexual abuse and had experienced it themselves or reported about their near ones who were subjected to it. *The study has brought into light startling facts how women get abused not only by strangers but within their families by the people whom they trust.* They become target, not only by their husbands, but by their fathers-in-law, friends of their husbands and close relatives. Despite the fact they get sexually abused, the rate of reporting the incidences is very low. Most of the women reported that they do not seek police help as procedures are rigid, insensitive and involves detailing (reliving the nightmare again). The system does not take into consideration the woman’s state of

mind, inability to communicate in English and/or ostracization from their own family and community. The study has brought into light the important issues of lack of support to this group of women. Although, the Punjabi community is one of the largest minority groups in the Region of Peel, there is still a lack of proper support mechanisms for these women. The participants who had been sexually abused did not have any awareness of whom to approach or where to get help. They felt this to be true of a majority of Punjabi women.

The detailed findings are compiled in the report.

Major Recommendations

The study suggested that primary, secondary and tertiary support measures for women need to be developed along with advocacy efforts. Culturally appropriate services need to be developed in order for Punjabi women to deal with sexual abuse issues.

Detailed recommendations are compiled in the report.

Outcome

The research study helped identify the need to develop support mechanisms for Punjabi women who have experienced sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 2

SEXUAL ABUSE RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

Global Problem

Violence affects the lives of millions of women world-wide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of forms, from domestic violence and rape to child marriage and female circumcision (genital mutilation). All are violations of the most fundamental human rights. In a statement to the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in September, 1995, the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned. There are many different forms of violence and persons may be subjected to more than one form of violence.

Violence in Canada

According to a 1993 Statistics Canada Survey, three in ten women currently or previously married or living in a common-law relationship in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence at the hands of their current or former partner. An estimated 250,000 Canadian women per year are physically or sexually abused by their spouses or common-law partners. These figures present only a tip of the iceberg, considering that only a fraction of all cases are ever reported. It is particularly ironic that, in spite of impressive economic, technological and social progress

world-wide, millions of women around the world are routinely abused within their own homes.

Violence at Home

It is a great tragedy that for most women, violence begins at home with their husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles. In overdeveloped and developing countries alike, physical, sexual and psychological abuse within the family affects an astounding number of women. Women are living under constant threat of sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape. The threat is often greatest in their own homes and from men they know. In most societies, the responsibility of maintaining standards of sexual 'purity' and 'honor' are imposed upon women. Thus, it is often the victim and not the perpetrator who bears the burden of shame and guilt. Consequently, women are often hesitant to report the crime. Sexual assault and rape is grievously underreported in official statistics, and everywhere the number of reported "sexual" crimes represents only a small proportion of those committed.

Owing to the paucity of research and the taboos surrounding admissions of violence against women in the family, the actual numbers of facts of violence will probably never be known. The extent of violence against women in the home largely remains hidden and widely denied by communities that fear that an admission of its incidence will be an assault on the integrity of the family. The fact that the abuse is generally condoned by social customs and considered part and parcel of marital life, rather than a crime, is in itself a grim indication of its high incidence. Some women fall prey to violence before they are born, since expectant parents abort their unborn daughters, hoping for a son instead. In other societies, girls are subjected to such traditional practices as circumcision, which leaves them maimed and traumatized. In

others, they are compelled to marry at an early age, before they are physically, mentally or emotionally mature. Women become victims of incest, rape and domestic violence that often lead to trauma, physical handicap or death. From the United States to Australia, Egypt, India and Israel, one in four families falls victim to incest. One report estimated that as many as 100 million girls, often 10 years of age, are raped by adult men, very often, their fathers. In many countries sexual assault by a husband on his wife is not considered to be a crime; a wife is expected to submit. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for a woman to prove that sexual assault has occurred unless she can demonstrate serious injury.

Culture and Myths

The culture which expects aggression from males expects passivity from females. Conveniently, the common myth about the nature of female sexuality is that all women secretly want to be raped. Lurking beneath her modest female exterior is a subconscious desire to be ravished. The scenario is even complicated by the expectation that, not only does a woman mean 'yes' when she says 'no' but that decent women ought to begin by saying 'no' and then be led down the primrose path to acquiescence. The basic element of rape involved in all heterosexual relationships may explain why men often identify with the offender in the crime. But to regard the rapist as a victim, a man driven by his inherent sexual needs to take what will not be given to him, a man who derives pleasure from raping woman clearly enjoys force and dominance as much or more than simple pleasures of flesh.

According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Delhi, seventy-seven percent of the men felt their masculinity was being threatened, if their wives didn't listen to them. They said force was

justified to assert their superiority. The study found that seventy-nine percent of the men asserted violence as a legitimate means of controlling their wives' fidelity. The martial relationship is closely associated with power, control and the privilege of being able to express and satisfy sexual needs. Although control and sexual violence decline steadily with age, the ICRW study found a disturbing correlation between violence, socio-economic status and education. The highest reported rates of sexual violence were found from men who were relatively more literate than those who were illiterate. Thirty-two percent of men with 0 years of education and forty-two percent men with 1-5 years of education reported sexual violence. While this figure increased to fifty-seven percent among men with 6-10 years of education, it stayed at this level for men with high school education and those who had moved further up the educational ladder. A similar pattern was seen among men in the privileged socio-economic class. The lowest rung in the socio-economic ladder reported the lowest rate of sexual violence at thirty-five percent. The rate almost doubled to sixty-one percent among the highest income groups.

Understanding Sexual Abuse

Abuse in any form whether physical, mental, psychological or sexual must not be condoned and must be treated with priority. However sexual abuse becomes hard to identify because it hides fear, guilt and shame. It can include unwanted sexual touching, rape or attempted rape, forcing someone to have sexual intercourse while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, forcing some one to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity, or using ridicule or other tactics to try to denigrate, control or limit women's sexuality or reproductive choices and sexual exploitation through prostitution or pornography. Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, male or female, young or old, rich or poor. Unfortunately, the majority of victims are women and children.

Women who suffer sexual abuse are often victims of physical and emotional abuse as well. It has been difficult to obtain a complete picture of the extent of sexual abuse in Canada because it often remains hidden. A person who is being abused may endure the abuse for a long time before seeking support. Some victims never tell anyone about the abuse. A person who is abused may be reluctant to talk about or report abuse for many reasons. For example, they may be emotionally attached to the abusive partner or have strong beliefs about keeping their relationships or family together. They may fear that the abuser will retaliate or they may fear that the abuser will retaliate (against them or their loved ones) or they may fear being stigmatized by others. They may be economically dependent on the abusive partner. They may live in an isolated area, or be socially isolated from others. They may face communication, language or cultural barriers. They may feel ashamed or powerless and lack access to information, resources and support. Many cases of sexual abuse are still not reported to the police although there are some signs that reporting is increasing.

Sexual Abuse in Marriages

One of the most comprehensive surveys about the extent of sexual abuse in marriages comes from one General Social Survey on Victimization. This victimization survey asked almost 26,000 women and men in Canada about their experiences of abuse, including experiences of violence and emotional abuse in their current or previous marriages and common-law partnerships. The survey found that the violence experienced by women tended to be more severe and more often repeated than the violence directed at men. For example, compared to men, women were six times more likely to report being sexually assaulted.

A United Nations study recently concluded that “Physical attack is often accompanied by sexual violence and rape, the psychological effects of which are perhaps more serious than rape by a stranger given the breach of trust that such conduct involves.” Yet only a few countries, including Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Poland, Scotland, the Soviet Union and Sweden, have incorporated marital rape as a crime in their legal systems. Despite the tremendous growth of interest in protecting women against sexual abuse, very little work has been done in this area be it at a research level, prevention level or at a secondary level. The amount of work is even little in respect to minority communities like the Punjabi Community. This clearly reflects how this issue has been ignored for a long time in this community, although it is an issue of concern. It is a general belief among many in Punjabi community that Punjabi men have always been taught to perceive themselves as the superior sex. It is perhaps this conditioning that makes them believe that they have control over their women counterparts.

A survey in northern India has found that nearly half of all husbands interviewed admitted to abusing their wives either physically or sexually. The American scientist who compiled the survey spoke to more than six thousand men in the state of Uttar Pradesh over a two-year period. It is believed to be one of the most comprehensive study of its kind carried out in India. This clearly reflects the significance of sexual abuse issue in the Indian context. The question is: Is there sexual abuse among Indian Diasporas in Canada? So far on this subject no comprehensive study has been conducted in Canada with the Indian community. The present research study taken up here will help in identifying gaps in understanding this or similar phenomena in Canada and in developing support mechanisms for Punjabi women who have been experiencing sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 3

Introduction of the Organization

Beginnings...

Punjabi Community Health Center (PCHC) was developed in 1990 as a non profit organization with the mission and vision to provide services based on the principles of Community Development and Cultural Appropriate service delivery. The Punjabi Community Health Promotion project in Peel was an innovative health promotion project. It was incorporated as a community-based agency and a resource center in 1995.

Objectives

The PCHC objective is to create a healthy and vibrant community which is in line with cultural mosaic of the Region of Peel. PCHC has been serving the Peel community through community development, culturally appropriate service delivery, partnership with other organizations, research and assets inventories, developing resources and volunteer from within the community, consulting and promoting diversity, through community outreach.

Programs

PCHC runs core programs as well as projects and has partnership projects running simultaneously.

- The core program comprises SAHARA Punjabi Men's group which deals with excessive alcohol use and anger management problems. This 16 week program is not only compatible with the partner assault response but also deals with the issue of alcohol use.

- SAHARA Punjabi Women's group is an aftercare program that provides long-term support to abused women and children.
- SAHARA Punjabi youth group is a youth program that deals with issues of deviant behavior, cultural conflict, and substance abuse.
- SAHARA Punjabi Senior's group is a seniors' program that deals with issues of senior abuse, intercultural and intergenerational issues.
- Parenting sessions are provided to parents at various Gurdwaras throughout the Region of Peel.
- Punjabi Food Bank is for women and children surviving abusive situations.
- Healing through Alternative Methods is a counseling program for individuals, couples and families.
- PCHC projects include developing social capital. This program is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and deals with sensitive issues within the South Asian Community. In this project the issues of sexual abuse, homosexuality and HIV/AIDS are explored and expressed in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Eco Action is funded by the Ministry of the Environment. It raises awareness within the Punjabi community in the areas of environment and waste management.
- Volunteer Development, which is another PCHC project, is an initiative to train volunteers from the community. Newcomers are given an opportunity in the area of social work. In addition, volunteers are given extensive training to assume the role of mentors. These mentors are then assigned to clients. The clients and mentors work together on a long term basis to reduce isolation

and loneliness. Through mentorship, clients are empowered toward self-sufficiency.

- The partnership projects comprise Mentoring for Change which is a partnership between Victim services of Peel and the PCHC. It addresses the issues of family violence within the South Asian Community.
- The co-operative cluster which is a partnership between Inter-Cultural Neighborhood Social Services, Canadians for safe and sober driving and PCHC. This project strengthens the capacities of smaller organizations.
- Gambling Project which is partnership between COSTI and PCHC is a participatory action research project that looks at the issues of gambling within the Punjabi community.
- The family violence awareness project is a joint project between COSTI and PCHC, which is designed to raise awareness on the issues of violence within the Punjabi community.

Introduction to the Project

The Research on Sexual Abuse of Women in the Punjabi Community is an exploratory study which endeavors to assess the complexities surrounding sexual abuse in the Punjabi community. The project was conceptualized and initiated in 2002.

Information for this report was obtained mainly through focus groups and one-to-one interviews. The interviews conducted provided in-depth information on sexual abuse and brought forward the heart rendering experiences of those women who had experienced sexual abuse. The qualitative information obtained was then analyzed and a report compiled.

Background

The Punjabi community is the largest ethnic community in the Region of Peel. According to the 2001 Canada census, Punjabi is the second most-spoken mother tongue after English in the Region of Peel.

Punjabi population can be found concentrated heavily in Malton, Mississauga and Brampton. The community has developed close knit networks with its own media, small-to-medium size businesses, its own school, and religious institutions and has made inroads in the hospitality, travel and tourism industry. This is not to say that community is not connected to mainstream Canadian society. The community has made contributions in various fields and created its place.

The Punjabi community seems to settle well and hard work forms the core of the majority of the Punjabi community. It tends to acculturate within the cultural mosaic of Canada rather well. It is observed that the community tends to discuss some social issues while “ignoring” (being in denial) others, for example sexual abuse. Thus “Sexual Abuse of Punjabi Women” is a relative by a new topic which needs to be explored further.

This study has charted a course which can provide impetus to other researchers to explore the area of violence against Punjabi women. Just like other communities, the Punjabi community has its fair share of violence perpetuated against women. Research studies¹ undertaken by PCHC has found that “fifty percent or more of almost all the subgroup members responded that family disruptions, such as arguing and fighting among family members, and wife abuse were the two most common negative results (of alcohol drinking)”.

¹ Timothy Weber, Purvi Biring, and Baldev Mutta, Final Report, Punjabi Community Health Project, Addiction Research Project and Region of Peel – Health, December 1993, p. 36.

A research study² undertaken by the Coalition of Agencies Serving South Asians found that “...participants from both ethno-specific and mainstream agencies felt that there was a need to evolve innovative and effective strategies for reaching out to South Asian women who were victims of harassment, sexism, *sexual assault* or social isolation”.

A research study³ “Report on Abused South Asian Women in Scarborough” highlighted that:

- 3 women sought help from South Asian Family Support Services for being raped by a relative (page 34); and
- Some (women) said that their husbands had girlfriends and when the wives complained or objected to them, the husbands’ replies were always the same, “He could take care of the girl friend and the wife (sexually)”, whereupon forcing the wives to have sex (page 44).

The general consensus seems to be that women and girls do become victims of incest and sexual abuse. Women all around the world are subjected to sexual abuse and the abuse is not confined to any one community. However, the extent and prevalence may vary. The sexual abuse, however, may not get disclosed due to fear of stigmatization and fear of loss of respect within the family and the community.

The information collected by the research team reflects how the women become victims in their own homes and by people they trust.

²Coalition of Agencies serving South Asians, *The Need for Community Services: A Study of the South Asian Community in Metropolitan Toronto*, November 1994, p. 71.

³ Aruna Papp, *Report on Abused South Asian Women in Scarborough*, August 1990.

Scope of the Study

The study was undertaken with the purpose outlined below:

- To determine the level of understanding of sexual abuse in the Punjabi community
- To examine the state of sexual abuse and its commonality in the Punjabi community
- To determine the intervention and support mechanisms that would be suitable for the Punjabi Community.
- To determine how awareness can be raised and destigmatization can be brought to this issue
- To involve women into gathering more information about sexual abuse
- To create and generate momentum to talk about this issue in the community
- To develop sustainable action program in terms of support group, continuous out reach and development of resources.

Objectives of the study

The study was undertaken with specific objectives in mind:

- To gain knowledge and understanding about sexual abuse
- To understand the nature and magnitude of abuse
- To determine the factors that inhibit women from seeking help
- To explore the existing availability of services and support mechanisms in the Punjabi community and the mainstream community
- To develop a core group and an advocacy group which can address the needs of sexually abused women

Approach

The research team used a participatory Action Research methodology to undertake research within the Punjabi community. The research, which dealt with such a sensitive topic, demanded that participants be assured of confidentiality. The primary source of data was one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions which resulted in gathering firsthand information. Secondary information was collected through newspapers, internet sites and books. The participants were not treated as “objects” but as a “subjects” who continue to be involved in the project in different ways. The information gathered provided insight into the lives of women who have experienced sexual abuse. This approach proved successful as a research tool with Punjabi women.

The data obtained was qualitative in nature which provided in-depth information on the sexual abuse. The information thus obtained was analyzed for content analysis.

The research team was well aware that the topic of sexual abuse may generate uncomfortable feelings within women. Every effort was made that once a disclosure occurred, the interview was stopped and assistance of “counseling” was offered to the woman. The interview could only continue with the permission and agreement from the woman. One important finding was that the women were very thankful to have their “traumatic experiences” listened to. They felt relieved and “light” after the interviews. As a follow up, each woman was contacted by the research staff after the interview in order to determine if additional support or help was warranted.

Methodology

The work plan consisted of the following:

- 1) establish a core group of women (5-6 Women’s Steering Committee) who will steer the sexual abuse component

- 2) explore whether community at large identifies the social issue of sexual abuse in the Punjabi community
 - 3) study the issues related to sexual abuse and how women deal with the traumatic experiences
 - 4) undertake literature review
 - 5) organize focus groups and one-to-one interviews to collect qualitative data
 - 6) analyze data and compile report
1. **The Steering Committee**

The steering committee comprised of 5-6 women who will take it up on themselves to delve deeper into the project.
 2. **The Research Team**

The research team comprised of three individuals who had experience in the field of social work.
 3. **Review of Literature**

The research team read several articles, research papers, and examined several internet sites in order to review the current research on sexual abuse. The team discovered that no research study has been undertaken in Canada on sexual abuse of Punjabi Women. The literature section provides the detailed picture of the studies reviewed for the study.
 4. **Qualitative data gathering process**

Three focus groups and 11 one-to-one interviews were conducted to collect information on sexual abuse. The detailed interview questionnaires and focus group questionnaires were designed for the purpose of the study. The discussions in the focus group were noted by the scribe and then entered into the computer.

The women were interviewed at their convenience and at the place where they felt comfortable.

Analysis

The information collected was in-depth and qualitative in nature. The interviews and focus group discussion responses were read several times and a content analysis technique of analyzing the data was undertaken. These formed the basis of findings and recommendations. Interviews were also reviewed for themes.

Findings

The findings of focus groups and interviews are compiled separately.

Recommendations

The recommendations of one-to-one interviews, focus group and interviews were compiled separately.

CHAPTER 4

Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this section represent the views and the opinions of women from the Punjabi Community. The women showed great courage in sharing their heart-rendering stories of sexual abuse. The women who participated in the study appreciated the step taken on this issue as they thought that no services were provided for women who experience sexual abuse. The research team, through this study, has come across experiences which will be an eye opener for all of us who are harbingers of women's rights and empowerment.

Findings Based on the Interviews and Focus Group

The themes that emerged were:

- Feeling of worthlessness
- Feeling of guilt
- Feeling of shame
- Feeling of helplessness
- Lack of Trust
- Depression
- Anger and feeling betrayed
- Lack of service providers
- Lack of legal knowledge and trust in the system
- Feeling of insecurity, nervousness
- Flashbacks, anxiety and panic
- Shock, disbelief, numbness and confusion

- Changes in eating pattern, socialization process and sleeping pattern
- Psychosomatic symptoms like body pain and headaches.

The women identified Sexual Abuse as:

- A forced touch without their consent.
- When somebody forces or pressurizes women or wife for sex or threatens them for sex
- Seeing a women in a lecherous way and making unsuitable gestures and comments
- Showing obscene photographs
- Giving an ugly look
- Speaking against women's honor and making derogatory comments
- Having sex with a wife while physically and emotionally attached to another person
- Having sex with a child or minor

The focus group discussion elicited that “women identified themselves as the most vulnerable group in society”.

Small children, teenage girls and immigrant women are the most vulnerable section in the society. In all the three focus groups, these three sections were identified as most vulnerable.

Myths and/or facts identified by women that surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi Community are as follows:

- Only intercourse is a sexual abuse
- Women are inferior to men

- Women are objects
- Family reputation is very important
- Discussion on sex should not be undertaken
- Women must have asked for it; she must have been wearing provocative clothes
- It must be women's fault; once women are abused they can never get respect
- Abused women carry bad names in the community
- Unmarried girls should not be given information on sex
- Old men can never abuse women
- People from high profile strata are considered good

Women suggested that PCHC should undertake following steps:

- provide information,
- form support groups of women,
- provide women a place to ventilate feelings,
- provide services in Hindi and Punjabi,
- give sex education to women,
- undertake steps for empowerment of women,
- develop programs for the community to spread awareness about sexual abuse,
- educate women on their rights and of programs' availability,
- provide anonymous help lines to women who need support and information.

General Findings

- Punjabi women who participated in this research study had heard about sexual abuse happening in India and Canada.
- Punjabi Women are sexually abused and in most cases by persons they know and trust. In the present study it was revealed that, women who have been sexually abused have been abused by their husband, father in laws, husband's friends and their relatives and uncles.
- Many factors inhibit women from seeking help. These include:
 - fear of the unknown, shyness, influence and power of the abuser, family reputation, cultural factors, problems in marriage, social ostracization, shame, guilt, fear of further being abused, loss of community support and isolation.
- Punjabi women are distrustful of the legal system. They cited "lack of sensitive legal system which comprises police and judiciary, strict and inflexible rules, detailing procedures, bad experiences in India, lack of knowledge about the legal system" as some of the issues which inhibit their accessing the legal system.
- Punjabi women blamed male patriarchy as responsible for sexual abuse.
- Punjabi women were cognizant of the fact that society and the community are unable and unwilling to provide a safe "space" for abused women to "vent" and/or seek further assistance.
- Punjabi women felt that this issue (sexual abuse) may be hard to "destigmatize". As long as men continue to "tolerate" the abuse of women to that extent, the sexual abuse of women and children will not wither away. In order to raise awareness around the issue of sexual abuse, male youth and men (of all ages) should be targeted. Specific effort should be made to reach out to young Punjabi girls and

information seminars should be provided in partnerships with schools and other agencies.

- Punjabi women felt that the police required them to give detailed information. The procedures and interrogation further becomes painful to them after undergoing the trauma of sexual abuse. The women felt that instead of women proving that she has been abused, the victim's abuser should provide proof of not being guilty. This is a woman and victim 'friendly' solution as the women who are already traumatized would not have to endure "detailing". The abuser whom women have charged should be made to prove that he is not guilty. This will not only reduce the incidence of abuse but will instill in abuser the fear of law.
- The curative aspect or the intervention level of the program should comprise culturally appropriate support programs for the women who are being abused. There is strong need and urgency to develop women-sensitive support structures like creating a "space" where women can go freely for discussing and for receiving counseling and services. Most of the time women feel threatened to go to police and don't have knowledge about the services they can receive. They need to be provided a confidential atmosphere of trust where they can be guided in a non-threatening environment.
- The rehabilitation or tertiary level approach will involve creating a therapeutic group for women to overcome the trauma of abuse and reassume their normal day-to-day functioning. A partnership between PCHC and other mainstream organizations could be developed in order to develop a culturally appropriate therapeutic group program for Punjabi women.

Causes of Oppression of Punjabi Women

Six major causes of oppression in Punjabi women were identified as the following:

- Women's Upbringing
- Men's Values
- Cultural Values
- Religious Values
- Punjabi Community Norms
- Mainstream Society Apathy

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Research study brought into light the fact that sexual abuse is prevalent in the Punjabi Community. Punjabi women (and girls) are being sexually assaulted by their acquaintances. The women have been unable to seek professional help for their sexual assaults due to a variety of reasons. The following recommendations are suggested which would address the needs of Punjabi women in the areas of sexual abuse.

Recommendations one:

Develop comprehensive programs aiming at prevention, curative and rehabilitative aspects of sexual abuse.

Recommendation two:

In order to deal with the aftermath of sexual abuse, PCHC should develop culturally appropriate:

- Support groups for women.
- Drop-in programs for women
- A therapeutic group program for women

Recommendation three:

In order to educate the Punjabi community, the preventive programs should be comprised of:

- awareness campaigns,
- educational work shops,

- use of electronic mass media (internet, radio, television)
- plays and dramas,
- use of poets, writers and other artists to develop a “literature that encompasses abuse issues”
- resources (videos, handbooks, brochures)

Recommendation four:

Develop partnerships with the police and judiciary in order to discuss how the process could be sensitized.

Summary of Recommendations from Literature Review

#s	Recommendations
1	Develop empowerment strategies for women which may be linked to awareness strategies.
2	Develop social marketing, community development, health promotion, empowerment building strategies for the entire community.
3	Provide sensitive, accessible and effective supports and services for individuals who are sexually abused.
4	Mobilize the community, enhance the understanding of Canada’s legal framework, establish culturally appropriate services, and develop resources to help victims and stop offenders.
5	Assertiveness and verbal resistance training to be organized for young girls and women.
6	Develop awareness about women workers’ rights about sexual harassment at the place of work.
7	Educate the women to seek help after she has been victimized so that “healing and recovery” can occur.
8	Develop a community development framework where the “trust” between various service providers and the South Asian community could be established in the areas of sexual abuse of women.
9	There is a need to develop models to deal with child sexual abuse which will take into consideration the needs of South Asian families.
10	Domestic abuse also incorporates sexual abuse and more awareness, education, and treatment must be developed for “abused women” in a culturally appropriate manner.
11	Educate the South Asian community about uneven sex ratio in births and “traditional values”.
12	The women must be educated in the legal system which pertains to “sexual abuse” and prosecution.

Summary of Recommendations from one-to-one interview with women

#s	Recommendations
1	The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers, therefore all awareness, education and empowerment strategies must be family and community centered.
2	The empowerment strategies must include the following issues highlighted by women: Minimization, Denial, Shame, Insult, Blame, Fear, Trust, Reputation, certain Cultural and societal practices, are feelings which need to be addressed.
3	Develop awareness about the Canadian legal system and “laws” pertaining to “sexual abuse” to South Asian families and community.
4	Develop more interaction between Police and South Asian Service Providers and the South Asian community.
5	The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers.
6	Develop awareness campaigns to educate women about their rights at work in relation to sexual harassment.
7	Develop awareness about the issue of sexual abuse within the South Asian community.
8	Develop education campaign to educate the family and the community about “marital rape”.
9	Develop awareness about women experiencing sexual abuse because of their “immigrant status”.
10	Develop strong relations between South Asian agencies, community and the police forces in the GTA area so that women are comfortable in disclosing any sexual abuse incidents.
11	Develop supporting “mechanisms” and “culture specific spaces” for women to address sexual abuse issues within the South Asian community.
12	Establish relations with the religious community and educate them about the issues of sexual abuse in South Asian community

Final Recommendations from Focus Groups

#s	Recommendations – joint responses from three focus groups
1	<p>Sexual abuse is defined as:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Inappropriate touching, forcing a woman to do things she doesn't want to do, whether in private or in front of others, making offensive verbal and postural signs, gazing or gawking (looking), making derogatory comments, fondling.</p> <p>(forcing her means: watching pornography, magazines, using sexual toys)</p>
2	<p>Women have identified sexual prevalence in Punjab. It occurred outside of the family with poor women and girls by "rich" men and it happened to girls and women by their family members and relatives. It also occurs within religious "priesthood".</p>
3	<p>The "Wall of Silence" must be broken through education, awareness and empowerment.</p>
4	<p>The immigrant young women need to be educated about their rights at the place of work so that they are not sexually harassed.</p>
5	<p>Special projects should be developed to educate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - little girls, - young teenage girls, - non-immigrant women, <p>because they are at most risk of being sexually abused by someone they know or they trust. These projects must address cultural values and issues which underpin sexual violence against women.</p>
6	<p>Educate women about the "system" which handles sexual abuse.</p>
7	<p>Language is the most significant barrier which needs to be addressed. Women cannot articulate well via interpreters.</p>
8	<p>Develop linkages and partnerships with police so that both parties understand each other. Develop a project which will educate the women about police responsibilities and educate the police to become culturally sensitive to the South Asian community.</p>

9	Develop culturally appropriate services for South Asian women who have experienced sexual violence.
10	Develop a community development project to enhance the skills of women to seek help in an emergency situation or in crisis situation. The solution of complex problems does not lie in calling 911.
11	The mainstream and South Asian service providers need to understand that the South Asian women want the violence to end and their marriage to end. This approach requires the service providers to make major changes in the way they are delivering services.
12	Develop a Health Promotion and a Social Marketing strategy in order to educate and empower the family and the community.
13	Develop resources in order to educate and empower individuals, family and the community.
14	Develop community development projects to educate children about self-defence and healthy sexual education.
15	Develop a Mentoring project, where by women mentors provide help and support to survivors of sexual violence.

CHAPTER 6

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Preparing for the future: Sexual Abuse of Girls and Young Women, Sexual Abuse of Girls and Young Women in Punjab

Introduction:

This study examines the sexual abuse of girls and young women in Punjab, India and examines the role of culture and socio-economic conditions on sexual abuse.

Abstract:

The report is based on a research study of sexual abuse of girls and young women in Punjab. The analysis is based on the combinations of empirical data collected from newspaper and actual case studies conducted by “War Against Rape” (War) (Reference). The report points out that variation in culture and socio-economic conditions have a minimal impact on the incidence and frequency of sexual abuse. Thus, awareness and social and economic development may not be the only solutions to the paradox of sexual violence. It is important to determine the priority areas for intervention in the future. On the prevention side, the single most important objective is empowerment of women and enhancing the awareness of both female children and their parents alone will not eliminate this phenomenon.

Analysis:

Variations in culture and socio economic conditions have minimal impact on the incidences and the frequency of sexual abuse. Awareness and socio economic development may not be the solutions to the paradox of sexual violence.

www.un.org.pk/library/women_Biblio/wbabs058.htm

2. Women: Victims of Violence Advocates of Peace

Introduction:

The paper discusses the prevalence of sexual abuse in families. It is a great tragedy that, for most abused women, violence begins at home with husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles. In developed and developing countries alike, physical, sexual and psychological abuse within the family affects an astounding number of women. Owing to a paucity of research and the taboos surrounding admissions of violence against women in the family, the actual number of facts of violence will probably never be known. The fact that abuse is generally condoned by social customs and considered part and parcel of marital life, rather than a crime, is in itself a grim indication of its high incidence. Rape and physical assault also extend to the female children within the family. From the United States to Australia, Egypt, India and Israel, one in four families falls victim to incest. One report suggested that as many as 100 million girls, often under 10 years of age, are raped by adult men, very often their fathers. The extent of violence in homes against women is largely hidden and widely denied by communities that fear that an admission of its incidence will be an assault on the integrity of the family. A United Nation's study recently concluded that physical attack is often accompanied by sexual violence and rape, the psychological effects of which are perhaps more serious than rape by a stranger given the breach of trust that such conduct involves. The reason that so many women put up with abuse in the home is primarily due to their unequal status in society and the fact that they have no viable alternatives available to them. Women are often caught in a vicious circle of economic dependence, fear of their own children's lives as well as their own, repeated pregnancies, shame, and ignorance of their rights, lack of confidence in themselves and social pressure.

Analysis:

The incidence of sexual abuse is widely prevalent in families both in developing and developed countries. However, it is largely hidden and denied as it is feared that admission of its incidence will be an assault on family integrity.

www.womenaid.org/press/info/violence/victimviolence.html

3. India: Crimes against women in Gujarat denied and unpunished

Introduction:

The paper examines the sexual abuse in a minority community with reference to community conflicts.

Following an attack on a train in Godhra, Gujarat, on 27 February, 2002, in which allegedly 59 Hindus were killed, violence of unprecedented brutality targeting Muslims spread in the state and continued in the next three months. Accounts narrated by eyewitnesses, as well as by human rights activists, indicated that women in Gujarat were beaten up, stripped naked, gang raped, stabbed with iron or sticks. Many of them were mutilated, disfigured and then often burnt alive by nationalist groups. Police took insufficient action to protect the victims, while officers reportedly instigated attacks or even sexually assaulted and verbally abused the victims.

Analysis:

The women from minority community often become victims of sexual assault during community conflicts.

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA200102003?open&of=ENG-IND>

4. SPOUSAL ABUSE FACT SHEET

Introduction:

The paper explores the extent of Sexual Abuse in Canada and presents the comprehensive data on sexual abuse in Canada.

It has been difficult to obtain a complete picture of the full extent of spousal abuse in Canada because it often remains hidden. A person who is abused may endure the abuse for a long time before seeking support. Some victims never tell anyone about the abuse. A person who is being abused may be reluctant to talk or be unable to talk. They may be emotionally attached to the abusive partner or have strong beliefs about keeping their relationships or family together. They may fear that the abusers will retaliate or they may fear being stigmatized by others. The most complete information about the extent of spousal abuse in Canada comes from the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS). This victimization survey asked almost 26,000 women and men in Canada about their experiences of abuse including experiences of violence and emotional abuse in their current or previous marriages and common law partnerships. The survey found that violence experienced by women tended to be more severe and more often repeated than violence directed at men. Women are six times more likely to report being sexually assaulted, five times more likely to be choked, more likely to have sleeping problems, suffer depression or anxiety attacks or have lowered self esteem as a result of abuse. It was reported that providing sensitive, accessible and effective supports and services for individuals who are abused is essential.

Analysis:

The violence experienced by women is severe and more often repeated than violence directed at men. Women are six times more likely to report being sexually

assaulted. They may not tell about abuse due to various reasons.

<http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/fm/sposeafs.html>

5. Women and Violence

Introduction:

The paper explores sexual abuse as one of the most dismaying forms of violence against women which cut across cultural and religious barriers.

Violence affects the lives of millions of women world wide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of all forms, from domestic abuse and rape to child marriages and female circumcision. All are violations of the most fundamental rights. In a statement to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September, 1995, the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, said that the violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned. But he said that the problem continues to grow. The Secretary-General noted that domestic violence alone is on increase. Studies in 10 countries, he said, have found that between 17 percent and 38 percent of women have suffered physical assaults by a partner. In the Platform for Actions, the core document of the Beijing Conference, the government declared that “violence against women constitutes a violation of basic human rights and an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Some females fall prey to violence before they are born, when expectant parents abort their unborn daughters, hoping for a son instead. A preliminary report in 1994 by the special Rapporteur, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, focused on three areas of concern, where women are particularly vulnerable: in the family (including domestic violence, traditional practices, infanticide); in the community (including rape, sexual assault, commercialized violence such as trafficking in women, labor exploitation, female migrant worker etc.) and by the state (including violence against women in detention as well as violence against women in

armed conflict and against refugee women). In recent years a number of steps have been taken place, in 1991, the government of Canada announced a new four-year Family Violence Initiative intended to mobilize community action, strengthen Canada's legal framework, establish services on Indian reserves and develop resources to help victims and stop offenders, and provide housing for abused women and children.

Analysis:

Violence affects the lives of millions of women in all socio-economic classes and educational classes and takes a variety of forms. A number of steps have been taken place by the Government of Canada; however, a lot remains to be done.

www.un.org/rights/dpil1772e.htm

6. International Statistics

Introduction:

The paper explores and presents the international statistics on gender violence. It explores the circumstances and conditions under which women get raped.

A few statistics taken from the Fact Sheet on Gender Violence, published by the UN Non-Governmental Agency, UNIFEM, and available in the Sexual Assault Education office (2002) gives a broad outline of the prevalence and extent of abuse. Three studies of women who resisted assault revealed that 44% of 600 women were able to avoid rape and to deter the attacker. In 1985 a large national study of women who reported assaults was analyzed by researchers. They found that most of the survivors did resist in physical ways, and that their resistance did not increase the violence, rather it decreased the violence. Additional studies indicated that the individuals who resist immediately upon the onset of an assault (hence, the importance of understanding what assault is) have a higher success rate of escape/avoidance than those who do not resist or who wait until they are trapped and feel they cannot resist. Based on these studies, FIST (Feminists in Self-Defense Training, Olympia, WA) states that there are three times as many rape attempts as completed rapes. Most women in these studies only had to use verbal statements to avoid an assault. In the case of acquaintance assault (80% of all assaults), assertiveness and verbal resistance has been found to be highly effective as well. In the Maternity Hospital of Lima, Peru, 90% of young mothers, aged 12 to 16 years, have been raped by their father, stepfather or a close relative. In the US, a woman reports a rape to the police every 5 to 6 minutes. Researchers estimate that only 1/3 of rapes are by strangers and only 13% of all acquaintance rapes are reported to the police. 10-14% of all married women in the US and at least 40% of battered wives have been raped by their husbands. Island-wide random surveys of women on Barbados

revealed that nearly 1/3 have been sexually abused during childhood or adolescence. Every 1 1/2 minutes a women is raped in South Africa, where approximately 386,000 women are raped each year. 683,000 women are raped each year in the US according to the National Women’s Study. This translates to 1 every 3 minutes, 78 per hour, 1,871 per day. Of the 4,008 subjects in the study who were raped, 84 did not report the assault.

Analysis:

Women everywhere are living under the threat of rape perpetrated more by the people who are known to them, rather than by strangers. Violence was decreased for women who resisted the attack.

www.womenagainstrape.net/international_statistics.htm

7. Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Introduction:

The paper presents an overview of World Statistics on Sexual Abuse with special reference to America.

The World Statistics (2003-09-04) reflect that a women in America is raped every two minutes, 683,00 forcible rapes occur every year, which equals 56.916 per month; 1871 per day, 78 per hour and 1.3 per minute. At the opening session of an international conference on “Violence Against Women: Zero Tolerance”, organized by the Portuguese presidency in Lisbon, the European Commissioner stated: “Globally, men’s violence against women causes more deaths and disability among females aged 15-44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war. (Harvard Study, **the Global Burden of Disease**, 1996)

US Department of Justice, 1994

National Crime victimization survey, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Analysis:

There is a high incidence of sexual abuse in the world which is recognized; however, steps need to be taken to tackle this problem.

8. Violence against Women in India: Evidence from Rural Gujarat

Leela Visaria

Introduction:

The study explores women's education and its relationship with the violence in rural India with reference to health seeking behavior.

The study emerged from a larger project funded by the Ford Foundation in New Delhi that examined the relationship between women's education and health-seeking behavior. The data was collected through repeated visits to five villages in Kheda district of central Gujarat between May, 1993 and January, 1997. As part of the study, a baseline survey of the entire population was conducted to assess the socio-economic and health situation of the region. From this census, a statistically random sample of 450 currently married women with at least one child less than three years of age at the time was selected. The majority of these women were contacted twelve times in the span of three and a half years. The data instruments from the large study investigated the relationship between: Women's education and their autonomy; their health-seeking behaviors and management of illnesses suffered by their children; and their treatment-seeking behavior regarding their own gynecological problems. While exploring these issues, many of the women in the survey suggested that violence was an important indicator of women's autonomy and power within the household. This feedback led to a few exploratory focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. These were held to understand the broad parameters that could be explored in a community-based quantitative survey on violence. The insights gained were valuable in designing the survey, which was conducted between December, 1996 and January, 1997 in all five villages. The research suggested that, in the present-day Indian rural setting, solutions to much domestic violence must be found within the family setting and within the

community setting. Strategies that should be explored further are education of women and girls; gender-sensitive education directed at males; the formation of women's groups to minimize isolation and increase power; and the use of mass media to promote more balanced, healthy perceptions of male-female relationships. The results of this study, though limited by the lack of a multivariate analysis to establish the significance of factors, present a glimpse into both the severity and endemic nature of marital violence. The research also helps to increase the understanding of the social and economic pressures that limit the power and options of women in violent relationships. Understanding both immediate precipitating factors and underlying causes for abuse, as well as the structures that women feel comfortable tapping for support, provides a starting place for designing initiatives to counter violence. The ways in which correlates such as age, caste, education, and duration of marriage, are associated with different forms and factors is an important finding that can aid in informing context-specific efforts in domestic violence prevention and intervention.

Notes

1. The Amul dairy (Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation – GCMMF) is comprised of 10,183 village milk producers' cooperatives in Gujarat. This cooperative has 1.95 million members, produces 6 million liters of milk per day, and sold 455 million dollars worth of products in 1997-98. The sale of milk fetches cash income for the households.
2. These quotes are taken directly from field interviews. In order to protect the privacy of these individuals, no identifying information has been given.

9. Kinds of Violence against Sikh Women

Introduction:

This paper explores the varied forms of violence against Sikh Women.

Some females fall prey to violence before they are born, when expectant parents abort their unborn daughters, hoping for sons instead. In other societies, girls are subjected to such traditional practices as circumcision, which leaves them maimed and traumatized. Women become victims of incest, rape and domestic violence that often lead to trauma, physical handicap or death. The platform of action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women declared that rape in armed conflict is a crime and could, under any circumstances, be considered genocide. A preliminary report in 1994 by the special rapporteur, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, focused on three areas of concern where women are particularly vulnerable: in the family (including domestic violence, traditional practices, infanticide): in the community (including rape, sexual assault, commercialized violence such as trafficking in women, labor exploitation, female migrant workers, etc.) and by the state (including violence against women in detention as well as violence against women in situations of armed conflict and against refugee women).

Analysis:

Females have been subjected to discrimination even before they are born. They become victim of practices which leaves them traumatized. Three areas of concerns were identified where women are particularly vulnerable: in the family, in the community and by the state. www.sikhwomen.com/antiviolence/kinds.htm

10. Programs against Sexual Violence

Introduction:

The paper brings out the two types of sexual harassment in the work place.

The paper discusses two types of sexual harassment. Quid Pro Quo and Hostile Work Environment. The first one pertains to the fact that employment decisions for an employee are implicitly or explicitly based on an employee's acceptance or rejection of unwelcome sexual behavior. The Hostile Work Environment is created by unwelcome sexual or sex behavior that is offensive, hostile and/or intimidating and adversely affects an employee's ability to do his/her job.

Analysis:

There are two types of sexual harassment that happen in the work place which can be implicit and/or explicit. A hostile work environment can be created by unwelcome sexual behavior.

<http://www1.unm.edu/aurora/sexualharassmentbasicdefinition.ht>

11. Trafficking of women fuelled by poverty

Introduction:

The paper examines the sexual exploitation of children and women in the border district of North Bihar.

Times News Network, Monday, June 24, 2002, reported that trafficking in women and sexual exploitation of children seems to have increased phenomenally in the border district of North Bihar. According to the survey by a social outfit, Bhoomika Vihar, there are 3,250 sex workers in 24 brothels spread over 11 districts of Kishanganj, Kathihar, Purnia, Araria, Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Khagaria, Madhubani, Darbhanga, and Begusarai. These brothels, in fact, have developed as a “transit point for girl trafficking”. The intensive survey has specifically brought out how the changing dynamics of land holding, continual migration of farm laborers, and perennial ravages wreaked by floods accentuating poverty and unemployment, have compounded this problem.

Analysis:

The changing land dynamics of land holding, migration of farm laborers, floods, poverty, and unemployment are compounding the problem of sexual exploitation of children and women.

www.indiatimes.com

12. Sexual abuse as a contributory factor: Expanding on the development view of homosexuality

Introduction:

The paper examines the incidences and prevalence of sexual abuse and its impact on personality and/or sexual orientation.

Canadian statistics confirm the wide-spread incidence of sexual abuse: over 40% of females, and about 25% of males, were victims of at least one unwanted sexual act before adulthood. The damage that results is deep and wide, impacting on an individual in a number of significant ways. This damage can contribute to a homosexual orientation. There is a high correlation: New Direction finds that approximately 70% of those who seek help from them have been sexually abused. There are many ways in which sexual abuse can be a contributing factor to homosexuality. For both men and women, homosexuality can be a way of trying to gain a sense of personhood – masculinity or femininity, and to make up for destruction of the self from abuse. For example, abuse may have so beaten down a young girl that she has no sense of value as a person or of being a woman. She may look to women to find what she is missing and often this emotional longing is sexualized during puberty.

Analysis:

There is a link between sexual abuse and homosexual orientation. Sexual abuse can damage the individual personality and sexual abuse can be considered an important factor in the homosexual orientation of an individual.

www.newdirection.ca/a_abuse.htm

13. Sexual Abuse among Minority

Disclosures of Sexual Abuse by Puerto Rican Children: Oppression and Cultural barriers

Introduction:

The study explores the child sexual abuse in the minority community. Puerto Ricans were studied for the research project to gather information on sexual abuse.

Abstract:

The study is based on the child sexual abuse in the oppressed minority community in the United States. Low income Puerto Ricans were studied for the research project. Seven psychotherapists and five clients were interviewed systematically for this exploratory study. The participants were interviewed for 90 minutes each in English and/or Spanish using a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. Participants indicated that experiences of discrimination led some Puerto Rican children in the United States to mistrust and fear the organizations which are charged with protecting and caring for them, such as the schools, the police, the courts and the social service systems. In this study participants said they thought that this tendency to confide in family members and to generally mistrust outsiders stem from discrimination. With the extended family broken up by migration, many Puerto Rican children are cut off from their family members. Children are isolated from extended family members, friends and may find themselves with no one in whom they can confide. Several participants suggested that the general acceptance of corporal punishment gives offenders greater latitude in using physical violence or threat of physical violence to intimidate their victims into silence. Victims disclosed that they used to feel afraid as they would be physically punished by their parents. Participants described instances

where children were punished for speaking out. Shame has been identified as a factor that leads child and adult victims of sexual abuse to keep silent as Puerto Ricans place a high value on virginity. This preliminary study provided the systematic exploration of the contribution of cultural and societal pressure to the low rates of disclosure of sexual child abuse.

Analysis:

The study indicated that cultural and societal pressure contribute to the low rate of disclosure of child sexual abuse.

Fontes, Lisa A. (1993). Disclosures of Sexual Abuse by Puerto Rican Children: Oppression and Cultural Barriers. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 2.

14. Sexual Abuse among Asian Communities

Toward a Better Understanding of Child Sexual Abuse Among Asian Communities

Introduction:

The paper looked at the utility of child sexual abuse models in understanding the nature, extent and management of abuse in Asian families. Western models of child sexual abuse such as those with psychodynamic and systemic emphases were tested against the nature of abuse in Asian families as constructed by participants. Accepted models were found to be wanting, particularly in relation to their inability to take in to account the role expectation placed on Asian parents and children, and the structure of marriages in Asian communities.

Abstract:

This paper looks at the utility of western models of child sexual abuse in understanding the nature, extent and management of abuse in Asian families. The workshop arose out of the fact that child sexual abuse training packages offered within the country bore little relevance to the family lifestyles of the minority group. In addition, social workers themselves felt that their own practices could be enhanced if more appropriate models of assessment and intervention are developed. Five women and four men constituted the initial social worker's group of participants. The workshop proved useful to all concerned in that the main objective, that is exploration of more appropriate assessment and intervention tools in cases of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) among the Asian communities, was achieved. Western models of child sexual abuse such as those with psychodynamic and systemic emphases were tested against the nature of abuse in Asian families as constructed by participants. Accepted models were found to be

wanting, particularly in relation to their inability to take in to account the role expectation placed on Asian parents and children, the structure of marriages in Asian communities, the economic dependency of extended families on male earners, and the impact of racism on disclosure and help seeking particularly by women.

Analysis:

This paper looks at the utility of western models of child sexual abuse in understanding the nature, extent and management of abuse in Asian families. The workshop arose out of the fact that child sexual abuse training packages offered within the country bore little relevance to the family lifestyles of the minority group.

Mtezuka, Melody (1989). Towards a better understanding of child sexual abuse among Asian communities. Pp. 248-260.

15. Programs against Sexual Violence

Introduction:

The paper explores the various facets of sexual abuse with special reference to the impact of sexual abuse on a victim's world.

The paper explores various dimensions of sexual abuse. The common feelings of victim/survivors to the assault have been discussed in great details. Sexual assault is extremely traumatic and life changing. Victim/survivors frequently fear people and feel vulnerable even when going through the regular activities of life. They may find themselves not knowing whom to trust. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997, almost 75.5% of rape victims know their perpetrators. One in three sexual assault victims is under the age of 12 years. Forty-three percent are of age 6 years and younger, and 34% are aged 7-11 years. Victim/survivors may experience a variety of sexual concern after an assault. They may want no sexual contact whatsoever; they may need intimacy-stroking, nurturing, holding and not want to be sexual, or they may experience some confusion about separating sex from sexual abuse. Most victims feel guilty and ashamed about the assault feeling that they somehow may have provoked or asked for it or that they should have known what was going to happen, or that they shouldn't have trusted that assailant or they should have prevented that assault.

Analysis:

Victims/Survivors may experience a variety of sexual concerns after an assault. This may range from not wanting sexual contact to feeling guilty and myriad other feelings.

www.1.umn.edu/aurora/realmendontrape.html

16. SPH Prof reveals domestic abuse among South Asians in Boston

Introduction:

The paper explores the abuse among South Asian Community.

The survey conducted by Anita Raj in Boston revealed that 40 percent of the participants reported that they had been abused in some way by their partners, and 90 percent of these incidents had occurred within the past year. Among the abused women, about two thirds reported sexual abuse and almost one-third reported injuries, some requiring medical attention. It was further mentioned that domestic abuse is very pervasive and that there are culturally specific and immigrant specific issues that increase a women's vulnerability and affect her ability to seek help.

Analysis:

Domestic abuse is prevalent and there are immigrant and cultural specific issues intertwined with it.

<http://www.bu.edu/bridge/archive/2001/03-16/raj.html>

17. Prevent Trafficking of Women and Girls

Introduction:

The paper presents an overview of situations of women and children across the world with regard to trafficking. The comprehensive statistics were presented vis-à-vis the world and with reference to India on the situation of trafficking, affecting lives of millions of children and women across the world. The paper presented some of the important facts.

It was presented that nearly 2 million children are abused and trafficked globally every year. It is worldwide five billion dollar business. A large proportion of such trafficking takes place in South Asia. During to globalization -- induced poverty, more and more families are being forced or deceived into sending their women/girls into prostitution. New globalization -- induced poverty makes more and more families send their women/girls into prostitution. In India, 25% of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation are below 18 years. Nearly 5% of the women and girls engaged in prostitution are from Nepal and Bangladesh. Most of the women/girls who are trapped in this trade belong to socially/economically deprived classes.

Analysis:

The paper brought out some startling facts about trafficking, how wide-spread it is and how smoothly it runs with the involvement of some powerful segments of society. Girls from neighboring countries are brought to India from neighboring countries, including Nepal and Bangladesh and girls from India are sent to the Middle East and further abroad. India is served also as a transit country for women and girls trafficked from neighboring countries.

Keeping track of missing women/girls -- everyone has a responsibility, Joint
Women's Programme.

18. Are our Laws strong enough to deter the rapist?

Introduction:

The article presents the critical views on laws by two prominent women in Indian system, one a lawyer by profession, and the other a Joint Commissioner of Police.

The article stated that the procedural laws relating to rape are inadequate and need drastic change. It stressed that procedural laws need to be changed to make them more gender sensitive so that the victim can be interrogated and asked to give evidence without going through the trauma that she presently does. It was mentioned that the stigma attached to a rape victim delays her reporting of the crime. However, support given to the victim is critical in helping her. It was stressed that the processes of law are necessary for the implementation of the law. The processes in the law are: the victim, the complainant: eye witness: direct circumstantial and forensic evidence, etc. All of this requires collation, documentation, evaluation, and presentation before a court of laws for its trial, while keeping in view the rights of the accused. For punishment to occur, the law on rape has to have a cooperative victim, professional investigation, diligent prosecution and an expeditious trial. Any section of this chain that is weak results in an advantage to the rapist. Hence, it is not the law that fails, but the processes that fail.

Analysis:

The article presents that for a law to be effective it needs proper implementation where victim, investigation, and prosecution and trial all play an important part. Any part of this chain that becomes weak results in an advantage to the rapist.

Times of India. New Delhi, November 24, 2002 p.6.

The article presents a critical view of laws on rape. The views are those of two prominent women in the Indian legal system, one a lawyer by profession and the other a Joint Commissioner of Police.

19. India's Shame: 15,000 rapes a year

Introduction:

The articles bring out statistics with regard to rape and views on rape laws and implementation hurdles.

In Mohammed Habib vs. state, a rapist was allowed to go scot-free simply because there was no injury on his penis, indicating that the victim had resisted. However, the seven-year-old victim had a ruptured hymen and bite marks. On average there are more than 15,000 rapes every year in India. The National Crime Research Bureau figures indicate that the incidence of rape has increased from 15,330 in 1997 to 16,496 in 2000. An average case take 2-10 years in court. Only 20 percent of rape cases are reported. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar were identified as troubled states with high incidences of rape, while Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai were identified as cities with high incidences of rape.

Analysis:

The articles present how the victim does not get justice despite the high incidences of rape. The slow process of proceedings and low rate of conviction presents the challenge to everyone who claims for getting justice for the victim.

Times of India, New Delhi, November 24, 2002, p. 5.

20. Without My Daughter: Killing Fields of the Mind

Introduction:

The article presents the picture of unequal sex ratio in India. The comparisons among the various states and reasons for the low female to male sex ratio were brought out in the article.

The census commissioner, J.K. Banthia, has brought out with lightening speed the first set of provisional tables based on the decennial census of 2001. The data relates to population size, density, sex composition, literacy level and decadal growth rate. The most alarming finding is the sharp decline in the female/male (sex ratio) among children in the zero to six years of age as compared to the increase in the sex ratio of the total population. In 1991, the sex ratio for the total population was 927 females per 1,000 males; it increased to 933 in 2001, an increase of six points. In contrast, the sex-ratio of the child population (zero to six years age group) which was 945 in 1991 decreased to 927, a decrease of 18 points. It can be said that the girl child has lost out in spite of numerous programs, projects, seminars and conferences. Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat are called DEMARU states where D stands for daughters, E stands for elimination and MARU stands for killing. However, regardless of steps taken which prohibit the misuse of prenatal diagnostic techniques, it is more than clear that the law cannot be enforced unless the government hires thousands of private detectives. States like Gujarat and Maharashtra have also joined the ranks of Punjab and Haryana in the perverse practice of foeticide. Even in Uttaranchal, an offshoot of the erstwhile Uttar Pradesh, which is advanced in terms of the literacy rate (72 percent), the sex ratio has decreased by 42 points. In Maharashtra, it has decreased by 29 points. The unholy alliance between tradition (son complex) and technology (ultrasound) is playing havoc with Indian society. The mindless consumerism which is propagated 24 hours each day

on TV channels is helping in the process. Increased greed goes with the increasing dowry. The message for would-be parents is clear that the upbringing of a girl will cripple them financially. Hence, it is better to spend a few thousand rupees on the prebirth sex determination test and sex selective abortions rather than spends lakhs of rupees on a dowry after years of saving.

Analysis:

The article brought about revealing facts about some of the major causes of an uneven sex ratio in India. It was revealed that the traditional values favoring sons and modern techniques are the two most important factors contributing towards the low sex ratio of females.

Hindustan Times, 25 April 2001

21. Statement showing the existing provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Code for the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act and the amended recommendations by the Law Commission in its 172nd report.

Introduction:

The provisions have been taken from the Indian Penal Code, Code for Criminal Procedures and Evidence Act. These presents how the Indian law system operates with regards to sexual assault and what amendments are proposed in the existing provisions.

The existing provision on the Indian Penal Code says that a man is said to have committed “rape” who, except in the case hereinafter, has sexual intercourse with a women under circumstances falling under any of the six descriptions. First, against her will; secondly, without her consent; thirdly, with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any other person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt; fourthly, with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and consent has been given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is lawfully married; fifthly, with her consent, when at the time of giving such consent by the reasons of unsoundness of mind or intoxication through the administration by him personally or through another, of any stupefying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent; sixthly, with or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age. The amendments that have been suggested were that Sexual Assault means (1) penetrating the vagina (which term shall include the labia Majorca), the anus or urethra of any persons with any part of body of another person or with an object manipulated by another person, except when such penetration is carried out for proper hygienic or medical purposes; (2) manipulating any part of the body so as to cause penetration of the vagina (which term shall include the labia majorca), the anus or the urethra of the offender by any part of another person’s body; (3) introducing any part of the penis of a

person into the mouth of another person; (4) engaging in cunnilingus or fellatio or continuing sexual assault as defined above in circumstances falling under any of the six following descriptions given above. Committing rape shall be punished by a term which shall not be less than seven years but which may be for life or for a term which may extended to ten years and shall also be liable to fines, unless the woman raped is his own wife and is not under twelve years of age, in which case, he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description of term and may extend to two years or with a fine or with both.

Analysis:

The provision on rape brings out the gap in existing legislation and proposes amendments to fill the gap in order to address the issues related to ambiguities in existing legislation in Indian law system.

Recommendations:

#s	Analysis	Recommendations
1	<p>Analysis: Variations in culture and socio-economic conditions have a minimal impact on the incidences and the frequency of sexual abuse. Awareness and socio economic development may not be the solutions to the paradox of sexual violence.</p>	<p>Develop empowerment strategies for women which may be linked to awareness strategies.</p>
2	<p>Analysis: The incidence of sexual abuse is widely prevalent in the families both in developing and developed countries. However, it is largely hidden and denied as it is feared that admission of incidence will be an assault on its family integrity.</p>	<p>Develop social marketing, community development, health promotion, empowerment building strategies for the entire community.</p>
3	<p>Analysis: The women from minority community often become victim of sexual assault during the community conflicts.</p>	<p>Develop campaigns to educate the community that women’s rights are human rights.</p>
4	<p>Analysis: The violence experienced by women is severe and more often repeated than violence directed at men. Women are six times more likely to report being sexually assaulted. They may not tell about the abuse due to various reasons.</p>	<p>Provide sensitive, accessible and effective supports and services for individuals who are abused.</p>
5	<p>Analysis: Violence affects the lives of millions of women in all socio economic classes and educational classes and takes a variety of forms. A number of steps have been taken place by the Government of Canada; however, much remains to be done.</p>	<p>Mobilize the community, enhance the understanding of Canada’s legal framework, establish culturally appropriate services, and develop resources to help victims and stop offenders.</p>
6	<p>Analysis: Women everywhere are living under the threat of rape which is more by the people who are known rather than from strangers. Violence was decreased for women who resisted the attack.</p>	<p>Assertiveness and verbal resistance training to be organized for young girls and women.</p>

7	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>There is a high incidence of sexual abuse in the world which is recognized, however, steps need to be taken to tackle this problem.</p>	<p>Develop general awareness campaigns about the issue of sexual abuse.</p>
8	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>Violence was an important indicator of women's autonomy and power within the household. The research suggests that in the present Indian rural setting, solutions to much of domestic violence must be found within the family setting and within the community setting. Strategies which need to be further explored are the education of women and girls; gender-sensitive education directed at males; the formation of women's groups to minimize isolation and increase power; and the use of mass media to promote more balanced, healthy perceptions of male-female relationships.</p>	<p>Develop health-promotion strategies in a holistic manner (pertaining to the entire family) to educate the South Asian community regarding the issue of sexual violence against women.</p>
9	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>Females have been subjected to discrimination even before they are born. They become a victim of practices which leaves them traumatized. Three areas of concerns were identified where women are particularly vulnerable: in the family, in the community and by the state</p>	<p>Develop education, health promotion and prevention programs in the families and communities.</p>
10	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>There are two types of sexual harassment that happen in the work place which can be implicit and/or explicit. A hostile work environment can be created by unwelcome sexual behavior.</p>	<p>Develop an awareness about women workers rights about sexual harassment at the place of work.</p>
11	<p>Analysis:</p> <p>The changing land dynamics of land holding, migration of farm laborers, floods, poverty, and unemployment are compounding the problem of sexual exploitation of children and women.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

12	<p>Analysis: There is a link between sexual abuse and homosexual orientation. Sexual abuse can damage the individual personality and sexual abuse can be considered an important factor for homo-sexual orientation of individuals.</p>	<p>Educate women to seek help after she has been victimized so that “healing and recovery” can occur.</p>
13	<p>Analysis: The study indicated that that cultural and societal pressure contribute to the low rate of disclosure of child sexual abuse.</p>	<p>Develop a community development framework where the “trust” between various service providers and the South Asian community could be established in the areas of sexual abuse of women.</p>
14	<p>Analysis: This paper looks at the utility of western models of child sexual abuse in understanding the nature, extent and management of abuse in Asian families. The workshop arose out of the fact that child sexual abuse training packages offered within the country bore little relevance to the family lifestyles of the minority group.</p>	<p>There is a need to develop models to deal with child sexual abuse which will take into consideration the needs of Asian families.</p>
15	<p>Analysis: Victims/survivors may experience a variety of sexual concern after an assault. This may range from not wanting sexual contact to feeling guilty and myriad other feelings.</p>	<p>Educate South Asian community about the “effects” of sexual abuse on a victim/survivor.</p>
16	<p>Analysis: The article outlines that “domestic abuse is very pervasive and that there are culturally specific and immigrant specific issues that increase a women’s vulnerability and affect her ability to seek help.”</p>	<p>Domestic abuse also incorporates sexual abuse and more awareness, education, and treatment must be developed for “abused women” in a culturally appropriate manner.</p>

17	<p>Analysis: The paper brought out some startling facts about trafficking, how wide spread it is and how smoothly it runs with the involvement of some powerful segments of society. Girls from neighboring countries are brought to India from neighboring countries including Nepal and Bangladesh and girls from India are sent to the Middle East and further abroad. India is served also as a transit country for women and girls trafficked from neighboring countries. Keeping track of missing women/girls -- everyone has a responsibility, Joint Women’s Programme.</p>	N/A
18	<p>Analysis: The article presents the view that for a law to be effective it needs proper implementation where victim, investigation, and prosecution and trial all play an important part. Any part of this chain that becomes weak results in an advantage to the rapist.</p>	<p>The women must be educated in the legal system which pertains to “sexual abuse” and prosecution.</p>
19	<p>Analysis: The articles present how the victim does not get justice despite the high incidences of rape. The slow process of proceedings and low rate of conviction presents the challenge to everyone who claims for getting justice for the victim.</p>	N/A
20	<p>Analysis: The article brought about revealing facts about the some of the major causes of an uneven sex ratio in India. It was revealed that the traditional values favoring sons and modern medicine techniques are the two most important factors contributing towards the low sex ratio of females.</p>	<p>Educate the South Asian community about uneven sex ratio and “traditional values”.</p>
21	<p>Analysis: The provision on rape brings out the gap in existing legislation and proposes amendments to fill the gap in order to address the issues related to ambiguities in existing legislation in Indian law system.</p>	N/A

CHAPTER 7

Interviews in detail

Interview of the participant No.1

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please discuss?

It is a forced touch without consent. It can happen at home, outside places and at a doctor's clinic. The doctor while doing check-ups, touches the breast hard and takes advantage of the situation.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women and in your opinion are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada?

Yes, in 1987 when she was taking driving lessons, the instructor used to move his hands on to her legs. He took her to his home and tried to kiss her and touched her breast. She did not tell anyone anything because she may be blamed or she may not be believed. She also felt scared and fearful. She did not want to make a scene. She did not know how her husband would react.

When she was 13 years old and went to her grandparent's home in India, her maternal uncle used to force her to hold his penis under the blanket and used to hold her hands. She was sacred and shy and could not tell anyone about it, fearing that a fight would break out. She knew something was wrong but chose not to get her parents involved.

When she was in grade 10, her teacher touched her breast and she could not speak about it to anyone. The teacher was a friend of the family. How could she "badmouth him"?

3. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

When she came to Canada, her father-in-law while sitting at the dining table held her hand under the dining table. Her husband used to do the morning shifts and her father-in-law used to work the night shift. The father-in-law used to take advantage of the situation and used to kiss her and call her in the room, and once forced her to lie on him.

The father-in-law also used to take advantage of the situation of one more girl in the family who was his friend's relative. When the woman tried to tell her husband, the father-in-law asked the son to ask his wife. The women in hesitation and shyness could not tell anything to her husband. The women also reported one more incident in which she told about their relative's tenants. The man developed a relationship with the tenant lady who was unable to conceive. The child was born and he resembled the man. The husband of the lady did not know about it. But when the child grew up, someone told him that his real father was the land owner of their house. After this finding, he left the home for India and never came back.

4. What stops women from telling their 'stories' or 'experiences'?

Shyness, a quiet personality, fear of fights, influential and powerful abusers are some of the reasons that stop women from telling about their plight.

5. How would you describe the experience the Punjabi women have with the legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

One woman told about her own experience in which she went to police when her husband started abusing her daughters. The police were video taping everything and at the end said that it was not enough proof to charge the person with the crime. It was very humiliating to be videotaped and then to be told that the evidence is not enough to press charges.

6. What myths and facts do you think surround sexual abuse in Punjabi Community?

Punjabi women think that sexual intercourse is sexual abuse. They attribute other aspects of abuse to man's nature.

7. What impact does sexual abuse have on victim's world?

Mental stress, fear of men, nervousness and losing trust are some of the outcomes of sexual abuse. The woman reported that she has become very worried and protective about her daughters and don't trust anyone. Even her daughters have difficulty in trusting people.

8. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

PCHC should make women aware about the sexual abuse component and should inform people on how to save children from abuse. Support groups for women, and places for her to express herself and obtain information should be formed.

Information should be provided in both Hindi and Punjabi.

9. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

Counseling services in both Hindi and Punjabi are required.

10. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

She did not answer.

Remarks

The woman experienced sexual assault by both her family members and strangers.

The sexual abuse of women also happens in Canada.

The participant was sexually abused but her perception was that “it is good that he did not rape me”. This clearly reflects the impact abuse has on her; it is distorting her perceptions and generating feelings of minimization and denial. The interview clearly brought out the fact that women do get abused by their own family members. In this case it was her uncle who abused her when she was young and then her father-in-law after marriage.

At the same time, it is reflected through this interview that the law doesn't provide women with sufficient support. The woman stated that the police would not lay charges against the husband because of insufficient evidence of alleged abuse against her daughter.

Interview 2

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

When somebody forces you, pressurizes you and troubles you to have sex, that is sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The respondent said that she hasn't heard about the term in Punjab but after reaching Canada she can understand it. She said that now she can relate it to the incidences that happened in Punjab as sexual abuse. She mentioned about the incidence that happened with her neighbor when she was in grade eight. The girl used to go to her uncle's (Taya⁴ Ji) house to get sweets. The uncle was her father's elder brother. After some time, the girl became fat and stopped going to school. It was later found out that the girl became pregnant. The parents took the girl to get her abortion in a nearby town, Chandigarh. The family broke the relations with the uncle but no legal action was taken. The girl's family started neglecting the girl and blamed her for this happening. However, the girl's uncle went unscathed as he was a big businessman. He often used to sexually abuse women from poor neighborhoods.

Once the 11-year-old daughter of his employee came to drop off goods on behalf of her father. He sexually abused the girl. When the girl went back home, her salwaar⁵ was filled with blood. She told her mother about the incident and they reported it to police. The case was filed and he got prosecuted. He was also

⁴ Taya – In Hindu and Punjabi community, the elder brother of father is called Taya.

⁵ Salwar* - It is Indian dress mostly worn in northern India. It is the lower half worn with the kameez and duppatta.

socially ostracized by the neighborhood. He was socially punished by the people in the community by “giving him ride on a donkey with the garland of shoes⁶”.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada and to what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada.

Yes, there are many such cases happening in Canada. The woman mentioned about the incident at her work place. The supervisor used to give unmarried girls overtime if they agreed to have a sexual relationship with him. The girl became pregnant. The supervisor also approached the single mother and asked her about the overtime. The woman warned him that if he asked her that again, she would complain to the manager. The man used to give lecherous looks to the women employees working there.

4. What stops women from telling these ‘stories’ or ‘experiences’?

It will create problems for them in getting married. The family will lose respect, and they will be socially ostracized. These factors prevent them from discussing these issues.

5. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

The respondent has no knowledge.

6. What myths and facts do you think surround sexual abuse in Punjabi Community?

She was quiet and could not answer.

7. What impact does sexual abuse have on a victim’s world?

The person becomes depressed and gloomy. Nobody loves her. She has difficulty in trusting people. At the end the respondent said that “it is destiny which is to blame”.

⁶ In India, this is a method employed to bring “shame” to a person.

8. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

Something needs to be done. Awareness should be brought to women that PCHC can be approached and can provide help in such cases.

9. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

Awareness needs to be developed for this issue.

10. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

The respondent could not answer for this.

Remarks:

The woman's experience reflected that women in India as well in Canada are facing sexual abuse. The experience of the woman again brought into light that woman get abused not only by the strangers but by the people they know. In the story of the little girl shared by the respondent, the girl got abused by her uncle and the girl was blamed for it. The story also brought into light that working women also face abuse at the hand of their supervisors and colleagues. Hence, sexual abuse is prevalent but, due to a lack of proper reporting, it goes unrecorded.

Interview 3

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

To see in a lecherous way, making unsuitable gestures and comments, to touch a person, giving remarks in front of a college and school gate are all sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard about the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

Yes, the respondent quoted two incidents that happened in Punjab. The servant in their house was raped by the owner of the house by taking her to the farmhouse. The owner's relation to the respondent was not disclosed in the interview. In another case, the woman was married to a military officer. They had a child from the marriage. The husband died in the war and the woman with her child went to live with her father after her own mother passed away. There she developed an illicit relation with the servant. One day the girl's father came to know about her daughter's relation with the servant. The father asked his daughter to have illicit relations with him instead of the servant. It was common knowledge in the village that both father and daughter were having sexual relations. Some people in the village felt that the father was taking advantage of his daughter's misfortune.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada and to what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused?

The respondent gave her own experience. According to her, her husband used to come back from work and would immediately demand sex from her. After having sex, he would again ask her to massage his legs. During the massage, he would again have sex with her despite her objections. She still believes that she felt raped.

Her husband continued to have sex with her even when she was pregnant.

As a result of "forced" sex, the respondent believed she got three miscarriages.

Her first miscarriage was when she was pregnant for month and a half. The second miscarriage was when she was pregnant for about two months and the third time the miscarriage happened when she was in her fifth month of the pregnancy. She gave birth to a baby boy after she resisted having sex during pregnancy. But, the child was born premature, she felt that this happened because of her husband's continued physical abuse.

Once the husband was having sex and the baby started crying. The man put the baby on the women's breast and continued having sex. He even continued having sex when his parents were inquiring why the child was crying. In the beginning she did not know that this is rape. She felt that it is the women's duty to "satisfy" her man's sexual needs and desires. She only knew that something is not right but never imagined that she was being raped.

The participant said, "thank God" someone is finally hearing my concerns and feelings. Now I can muster some strength to maybe soon find the courage to leave him for good.

4. What stops women from telling their stories or experiences?

Shame and insult that women will face pose an hindrance in disclosing abuse.

5. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and judiciary)?

The system requires details and giving out the details becomes a difficult task and makes women uneasy.

6. What myths and facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi Community?

Women are not treated equally, and are treated like objects without feelings.

Moreover they are blamed by family and society for no fault of theirs.

7. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

The victims become frightened, their futures seem bleak, and they cannot trust others.

8. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

Women should be given sexual education, contraceptive education and should be empowered especially physically so that she cannot be abused.

9. What support mechanism do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

They should be helped to deal with the trauma.

10. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

Once a woman has been abused, it will be difficult for her to forget about it.

However, education needs to be provided to women.

Remarks:

The interview brought into light that women get sexually abused by their own husbands. Often women may not even know that forced sex is rape.

The interview also highlighted how men take advantage of other women (even their own daughters).

Shame and insult were the two main factors that were identified by the woman which inhibited her to share her experiences.

Interview 4

1. What is sexual abuse?

The respondent said that giving an ugly look, touching a person without consent, and having intercourse is all sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

Respondent said that she has heard about a number of cases in Punjab and that she herself has been abused many times. She shared her experience when she was fourteen years old. She told that once she had developed a stuffy nose. When her mother took her to the doctor, the doctor used to take her to the examination room and he used to examine her breasts and lips and used to touch her. When her mother asked doctor to accompany her daughter, he used to refuse to let her come in with the girl. The mother highly regarded the doctor and had a lot of appreciation for him. The doctor used to be very caring and friendly towards the mother. The doctor had created a very respectful image in front of the mother. Therefore, as a young girl, she could not tell her mother anything.

When she was 13-14 years old, she went to her sister's house as her sister was pregnant. Her sister's father-in-law, created conditions to be alone with her and then kissed her on the lips. He used to threaten the girl that if she shared this secret, he would make sure that they "divorce" the sister.

When her mama⁷ used to come to their house, he used to touch her and her sister in a 'wrong way' which was inappropriate and unacceptable. When she tried to tell her mother, she was rebuked as her mother trusted and loved her brother.

⁷ Mama is Punjabi means mother's brother.

Every time when he used to visit, he used to bother her and touch her private parts.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada and to what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

(Respondent answered for Question 3 and Question 4 simultaneously)

Respondents gave affirmative answer for it. She mentioned that when her husband is driving a taxi, his friends often try to sexually abuse women. She also mentioned that supervisors in various factories are often trying to sexually abuse women who are vulnerable. She explained that some women need to show income for immigration purposes and request the supervisor for overtime. The supervisor then uses the vulnerability to sexually abuse her.

The woman shared another experience in Canada. Her best friend migrated to Canada with her husband. The best friend's husband called her to his place and when she reached the house, she found that he was alone at home. Her friend was not there. He then asked her to come to the room on the pretence of showing her something. As soon as she entered the room, he grabbed her and threw her on the bed and then raped her. After raping her, he said not to worry that nobody will come to know about this incident. As soon as he went to the washroom, she ran away from the house and to date never went to his house again. She broke all contact with him and her best friend. Her best friend doesn't know about this incident.

4. What stops women from telling their 'stories' or 'experiences'?

Shame and fear that marriages will fall apart are some of the hurdles that stop women from sharing their experiences. The respondent herself quoted that she is

sharing her experiences for the first time and does not want her name to get disclosed and this information to reach her husband.

5. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with the legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

The legal system is not victim friendly. The women are already in pain and the system requires her to go into detail. This in itself leads to more pain as she has to go through that experience again. The guidelines in law are not victim friendly and are strict. One is supposed to go without shower; they ask for witnesses and all this further traumatizes the victim.

6. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

The community blames women, stating that it was their fault. They think that women have asked for it. It is very much prevalent in the family.

7. What impacts does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

Respondent said that the victim become confused, nervous, sad, depressed and blames herself. The traumatic experience can result in sleeping problems. The respondent shared her own experiences about how she developed sleeping and eating problems. She would later on also develop stomach pain (cramps) and she no longer wanted to be near any man. The slightest touch would trigger uncomfortable memories and flashbacks. She started to blame herself. She could not look at her body and went into depression. She is now very protective of her daughter. She still is very angry and bitter about the experience.

She said she felt relieved after disclosing this traumatic incident.

8. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

PCHC could organize support groups. The purpose of the support group would be to provide a “listening platform”, a space where women could “vent out”.

PCHC could raise awareness about sexual abuse. She commented that sexual abuse by known family members (men) is more prevalent than sexual abuse of Punjabi women by strangers.

9. What support mechanism do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

PCHC should partner with a mainstream agency to create a “space” where women can meet. This should be a secret place and no man should be able to find this place.

PCHC should help women to overcome the trauma associated with sexual abuse.

PCHC should take upon itself the responsibility to provide education to abused Punjabi women, Women need to know their rights and how they can protect themselves.

10. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

The respondent said that this issue can never be destigmatized; it is a painful reality for those who have gone through this hurtful traumatic experience. Women often do not disclose because they do not know how the husband or the family would react.

Just imagine, a woman has been raped. She comes home and informs husband that she has been raped. What if she is not supported by the husband?

What if he decides to “dump her”? Where will she go? What would her family say then?

Even parents would have difficulty supporting their daughter. She commented that “In the Punjabi community, parents will not allow her to press charges. They will be more interested in “saving their face” rather than “seeking justice”. The culture still prefers to keep these experiences “hidden”. She reiterated that myths also contribute for the suffering to continue in silence.

She mentioned that she has gone through many bad experiences but it is the first time that she has discussed these incidences. She felt strongly that people WILL stop talking to her, if these issues were ever divulged.

Remarks:

The interview again brought into light that women and girls get sexually abused by their uncles, and other men who are known to the victim. The sexual assaults occur at any place, their own house or someone else’s house or even in a doctor’s office. Usually these “men” are held in high esteem by the family or the community. Females often could not share their experiences due to fear of not being trusted and being blamed for the act.

The cultural practices, norms and traditions perpetuate the silence of the victims.

It was observed during the interview that this woman had clearly “gone through hell” and was still reluctant to fully disclose the extent of her violations. She repeatedly was making sure that we would not be divulging her name in any shape or form. She still thought that her “reputation” in her in-laws family would be tarnished and feared that her husband would not be supportive.

She did not want to seek any professional help this time. She was open to informal “listening” sessions.

Interview of 5

1. What is your understanding of Sexual abuse, Please describe?

The respondent mentioned that unwanted touching, showing obscene photographs, and making gestures apart from forcing a person for sex, are all forms of sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The respondent said that she had heard about many sexual abuse cases which happened to Punjabi women in India. She mentioned about the rape of a medical student at one of the prestigious college in Delhi. There was an old fort behind the college and the girl was going towards her home and suddenly two boys came from behind and took her to the fort and raped her. This incident was given a lot of attention and the culprits were caught and punished. This happened because the girl's parents were very rich and the girl was admitted to the hospital.

Lots of teasing and molestation happens on the street. She mentioned about her own experiences that when she traveled in buses she had to be very careful as men tried to touch her and rub their penis against her body.

Respondent mentioned about a number of cases in Punjab too. She mentioned that in Punjab, lots of poor and low caste women become victims of sexual abuse. They often get molested and raped by higher caste men. She quoted the incident of her uncle in Punjab, whom she, herself, has seen misbehaving with the servant. He held the hands of the girl and was not letting her do the cleaning. The respondent said that she was passing by and saw that accidentally. She could not tell this to her mother or anyone because she was shocked at her uncle's behavior.

3. **In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada.**
4. **To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?**

(The respondent answered for question 3 and 4 simultaneously)

Respondent said that in Canada a man undergoes several marriages – This is also abuse against women in general. How could men so freely “dump” women and go back to get remarried. The respondent quoted her own experience that she has witnessed. The respondent’s uncle has undergone three marriages. Her uncle started to have an affair with his wife’s relative. When his wife found out, he divorced her. He then went to India and got married and sponsored his second wife. He subsequently threw her out and married the third time. The marriage only lasted a few months and he is now living in a common-law relationship with his first wife.

She also knew about an incident where a so-called uncle sexually abused his niece. And, when this poor girl informed the parents, they blamed her for dressing provocatively and seducing him. She has run away from home many times. In factories, supervisors exploit women. They abuse women and want sexual favors in exchange for overtime.

She also mentioned about men from the in-law’s family sexually abusing women. Men know that women will not disclose their inappropriate behaviors.

5. **What stops women from telling their ‘stories’ or ‘experiences’?**

There is a feeling of shame and often women are held responsible by claiming that they must be dressed in a provocative way or did something that led to this situation. The parents often feel that there would be problems in their daughter’s marriage, if incidents come to light.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

Police only look at the case from a legal point of view. What is needed is to display some human touch and feelings. They go into so many details which become further tormenting and hurtful for the victim. However, she said, that she does not know much about it but has heard that police is efficient but lacks a human touch.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

They believe that for a family's and girl's respect, these incidences should not be discussed and, if something has happened to the girl, they try to suppress and hide it. The girl's emotional state does not mean much to them. They are more worried about their family's reputation. Marriage is considered an important issue and they feel that, if an unmarried girl is sexually abused, she would have difficulty getting married. To discuss sex is still taboo in most of Punjabi families and they will not open up easily on this issue.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

The victim loses trust, becomes fearful and may have problems in developing relationships with the opposite sex. She may feel guilty and helpless for what has happened.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

PCHC should provide spaces for victims to discuss about it in a non-confronting way. They should develop programs to make the community aware about such issues and to destigmatize this issue.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

They need a place where they can go, ventilate their fears and feelings and can seek help. The community requires awareness on this issue. There needs to be an effort to make people aware about it.

11. How can we destigmatize this issue?

It will be a difficult task as it is a sensitive issue. However, through awareness, discussions and through mass media this can be taken up. Women's support groups, in which women help other women, can be formed. Empowerment of women should be taken up through education and employment so that they don't feel helpless.

Remarks:

The interview brought to light how women get abused in the name of the marriage. Punjabi men end up going to India to get married over and over again. The women are always under the threat that their husbands may leave and get married to other women. Lack of awareness and information makes women vulnerable to be exploited.

The interview also brought forward the level of workplace harassment of women. There seems to be consistent messages from women of being sexually harassed at the place of work.

During the interview, the respondent was active and did not feel inhibited from sharing her experiences. She strongly raised the need for steps that need to be taken up in this direction.

Interview of participant 6

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

To force women for sex and bring disgrace to women, to put pressure on her for sex, comprises sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada?

(The respondent answered both of these questions simultaneously)

The respondent answered that it happens to women from all cultures. This happens everywhere because a woman is considered weak and powerless and, hence, she get exploited by men. The respondent mentioned that she has heard of a lot of sexual abuse cases in Punjab. In Punjab, when women go to the farms to give food to her spouse or her father, she often becomes a victim of rape by the landlords and rich zamindars⁸.

Men in crowded places and in market places often indulge in inappropriate behavior. For example, they will rub their hands on a woman's body, will open their zippers in front of them, and pinch her on her behind, etc. The respondent shared her own experience of once, when she was in market place with her friend, a man opened his zipper, grabbed the hand of her friend and rubbed her hand on his penis. The respondent's friend went into a state of shock and became unconscious for a few minutes.

Once, when she was traveling in a bus, a man inserted his finger in her lower back private part. When she shouted at him, passengers in the bus started

⁸ Rich landholders in rural India.

laughing at her. The respondent further stated that Punjabi men are very lecherous; they oogle at even fully dressed women.

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

The respondent was not aware about sexual abuse cases in Canada, although she said that it must be happening because everywhere women get abused, irrespective of the culture.

5. What stops women from telling their ‘stories’ or ‘experiences’?

The women think that this will bring disgrace to her and her family, therefore, for the sake and respect of her family, she doesn't disclose of anyone. This can also make others feel that a woman is a whore and is characterless.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with the legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

The police in Punjab have a bad reputation. The respondent shared the experience of her friend who was raped and when she went to report to police, the police officials further raped her. These bad experiences with police results in creating negative experiences of police and, therefore, women don't trust the police.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi Community?

Often the community thinks that women must have done something to “provoke” the abuse.

Sexual abuse is a ‘sign’ which people will never forget and every time they see her they would remind her of this abuse, it is better to not disclose at all.

God forbid, if an unmarried woman is sexually assaulted – the community would make sure that every one knows about the loss of her “virginity”, rather than the “pain” and “hurt” she has encountered. There have been cases where a woman

and her children have been “teased” for decades for being “raped”. It is no wonder that women don’t report these “crimes”.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim’s world?

The women get into shock and can become depressed. Often the woman finds it difficult to continue with day to day life. Eating and sleeping disorders can also occur. Many have attempted suicide and find it very difficult to live.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

The respondent suggested that support groups should be formed, where women can go and discuss and ventilate their feelings without any fear.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

Awareness on this issue should be provided; support groups should be formed. Women should be educated that help is available where they can go and seek help.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

The respondent mentioned that this issue may never be destigmatized. It is deeply rooted in patriarchy. Men should be the ones who should take it upon themselves to “socially boycott” those men who sexually abuse women. Men should support women when they are sexually abused.

Remarks:

The interview revealed the important fact that bad experiences of police in India often inhibit women from sharing her plight with police.

In addition, cultural factors and societal pressures inhibit women from sharing their experiences. Often women are blamed in one way or another for “putting themselves” in a situation, whereby they are sexually assaulted.

The feelings of pain and anger were evident when this respondent was describing her experiences. It was clearly visible that this woman had strong feelings about this issue. She felt that destigmatization may not work in the community. She commented that culture places women in subordination whereby men take advantage. She stated strongly that a woman who is sexually abused cannot get respect and generations that follow remember this.

Interview 7

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

The participant responded that inappropriate touching, indulging in inappropriate behavior and forcing or threatening a person to have sex are all different forms of sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The respondent gave an affirmative answer. She said a lot of sexual abuse happens in Punjab especially in rural areas. The women and young girls get abused by rich landlords. When they go to farms, they get molested and raped by the rich landlords and their sons. When one is traveling in buses or is in a crowded market place, women often become victims of harassment and even teasing. Men often rub against their body, pinch them on their backs or other parts.

She shared that very often in the market places she has been pinched on her back. She further said that the low sex ratio of females to males is reflective of the fact that females get abused even before they are born.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada?

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

(The respondent answered for them simultaneously)

The respondent said that lot of Punjabi women get abused in Canada. She shared an experience of her relative who was married in Canada. The boy brought a girl from Punjab to Canada, stayed with her for some time, then left her and got married to another woman.

She shared one more experience of her very good friend, who was married to a boy in Canada. In the first night, the boy abused her physically and told her that

he was married against his parent's wishes. He used to physically abuse her every day until the girl left the place.

The respondent said that lot of Punjabi girls who get married in Canada have to go through an ordeal of negative experiences. The Non-Resident Indian (NRI) boys abuse women as they know that girls in Punjab are eager to settle in Canada. They exploit the situation and often girls end up getting abused.

She shared her own experience when she visited Canada for the first time. She was 16 years old at that time. Her Father's friend took them for lunch and there while taking the photograph, he stood next to her and put his hand across the girl for the photograph and pinched her breast. She was in shock and could not even disclose this to her own mother. Once she recovered from the shock, she thought that her disclosure would result in a fight between the families. She has never gone to that uncle's place since and neither has she spoken about it to any one.

5. What stops women from telling their stories or experiences?

Women fear that their in-laws and their husbands would leave them or divorce them. Their families and relatives would blame them and they will lose the support of relatives and the community. Women who have been abused would not receive positive support. Many times women get blamed for dressing in provocative clothes or blamed for bringing the situation on to them.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

A lot of women cannot speak English and they have no idea of how the system will treat them. Their fear of the consequences of discussing their matters with

strangers often inhibits them from sharing their experiences. The respondent said that she didn't have any personal experience with the police.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

People think that if women have been sexually abused or raped and, if this gets disclosed, it will bring a bad name and shame to the family. She will become an easy target of everyone's comments. People will not let her survive and she will become a topic of discussion in gatherings. Therefore, in order to save oneself from being ridiculed, people vigorously tend to hide the incidences of sexual abuse.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

It shatters the life of the victim; it leaves a mark which cannot be erased. She loses trust in relationships; she feels rejected and, should her marriage fall apart as a result of the sexual abuse, she would be devastated.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

PCHC should take steps to empower women so that they can raise their voice against injustice done to them. Support groups and places should be provided to women where they can go and discuss freely about their experience and give ventilation to their feelings. PCHC should not only educate women about their rights but should spread awareness at the community level about sexual abuse.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

They need a place where they can be given information and counseling regarding sexual abuse.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

This issue is highly sensitive and it will take an enormous amount of time and awareness to destigmatize this issue. Radio and television can be used as a medium to hold talk shows.

Remarks:

The interview once again pointed towards the fact that women in Punjab get exploited when Punjabi men from Canada marry them. The men bring them to Canada and, if these women do not meet their expectations, they get exploited and used. The woman lives under constant threat of being “dumped” by him. This fear is often “exploited” by these men.

The girls and women often get sexually assaulted by their uncles and people whom they know but, due to fear and societal factors, they are unable to disclose their experiences to any one.

During the interview, it was observed that initially the respondent was calm while giving the interview but became angry at certain points. She was unable to hold her self and lost her control. She voiced her opinion very strongly at the end when inquired about the support mechanisms required for sexually abused women. It was clearly evident that she feels strongly about the support mechanisms that are required for women.

Interview 8

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

The participant responded that it is inappropriate touching, indulging in inappropriate behavior, speaking against women's honor and threatening or forcing a person to have sex.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The participant responded that a lot of sexual abuse happens in Punjab. Rich men in Punjab have an easy access to poor and vulnerable woman. When a low caste woman or poor woman goes to work at a farm, she often gets raped by the landlords. When they go for cleaning the houses of rich men, they get harassed and raped.

The respondent said that, since because women are considered inferior in the Punjabi culture, it may explain the reason for their abuse. Just look at the sex ratio of men versus women in Punjab. Males outnumber women in Punjab.

The respondent, however, could not give specific incident of abuse but said that it is highly prevalent in Punjab and women from the lower strata are most vulnerable.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada.

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

(The respondent answered for them simultaneously)

The respondent said that lot of Punjabi women get abused in Canada. She shared an experience of a family friend who got divorced twice and got himself married to a woman whom he used to love earlier. He got the woman divorced and, after

staying with the women for some time, he left his third wife and went to stay with his first wife. At the age of 55, he still roams around with women.

The respondent shared another incident of a man who went to Punjab and got himself married to a girl against the wishes of the girl's parents. When the two of them came to Canada, he started abusing the girl. He puts ghungroo⁹ on the girl's feet and makes her dance in the night for himself. The girl is traumatized by the incident but she thinks that she cannot do anything as she married against her parent's wishes and cannot go back to her parents.

5. What stops women from telling their stories or experiences?

Women sometimes believe that it is their own fault. When they get married against their parents' wishes, they feel that they cannot go back. Sometimes they wonder what people would say if they came to know about it. Hence, stigma often inhibits them from telling their experiences.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with the legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

The respondent said she is completely unaware about experiences of Punjabi women with police and judiciary.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

People blame women for everything. They blame the character of the girl by making remarks that she must have done something to provoke the attack. They would hold the woman responsible, if her husband decides to "dump" her for another woman. They talk about it and use it as gossip to discuss with their friends.

⁹ Ghungroo means "ankle bracelets which "call girls" wear in India.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

The women feel suffocated, have no life, go into depression and may commit suicide. She becomes like a dead body.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

Women must be made aware about their rights, policies and programs available for their support. They must be educated and made aware about their rights.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

The respondent could not answer for it.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

It is possible but a difficult task. The efforts should be made in order to destigmatize this issue. Seminars should be held to teach men about the pain and suffering they put women through by their inappropriate behaviors.

Remarks:

This interview again brought into light the fact that new immigrant women who hail from Punjab are at risk of sexual abuse. The man often exploits her sexually and after "using her" leaves her to get married to another woman. The woman is under the constant pressure to satisfy him and indulges in all sorts of sexual practices to satisfy him.

The respondent during the interview remained calm and composed and answered the questions patiently. When sharing the experiences of women, she felt sad and signs of discomfort were clearly evident on her face. She was able to empathize with them and felt bad for the state of women who get abused.

Interview 9

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

The participant responded that it is a violent act, a kind of physical action taken against women which is sexual in nature and which violates her dignity as a person.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The respondent said that young women in villages get abused and raped by men in their houses and by outsiders. However, the rate of reporting the incidences are low as there is a stigma attached to it.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada.

The respondent said that a lot of women get abused in Canada. She was not aware about any specific incident but said it happens with all women irrespective of colour, religion and age. She was not aware of any specific statistic for Punjabi women who get sexually abused. She also felt that a lack of interest by the community-based agencies in collecting data related to ethnicities is a form of “subtle” discrimination. How would we know how many Punjabi women have reported being sexual abused and or sought treatment at hospitals or clinics?

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

The women must be getting abused but they don't raise their voices.

5. What stops women from telling their stories or experiences?

The respondent said that no one takes into consideration or gives importance to this issue unless and until women get raped. Women also do not report inappropriate touching, fondling, or harassment of any nature. The women feel

ashamed and unsupported at every step of the way, therefore, they do not report this to the Police or to their loved ones.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

Mostly Punjabi women are immigrants. They don't have knowledge about the system. They feel scared to report the incident and think that police officials may not give them importance. Apart from this, the investigation process is tedious and lengthy. This inhibits them from sharing the information.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

It is often thought that women get abused sexually because they ask for it. It is the woman who asks for it through her provocative dress and gestures. It is always the woman who gets blamed for it. In Punjabi community, a man is usually believed to be "over woman". The excuses given include 'how can an old man or a relative sexually abuse a girl or a woman?' There must be some "hanky panky" going on between the two. "It takes two to tango" is the norm that the community goes by. Therefore, it is very difficult for woman to trust the system.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

Sexual abuse has a deep impact on Indian women as they are taught that once they lose their virginity, they have lost everything. They may experience the following: get a sense of uncleanness, become hesitant, defensive, feel unworthy and develop a low opinion about themselves.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

The community must be made aware of the definition of sexual abuse and women should be educated about this issue. Statistics should be produced so that people

can get a real picture about the extent and prevalence of abuse. Support groups and drop-in groups should be initiated.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

Women require anonymous help lines so that they can get help in deciding the action. A place should be provided where they can get support.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

It is going to be a slow process. It is deeply rooted and, hence, it will take time to eradicate this issue. No one wants to talk about this issue, hence, people need to be made aware about this issue. To find a solution for this is not going to be an easy task and it will take time.

Remarks:

Although the respondent, could not share any specific incidences or experience, she mentioned that sexual abuse is prevalent but, the cases go unreported. Society blames the women for being sexually abused and provides no space to her to share her experiences.

The respondent suggested that anonymous help lines be initiated; the abused women could call and seek information.

The respondent, during the interview was calm and composed but strongly advocated for women and society education for spreading awareness on this issue.

Interview 10

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

The participant responded that sexual abuse can be “inappropriate gazing”, it can be an inappropriate touch, inappropriate behaviors or gestures, code of conduct and “dirty talk”. Taking advantage of vulnerable women and forcing sex is also sexual abuse.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The respondent gave an affirmative answer. She said that it happens everywhere be it at colleges, workplaces, buses, in markets, etc. Girls get abused in workplaces by their superiors and bosses.

The respondent shared the incident in which a boss wrote to a girl a note that he loves her. The girl left the job as she was not able to handle the advances of her boss. The respondent said that married men often harass young girls and married women and girls either leave their jobs or become their victims.

Often outside colleges boys tease girls and in buses they rub against girls, touch them inappropriately and harass them. She shared an incident in which a teacher sexually abused a ten-year old girl. He used to manipulate her body parts and the girl after some time started enjoying it. Her parents only found out when this ten-year old girl became pregnant.

The respondent shared one more experience in which a man used to visit a family. He used to take care of a ten-year old girl in the absence of her parents and used to touch her on her private parts and that used to scare her. The girl could not tell her parents about it but used to tell them that she did not like her uncle and did not want to stay alone with him. One day parents came early and found that he was sexually abusing the child by removing her clothes.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada.

She stated that she once read in Punjabi newspaper that a teacher from one of the private Punjabi schools in British Columbia was charged with sexually assaulting girl students. She did not know whether the person was found guilty or not.

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

The respondent said that a lot of Punjabi women get abused in Canada. She shared an experience of her neighbor, who was sexually assaulted while working at a night shift in a factory.

She also shared a story about a man who raped his sister-in-law. The girl's parents quickly got her married and nothing was done to this man. No charges were filed.

5. What stops women from telling their stories or experiences?

Girls feel embarrassed; they feel that it is shameful to speak on this topic. Girls in India can't even talk about their menstruation. They feel that it is shameful topic to discuss. They feel that if they disclose it, they will be abused more. Sex is considered too taboo a topic to discuss.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

They feel inhibited not to report. They don't open their mouths and tell any one about it.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi community?

This issue is considered a taboo and is not discussed openly. It is felt that until girls get married, they should not know about sex. It is a shameful topic to discuss.

There is a lack of knowledge and information.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world?

Mentally, psychologically and socially a person gets affected. They become negative towards life. They are unable to trust anyone. Their sleep can be affected by it.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

Seminars, open discussion, printed material, media and one-to-one talk need to be undertaken. Education should be provided and a place for women to discuss and share confidential information should be provided.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

They should be provided support to open up. They should not be made to feel that they are rejected or judged. They should be provided help in a professional yet empathetic way.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

It can be destigmatized but it will take a lot of effort and a lot of work needs to be done so that it can be destigmatized. Workshops and seminars for the community and youth could be the starting point.

Remarks:

The interview brought forward the following points:

- Women are sexually abused in Punjab, India.
- Women and girls are sexually abused by “known members”.
- The community tends to hide the issue.
- Women do not receive the support from the community.
- Sex-related topics are taboo in the Punjabi culture.

- Awareness raising campaigns should be undertaken.

The respondent remained calm throughout the interview, but it was clearly evident that she feels strongly for this issue as her frustration gets clearly reflected through her anger. The respondent being an educated woman was able to respond and understand questions easily.

Interview 11

1. What is your understanding of sexual abuse, please describe?

The participant responded that sexual abuse is touching the person in a 'wrong way', making gestures and using certain terminology which is offensive. Sexual abuse is forcing someone to have sex.

2. Have you heard of the sexual abuse of Punjabi women?

The participant said that she has heard about a lot of incidences in Punjab. She mentioned about her own experience as a child. Near her house was a Gurdwara,¹⁰ where the priest lured young girls by giving sweets to them. He would ask these girls to rest with him in bed. Once they were in bed he used to touch their private parts. She was also touched numerous times. When she advised her mother that she did not feel like going, her mother scolded her by saying that it is very important to go to the Gurdwara and do Sewa.¹¹ This priest was very well liked by the congregation. He often used to visit "our" house and people would literally touch his feet in reverence.

She also mentioned that in the market place and in crowds, people often take advantage of the situation and touch the breasts of girls as well as when they are going on bicycles they often pull the dupatta¹² off the girls.

3. In your opinion, are Punjabi women experiencing sexual abuse in Canada.

4. To what extent and in what circumstances are Punjabi women sexually abused in Canada?

(Respondent answered for both the questions simultaneously)

The respondent mentioned that Punjabi women very often get abused in Canada.

¹⁰ Gurdwara means Sikh Temple or Sikh Place of Worship.

¹¹ Sewa means Volunteer Work.

¹² Dupatta means a Scarf or Shawl that women carry with them.

She mentioned the experience of the young girl who came to Canada. The girl, who was 15-16 years old, was residing with her uncle and aunty. Once during a party, her uncle, who was drunk at that time, was not letting her go through the basement stairs where other women were sitting. He was obstructing her way. He held his whisky glass in one hand and was pushing against her breast. Luckily, she pushed him away to escape.

The respondent mentioned about another incident, in which a woman left her husband because he used to abuse her. She then went to stay at another man's house. This man was about 50 years old. The man was of high social standing and offered this woman his house to reside in. Within a couple of days, he forced her to have sexual relations with him. When this man's wife found out, he married the abused woman to another man. He got praise and appreciation for marrying this abused single divorced woman to another man. However, to date, he continues to have a sexual relationship with her by threatening to expose her.

5. What stops women from telling their 'stories' or 'experiences'?

Respondent mentioned that women are inhibited from sharing their experiences because of culture, shyness, and fear of insult. The women may also fear "what people would say". Often, the abuser is a respectable person in society which inhibits women from disclosing abuse to anyone. Another reason might be that the shame associated with disclosing is very hurtful and painful to deal with.

6. How would you describe the experiences that Punjabi women have with the legal system (Police and Judiciary)?

Punjabi women are shy. When a person is shy, it is very difficult to find the right vocabulary to express the experience to the police. I know that police would say that we could bring in an interpreter but, with such a sensitive topic, Punjabi

women would not be able to disclose. They often think that, if they are not raped, it is not sexual abuse.

7. What myths and/or facts do you think surround sexual abuse in the Punjabi Community?

People often think that, if a person is “dirty talking” about your body or using derogatory comments towards your body, that this is not sexual abuse.

Inappropriate touch and look is not considered sexual abuse in the Punjabi community. High profile people are considered good and of sound moral character.

Women who are new immigrants often think that their immigration status will get cancelled.

8. What impact does sexual abuse have on the victim’s world?

The victim becomes scared; she becomes frightened to talk openly about it and she constantly fears rejection and getting a bad image.

9. What steps do you suggest PCHC should undertake in order to address this issue?

The respondent mentioned that PCHC should make awareness campaigns, educate community about this issue, work with the system and form support groups where women can go in confidence.

10. What support mechanisms do you think sexually abused Punjabi women need?

They need trust, and confidence that someone can provide them help. They don’t know whom to turn to and talk about it. Hence, they need support structures where they get help.

11. How can we help to destigmatize this issue?

The respondent could not answer this as she was feeling exhausted.

Remarks:

The interview brought the following important facts to light:

- Even priests may sexually abuse women or girls
- High profile men can also sexually abuse women and get away with it due to their status
- Close relatives can also sexually assault girls
- Culture tends to prohibit women from disclosing sexual abuse
- Awareness campaigns should be undertaken to discuss the complexities surrounding sexual abuse

During the interview it was observed that the respondents taking time to express herself. She was feeling heavy at certain times while describing certain events. She did not cry but her facial expressions clearly reflected the pain and helplessness feeling. At the end she could not answer for the destigmatization issue as she was feeling exhausted.

Summary of Recommendations from 1 to 1 interview with women

#1	Remarks	Recommendations
1	<p>Remarks</p> <p>The woman experienced sexual assault by both her family members and strangers.</p> <p>The sexual abuse of women also happens in Canada.</p> <p>The participant was sexually abused but her perception was that “it is good that he did not rape me”. This clearly reflects the impact abuse has on her; it is distorting her perceptions and generating feelings of minimization and denial. The interview clearly brought out the fact that women do get abused by their own family members. In this case it was her uncle who abused her when she was young and then her father-in-law after marriage.</p> <p>At the same time, it is reflected through this interview that the law doesn’t provide women with sufficient support. The woman stated that the police would not lay charges against the husband because of alleged insufficient evidence of abuse against her daughter.</p>	<p>The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers.</p> <p>Minimization and denial are feelings which need to be addressed.</p> <p>More understanding of law pertaining to “sexual abuse” is needed by South Asian women.</p> <p>More interaction between Police and Service Providers.</p>
2	<p>Remarks:</p> <p>The woman’s experience reflected that women in India, as well as in Canada, are facing sexual abuse. The experience of the woman again brought into light that woman get abused not only by the strangers, but by the people they know. In the story shared by the respondent of the little girl, the girl got abused by her uncle and the girl was blamed for it. The story also brought into light that working women also face abuse at the hand of their supervisors and colleagues. Hence, sexual abuse is prevalent but, due to lack of proper reporting, it goes unrecorded</p>	<p>The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as by strangers.</p> <p>Develop awareness campaigns to educate women about their rights at work in relation to sexual harassment</p>
3	<p>Remarks:</p> <p>The interview brought into light that women get sexually abused by their own husbands. Often women may not even know that forced sex is rape.</p> <p>The interview also highlighted how men take advantage of other women (even their own daughters).</p> <p>Shame and insult were the two main factors that were identified by the woman which inhibited her from sharing her experiences.</p>	<p>Develop education campaign to educate the community about “marital rape”.</p> <p>The two main factors identified as forcing them to not to take action were shame and insult.</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>Remarks:</p> <p>The interview again brought into light that women and girls get sexually abused by their uncles, and other men who are known to the victim. The sexual assaults occur at any place, their own house or someone else’s house or even in a doctor’s office. Usually these “men” are held in high esteem by the family or the community. Females often could not share their experiences due to fear of not being trusted and being blamed for the act.</p> <p>The cultural practices, norms and traditions perpetuate silence from the victims.</p> <p>It was observed during the interview that this woman had clearly “gone through hell” and was still reluctant to fully disclose the extent of her violations. She repeatedly was making sure that we would not be divulging her name in any shape or form. She still thought that her “reputation” in her in-laws family would be tarnished and feared that her husband would not be supportive.</p> <p>She did not want to seek any professional help this time. She was open to informal “listening” sessions.</p>	<p>The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers.</p> <p>The four main factors identified as forcing them to do not take action were fear, trust, reputation, and blame.</p> <p>Cultural practices also “force” women into silence and this needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Remarks:</p> <p>The interview brought into light how women get abused in the name of the marriage. Punjabi men end up going to India to get married over and over again. The women are always under threat that her husband may leave and get married to other women. Lack of awareness and information makes women vulnerable to be exploited.</p> <p>The interview also brought forward the level of workplace harassment of women. There seems to be consistent messages from women of being sexually harassed at the place of work.</p> <p>During the interview, the respondent was active and did not feel inhibited to share her experiences. She strongly raised the need for steps that need to be taken up in this direction.</p>	<p>Women experience sexual abuse because of their “immigrant status”.</p> <p>Awareness needs to be developed about the issue of sexual abuse within the South Asian community.</p> <p>Developed programs need to be to educate women about sexual harassment at work.</p>

<p>6</p>	<p>Remarks: The interview revealed the important fact that bad experiences of police in India often inhibit women from sharing her plight with police in Canada. In addition, cultural factors and societal pressures inhibit women to share their experiences. Often women are blamed in one way or another for “putting themselves” in a situation whereby they were sexually assaulted. The feelings of pain and anger were evident when this respondent was describing her experiences. It was clearly visible that this woman had strong feelings about this issue. She felt that destigmatization may not work in the community. She commented that culture places women in subordination whereby men take advantage. She stated strongly that a woman who is sexually abused cannot get respect and generations that follow remember this.</p>	<p>Strong relations should be developed with police forces in the GTA area so that women are comfortable in disclosing any sexual abuse incidents. The three main factors identified as forcing them to not to take action were non-supportive culture, societal pressures, and being blamed.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Remarks: The interview once again pointed towards the fact that women in Punjab get exploited when Punjabi men from Canada marry them. The men bring them to Canada and, if these women do not meet their expectations, they get exploited and used. The woman lives under constant threat of being “dumped” by him. This fear is often “exploited” by these men. The girls and women often get sexually assaulted by their uncles and people whom they know but, due to fear and societal factors, they are unable to disclose their experiences to any one. During the interview, it was observed that initially the respondent was calm while giving the interview but became angry at certain points. She was not able to hold her self and lost her control. She voiced her opinion very strongly at the end when inquired about the support mechanisms required for sexually abused women. It was clearly evident that she feels strongly about the support mechanisms that are required for the women.</p>	<p>Women experience sexual abuse because of their “immigrant status”. The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers. The two main factors identified as forcing them to not take action were non-supportive culture and fear. Support “mechanisms” need to be developed for women to address sexual abuse issues within the South Asian community.</p>

<p>8</p>	<p>Remarks: This interview again brought into light the fact that new immigrant women who hail from Punjab are at risk of sexual abuse. The man often exploits her sexually and after “using her” leaves her to get married to another woman. The woman is under the constant pressure to satisfy him and indulges in all sorts of sexual practices to satisfy him. The respondent during the interview remained calm and composed and answered the questions patiently. When sharing the experiences of women, she felt sad and signs of discomfort were clearly evident on her face. She was able to empathize with them and felt bad for the state of women who get abused.</p>	<p>Women experience sexual abuse because of their “immigrant status”.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Remarks: Although the respondent, could not share any specific incidences or experience, she mentioned that sexual abuse is prevalent but, due to low reporting, the cases go unreported. The society blames the women for being sexually abused and provides no space to her to share her experiences. The respondent suggested that an anonymous helpline be initiated – the abused women could call and seek information. The respondent, during the interview was calm and composed but strongly advocated for women’s and society’s education for spreading awareness on this issue</p>	<p>Awareness need to be developed about sexual abuse issues in the community. “Culture specific” spaces for South Asian women need to be developed to address sexual abuse issues.</p>

<p>10</p>	<p>Remarks: The interview brought forward the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are sexually abused in Punjab, India. • Women and girls are sexually abused by “known members”. • The community tends to hide the issue. • Women do not receive the support from the community. • Sex-related topics are taboo in the Punjabi culture. • Awareness raising campaigns should be undertaken. <p>The respondent remained calm throughout the interview. But it was clearly evident that she feels strongly for this issue as her frustration gets clearly reflected through her anger. The respondent being an educated woman was able to respond and understand questions easily.</p>	<p>The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers.</p> <p>Community wide education and awareness campaigns need to be developed to address the issue of sexual abuse.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Remarks: The interview brought the following important facts to light:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even priests may sexually abuse women or girls • High profile men can also sexually abuse women and get away with it due to their status • Close relatives can also sexually assault girls • Culture tends to prohibit women from disclosing sexual abuse • Awareness campaign should be undertaken to discuss the complexities surrounding sexual abuse <p>During the interview it was observed that respondent was taking time to express her self. She was feeling heavy at certain times while describing certain events. She did not cry but her facial expressions clearly reflected the pain and helplessness feeling. At the end she could not answer for the destigmatization issue as she was feeling exhausted.</p>	<p>Priests may sexually abuse women and or girls</p> <p>The women experience sexual abuse by her family members as well as strangers.</p> <p>Awareness campaigns need to be developed to address the issue of sexual abuse in a “culturally appropriate” manner</p>

CHAPTER 8

Focus Group Guidelines

To collect information on Sexual Abuse Amongst Punjabi Women, three focus groups were conducted on March 16th, 2003; January 31st, 2004 and February 11th, 2004.

The guidelines were developed by the coordinator before starting the focus group discussion. Ten women participated in the first focus group, ten in then second and eight women participated in the third focus group. Altogether, 28 women shared their experiences in a structured focus group discussion.

Participants were informed that their names and identity would not be disclosed and they should feel free to discuss their own experiences or any of the incidences they know on sexual abuse.

In order to create an atmosphere of trust, tape recorders were not used. Each focus group had a facilitator and a scribe. It was the scribe's responsibility to note down the remarks and comments of women and then transcribe them in a report format.

The purpose of the focus group was to delineated information that would help PCHC to develop programs for sexually abused women. The confidentiality guidelines were also explained.

After the brief introduction given by participants, the discussion began. The findings of the focused group are reported below.

Focus Group 1

Punjabi Community Health Centre on March 23rd, 2003 organized a focus group regarding Sexual Abuse in the Punjabi community. The findings were extremely disturbing and the extent of the abuse even more painful to hear.

In this focus group 10 women participated.

Focus Group Questions:

1. What is sexual abuse?

According to the women sexual abuse included:

- inappropriate touching anywhere on the women's body
- dominating and exploiting the vulnerability of women by forcing her to have sex
- watching 'porno' videos against her wishes
- having sex with your own wife against her wishes
- forcing her to watch 'adult' magazines and go on the internet
- forcing her to use 'sexual toys' against her will
- genital touching in front of children and making comments towards sexually abusing them

2. Have you ever heard about sexual abuse in Punjab?

Yes – unanimous

Most women had heard of sexual abuse that occurred in Punjab. This is mostly directed at poor women or girls by the middle class or rich men. Some women did state that their uncle(s) in Punjab sexually abused them when they were little girls. The stigma attached to sexual abuse prohibits women from disclosing what was happening to them when they were little. The stigma creates a wall of silence.

The women said that they were told that “good” girls who belong to “good” families don’t open their mouths, even when sexually abused. Their fate depends on keeping these incidences secret. In secrecy, the fate is decided – marriage and/or abortion (in case of pregnancy). The silence guarantees the family’s dignity.

Each women knew someone, who was sexually abused either in her family, or in the neighborhood or in the village or city.

They also knew someone who was abused as a child; one woman shared that a priest in Punjab sexually abused her husband.

3. Male Patriarchy – is this to blame?

Almost all of the women feel that male patriarchy is to blame. The abuse is inflicted not only on women and girls in Punjab but also in Canada. Father-in-law(s), grandfather(s), and father(s) have at one point or the other abused their daughters-in-law, granddaughters and/or daughters. The women agreed that the male need can be expressed as “I have only kept you to fuck you and to bang you”.

4. What about Canada? Have you heard of sexual abuse cases here?

A very disturbing incident was shared by one of the participants. This incident took place in Canada. Sometime ago, a grandfather abused a little girl whom he was babysitting by putting his penis in her mouth. Parents did not even know or did not even think that this was either happening or that it could even take place.

Women shared what they had heard. The stories related to sexual abuse of women in the work place. Many stories were cited but the theme was the same. Supervisors sexually abused young immigrant Punjabi women.

Women also cited stories about family members sexually abusing daughter-in-laws, nieces and cousins, and other women (often single women with children) who rent the basement apartments.

All participants agreed that shame, ostracization, and lack of awareness of rights and services lead women to be SILENT. Many felt that by disclosing they would be labeled as “characterless”.

5. Who in your opinion is the most vulnerable section of the society? (Children, Lesbians, Women, Senior Women, Teenage Women)

Most women felt that because of the extent of the abuse, little girls and young teenage girls are most at the risk of being sexually abused by someone they know or they trust.

Immigrant women are also at risk of being sexually abused. The men take advantage of the immigrant women by exploiting their weaknesses. Men have been known to promise marriage if a woman engages in having sexual relations. Often, after having sex, they disappear. Sometimes men pressure her to have sex so that she will get settled in Canada quickly.

6. Does the society and the community (both used in separate ways, society means the North American culture and laws; community means the south Asian community) give space for healing the wounds?

When the time came to help women who were abused, most women felt that the experience with the system had been disappointing.

Language is the most significant barrier which needs to be addressed.

Women cannot articulate well via interpreters. Shame also inhibits women finding the right words. As a result, women are unable to express their viewpoints well to the police.

They feel intimidated not only by police officers but also by the person who abused them. According to the respondents, repetition of the sexual abuse events to the officer, the lawyer, and then to the judge is first and foremost SHAME INDUCING and then painful and demeaning. In addition, the women also feel that the officers or the mainstream community does not understand the cultural barrier and the feelings of the women who have been abused.

They also do not feel comfortable sharing their painful story with a stranger. They are often told that the information that they share will remain confidential but it is rarely confidential when it is presented in front of the judge where the general public sits in the court. They (the community) now know the women; they also know everything that happened to her and, therefore, the cycle of abuse continues.

7. Are you aware of some myths and facts on this issue in the community?

The women had this to say:

Myths:

Women bring it upon themselves
Dress provocatively and you will get raped
It takes two to tango
Nice women don't get abused
Educated women don't get abused
Strangers rape women

Facts:

Family members sexually abuse women
Relatives and friends of the family sexually abuse women

8. What kind of impact does sexual abuse have on the victims' world? How does it change the psyche, choices, worldview, and circumstances?

Some experiences:

- A woman shared her best friend's experience. After the 4th day of coming to Canada, my best friend's husband started abusing her and demanded a

baby. She asked him to first get settled and then plan for a baby. One day, after having sex with her, he informed her that he had cut the condom from the front which would guarantee that she would now get pregnant. After the baby was born, the doctor advised her not to have sex for three months. But he again had sex and she got pregnant again. But, this time she had an abortion and he was furious. They are now separated.

- “ A man saying to his wife “When penis is stiff and ready, it does not see whether it’s a wife or daughter”.
- “ Women sharing that they were forced to perform oral sex on an unclean penis.
- “ Women forced to have sexual intercourse against their will while pregnant.
- “ Women forced to have sexual intercourse against their will during heavy menstrual period.
- “ One woman shared that her husband would play with his penis in front of his daughter while watching ‘porno’ movies.
- “ Husband was having sex while the baby lay crying in the crib; he picked up the baby and put him on the women’s chest and continued having sex while, outside the door, the father in law started to knock on the door asking “what’s going on?”
- “ Women cry and can’t believe what is happening to them; it’s secret they can’t tell anyone; she burns inside; she gets sick; and wonders what will happen to the kids
- “ Women also think that people will think that she is the one to blame

9. What are the problems with using 911?

The women feel that in using 911 one of the biggest problems is language. When an officer comes to the door, the women have to go through the same trauma of repeating everything again. The police ask the same question in different ways over and over again. The statements are repeated again to find out whether the women are lying. Women get fed-up with this line of questioning. They feel nervous and therefore forget about all those things that took place. They also worry about what the community will say when they see that there is police at this house.

The other problem women had was reaching the phone. The husband and other family members who were involved in the abuse took the phone wire out so that the women could not make the phone call. In some cases the men held the women by sitting on their chest until she agreed not to call – so she could not even get to the phone when she needed it.

Women have also identified problems with existing agencies. One such organization is _____ (name deleted) named by the women at the focus group. The workers at this agency did not show any sympathy. They did not get any information when they called this agency. One woman shared that she was having a problem with her husband and she called this agency to ask for help; the woman was told that she should leave her husband without consulting them further.

10. What information/education would you suggest to develop awareness in the community?

We need a kind of place where we can feel comfortable talking about our inner feelings; for example, Sahara Women’s Group. It is hard to get women out of the house to seek help but, with a little bit of “push”, they can heal their wounds. It is clear that women cannot talk from their homes because their extended family is there. There is a need to educate women regarding their rights in Canada. Another important issue is the need to develop a long-term plan to deal with such a sensitive issue.

The women said that many agencies dealt with crisis situations. But, we need help after the crisis is over. We need more after-care programs like SAHARA Women’s Groups.

Brochures and videos should be developed in order to raise awareness in the community. Perhaps, radio and television could also be engaged to raise awareness.

11. What suggestions do you have for the research team?

We need some kind of system to help women in need. When we identify women who need help, we should be able to follow up with them until they are satisfied. We need mentors who can work with women and address their day-to-day needs. We need to be able to identify sources at work.

The women also felt that some influential members of the community should be exposed who are guilty of abusing women. Other women shared stories of how men with “5Ks” are guilty of sexually abusing women.

12. Would you like to be involved in this project?

Yes, we would love to work with you in this project.

Other Comments

- Husband says to his wife that the women who meet in the group are all widows and divorcees.
- Husbands have tape recording devices attached to their phones so that when the phone rings the recording device is turned on for recording the conversation.
- Woman's father would give money to in-laws whenever there was problem. Therefore, the in-laws, in order to receive more money, started abusing her more and more.
- A lot of children get abused by the grandparents.
- Parents leave the children at home (thinking that children will be safe) to save money because licensed day care centers cost a lot of money, only to find later on that the children have been sexually abused.
- Punjabi community has no concept of solving problems – they 'love' to patch things up or 'cover up' the situation.

A woman is not only abused by her husband but also by other family members for example, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

Observation and Conclusion:

The women were active and participated by giving and sharing their experiences. The women had shared some very disturbing experiences which highlighted that women are sexually abused by the people they know. The abusers are their husbands, fathers-in-law and friends, uncles or any one in the family. The insensitive legal system, apart from culture and society pressures, also inhibits women from demanding justice. The language was identified as an important issue that inhibits women from availing of police support. The women strongly advocated for developing programs for the women who

require services. The insensitivity of an organization working for abused women was also identified as an important stumbling block that inhibits women from sharing her experiences.

Focus Group Report 2

Punjabi Community Health Centre on January 31, 2004 organized a focus group regarding Sexual Abuse, in the Punjabi community.

In this focus group 10 women participated.

1. What is Sexual Abuse?

The respondents gave varied answers.

- Forcing or coercing her to have sex,
- Forcing a wife for sex when she is not ready,
- Unwanted touch,
- Making offensive verbal and postural signs,
- Having sex with wife while emotionally or mentally attached or thinking about other women.

It was stressed that child sexual abuse is a very important topic as the child is not able to understand it although may be deriving pleasure from it.

2. Have you heard about sexual abuse in Punjab?

Almost all the participants have heard about sexual abuse in Punjab. It was mentioned that it is common with the women from lower strata. The women, while going to farms often get molested and raped by higher caste* youth and men.

Some are gang raped as newspaper had pointed out. Participants gave varied experiences and incidences of sexual abuse. They are as follows:

- One of the respondents quoted the experience of her servant that her (cousin and brother) attempted to rape her by taking her to the farms.

- Sarpanch¹³ of the village in Punjab raped a girl from lower strata and made her pregnant and got off without being charged because of his status.
- In Punjab, a brother raped his own (sister) and this incident was suppressed by the family since it would bring a bad name to them.
- One participant reported that she, herself, saw a 14 year-old-girl having sex with her uncle in a summer afternoon, when she went to look for her. The mother of the girl was doing prayers and the father was not at home.
- In Punjab, in one of the universities, college students sexually abused young boys and later killed them. The culprits were not caught.
- In Jalandhar,¹⁴ the aged neighbor tried to rape a young girl in the absence of her parents. The parents of the girl had left the note outside the door that they would be coming late. The window of the girl's bathroom was adjacent to the neighbor's bathroom window. Their neighbor, tried to get in through the window but the girl cried for help. The man was caught.
- In Punjab, parents left the child with the grandfather; the grandfather did oral sex with a few-months-old child. This later came to light when child developed intestinal problems and was taken to hospital.
- While traveling in buses, the men often sexually abuse girls by making inappropriate gestures and by touching them.

3. Male patriarchy- is this to blame?

Participants said that it is linked to power and situations that happen. Women may also be powerful but sometime situations make them vulnerable. One of the respondents gave elaborate explanation on personality types of male and female

¹³ Head of the Village.

¹⁴ A City in Punjab.

and how it affects the sexual abuse component. It was mentioned that males and females have different personality types. Males are more physical while females are more emotional. Females lack awareness and understanding of males. Do males lack awareness and understanding of females? Owing to personality types, males seek physical gratification and find an easy outlet at home. That is how the near ones become vulnerable.

(Need clarity – what is this?)

4. What about Canada? Have you heard of sexual abuse cases here?

Almost all women have heard about sexual abuse cases in Canada. They gave instances of women who have been sexually abused.

One family in Canada got the girl's father-in-law married with the girl's sister for the purpose of getting her immigration in Canada. The father-in-law and the girl developed relations and both started residing together. The age difference was 40 years.

A girl was raped in an elevator. The girl was alone and the man took advantage of that and raped her. The husband, instead of lending her support, left her.

In buses, people sometimes misbehave with women. The participant reported her own experience how she was made uncomfortable by a man who continuously tried to touch her and, when she changed the seat, he continuously harassed her. The women said that she could not say anything and became a victim of harassment.

One family from Canada went for their marriage in Punjab. The boy was reluctant to marry the girl. Owing to pressure, the marriage took place. The girl eventually came to Canada but was raped by the father-in-law who informed her

that she was his property now. Eventually the girl ran away from the house and her husband quickly remarried.

One of the respondents quoted her own experience about how her colleague once came to her house in the absence of her husband and gave indications for having sex. The participant said that she was alone at home, and the colleague asked her whether he could come over. When the man came, he started making gestures and started giving indications for sex. The women asked him to leave the house.

**5. Who in your opinion is the most vulnerable section of society?
(Children, Lesbians, Women, Senior Women, Teenage Women)**

Women felt that small children and teenage girls are the most vulnerable section. This is because they lack understanding and, hence, become vulnerable. This is one of the reasons that lots of children get abducted. The teenage girls have misconceptions and are intrigued by the concept of sex and lack complete understanding.

The respondents also mentioned that immigrant women are also at risk because they have lots of pressure and their frustration level is high. Hence, they become prone to sexual abuse.

6. Do the society and the community (both used in separate ways, society means the North American culture and the laws: community means the South Asian community) give space for healing the wounds?

Participants felt that society gives no space. Parents are often worried about the marriage of their daughter and her siblings and feel concerned that if sexual abuse is disclosed. They wonder what other people and their own community is going to say. They feel that once it is disclosed their daughter will further be abused by other men and will become an easy target.

7. Are you aware of some myths and facts on this issue in the community?

Respondents said that women's entry to religious places may become restricted; families restrict interaction with the women who have been abused. They feel that female development gets affected once she is abused.

8. What kind of impact does sexual abuse have on the victim's world? How does it change the psyche, choices, worldview, and circumstances?

Depression, frustration, aggression, helplessness, self blame, guilt feeling and thinking about the incident and inability to forget it are some of the responses that participants gave.

9. What are the problems with using 911?

One woman reported an interesting incident in which she stated that the police is so fed up with the Punjabi community, that should they come to know that a Punjabi domestic violence has occurred, they deliberately arrive late. This is so because the Punjabi women are "pressurized" into withdrawing the cases. The problem with 911 is that women's fear and inability to articulate properly result in either no charges or both are charged.

Often the women want the violence to end and not the marriage to end.

The women questioned the culturally appropriate treatment programs for men.

They believed that the existing treatment programs are not productive.

Once removed from home, the men refuse to support the family. The court system does not work fast enough to provide for rent and grocery bills to be paid.

Eventually women are forced to give up.

10. What information/education would you suggest to develop awareness in the community?

Participants responded that there is a need to educate women; open up their minds and train women on those aspects.

Talk shows, seminars, educational workshops like Sur Sagar should be organized. People should be reached through talk shows, skit, and dramas.

Apart from these, advocacy efforts need to be taken up; curriculum, sensitive to the needs of our community, needs to be developed and taken up in the schools.

11. What suggestions do you have for the research team?

Women suggested that there is a need to empower women, develop help lines for women, and a need to educate them on sexual abuse.

12. Would you like to be involved in this project?

Yes, most women felt that they would be able to give time.

Observation and Conclusion:

Women initially were not able to open up and discuss freely on this sensitive topic, but, once they were given the confidence, they discussed and shared their experiences with group. This discussion brought forward again the fact that women get abused in their families and by the people they trust and sometimes a situation outside their homes makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse. Most of the women were able to contribute significantly. The group members stressed that there is a strong need to develop services and support groups for women. This sensitive issue needs to be addressed to help those women who are still living in an abusive state. The use of media was stressed by the women like the use of shows like Sur-Sagar to disseminate information on sexual abuse.

Focus Group Report 3

Punjabi Community Center on February 11, 2004 organized a focus group discussion with the collaboration of a South Asian Center for Women. Eight women participated along with one facilitator and a scribe.

Focus Group Questions

1. What is Sexual abuse?

According to the participants sexual abuse includes:

- inappropriate touching,
- gazing or gawking (looking),
- making derogatory comments
- touching inappropriately
- fondling
- and forcing sex

It includes the sexual abuse that takes place within the family by the husband and his family members. It includes the comments given by the husband that humiliate and depress the women.

2. Have you ever heard about sexual abuse in Punjab?

Almost all women had their experiences to share. Participants said that it is prevalent everywhere. Lots of abuse happens in Punjab. Fathers, fathers-in-law and other close relatives often take advantage of the situation of women and girls, apart from other outsiders. A woman shared the experience of her neighbor's daughter, who was sleeping outside with her mother on one summer night. There was a visitor in the house adjacent to the girl's house. The man, when he saw the girl sleeping alone with her mother, climbed over the wall to their verandah* and

covered the girl's mouth and took her to the farms. The girl was left in the farms after raping. The girl came back in her torn and blood stained clothes and told the incident to her mother. The man after raping ran away and was not caught. Another participant shared her incident. She had worked in a family health department and told the group that most of the time men used to embarrass her by making unsuitable gestures and comments. One day, a boy who came to collect the condoms put the condom over his finger and kept it like that till another employee asked him to leave the place. Another participant shared another incident, that a four-year-old girl was physically and sexually abused by her father because her mother was not able to get a dowry from her parents' house. Another participant shared her experience in the University that when she went to university, a boy took away her duppata* in front of every one and nobody came to help her. Boys often harass girls in colleges and schools. Girls and women very often get harassed in buses while traveling. Men often pinch the women, touch them, rub against their body and give them lecherous looks.

3. Male Patriarchy- is to blame?

All the women in the group said that male patriarchy is responsible for the abuse. Boys are given preference since conception and this gets reflected in the low sex ratio of girls to boys in India. Society, through its customs and traditions, makes males more desirable. When a girl child is born, she is treated as a burden and parents start getting worried about the dowry and her marriage. One respondent shared the experience of a lady who died giving birth to her ninth daughter in a hospital when her oldest daughter was getting married. The lady had undergone seven abortions. The participants said that the women and girls get abused not

only by uncles but by their own fathers, husband and fathers-in-law and by people whom they trust.

4. What about Canada? Have you heard of sexual abuse cases here?

Almost all participants said that they have heard of sexual abuse in Canada. One of the group members shared an incident. The husband of the girl used to go for trips. During one such trip, the girl was alone with her father-in-law. The father-in-law took advantage of the situation and raped the girl. The girl could not tell this to anyone. Later she started having sex with her father-in-law with consent. The girl got pregnant and when her husband found about it, he sent his father back to India. The participant said that loneliness is big factor here. People need company and in this cold weather, girls in the family become victims of sexual abuse.

Children watch pornographic movies because of the easy access to such material.

One of the participants shared her own experience. She told that while she was taking care of her grandchildren in the night, one of her 11-year-old grandchildren went to the washroom. When she went to check why he hadn't come, she saw him watching a blue film. The young girls, who come after marriage, often become victims of abuse. Their husband threatens to leave them or to send them back.

They are shown blue films and are forced to copy it. It is very common for a Punjabi man to marry three or four times. They go to India for their marriage and, if their wife is not to their standards or able to satisfy them, they leave her and women get abused.

**5. Who in your opinion is the most vulnerable section of the society?
(Children, women, senior women, teenage women)**

According to the group members, teenagers and immigrant women are the most vulnerable section of the society. The participant said that immigrant women are

desperate and are exposed to market. People take advantage of their situations.

They are frustrated and get exploited. Teenage girls, because of their age and lack of fuller understanding, get exploited.

6. Does the society and the community (both with different connotations, society means the Canadian culture and laws and community means the South Asian Community) give space for healing the wounds?

Participants said that no space is provided to victims by community or by society as a whole. Parents and family most often blame victim. One of the group members shared the incident of a 13 year-old girl who was kidnapped by her driver in India and was raped for 7 days. When she returned back home, she was beaten up by her parents. Women are often considered at fault in that they believe she must have encouraged it or would have asked for it. Language creates obstacles for women who want to take up the matter. They have heard bad stories and experiences with police so that they fear them. They don't feel comfortable sharing their experiences with police.

7. Are you aware of some myths and facts on this issue in the community?

It is often thought that, if virginity is lost, women have lost her everything. It is considered that death is better than to be raped. Sex is considered a taboo. Curiosity and doubts are not cleared and opening discussion on sex is considered bad. One woman shared her own experience and told the group that when she was 14 years old, she used to feel scared to take a shower as she used to feel that sperm from the shower used by men in the upper floor would come through the water and would make her pregnant. Other women told the group that girls are not aware about menstruation. It is considered bad to talk about it and leave out things about sex. One of the young 10 year-old girls came with her blood-stained dress in

a family get together and told her mother that since she ate bournvita* the last night, too much of blood has been formed and it is coming out.

8. What kind of impact does sexual abuse have on the victims' world? How does it change the psyche, choices, world view and circumstances?

The victim becomes dead, she loses her life and become scared to trust. She develops complexes. She may become angry, depressed or frustrated. Her life becomes shattered and she may commit suicide, if no one provides her with support.

9. What are the problems with using 911?

Women feel that one of the biggest problem is that once you call, a case is formed. Once the case is there, people will blame the women and the family reputation will get spoilt. Police lack the humane nature and their questioning ability is very mechanical. They cannot take into consideration the cultural perspective and lack the ability to think from a woman's perspective.

10. What information/education would you suggest to develop awareness in the community?

Women felt that there is need to organize talk shows, seminars and individual counseling. Media must be used to provide information. Parents must be educated so that they give education to their children. Self defense and sex education should be provided to children. Workshops should be conducted to educate people. Work at an advocacy and legislative level must be undertaken to help sexual abuse victims and prevent sexual abuse. Free sex should not be encouraged. People should be encouraged to talk and discuss about it without stigmatization.

11. What suggestions do you have for the research team?

Participants felt that women should be empowered through education and employment so that they get to know about their rights. They should be

encouraged to speak. Support services must be developed for women who need help.

Observations and Conclusions:

The participants were active and contributed to the discussions by giving information and sharing their experiences. This discussion specially brought into light the vulnerability of immigrant women who get abused by their husbands, fathers-in-law and their relatives. They live under the threat of being left and abandoned. The lack of information and knowledge makes them more vulnerable to the abuse. Sex education was given significance by this group, as they felt that there is a stigma attached to this issue and, hence, priority must be given to make women and society more receptive.

Verandah* Space outside the house with a covered with boundary

Dupatta* Part of an Indian dress worn with suit and salwar

Bournvita* A popular nutrient drink

Summary of Findings from Focus Groups

#s	Findings – joint responses from three focus groups
1	<p>What is sexual abuse?</p> <p>According to the women sexual abuse included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate touching anywhere on the women’s body • dominating and exploiting the vulnerability of women by forcing them to have sex • watching ‘porno’ videos against her wishes • having sex with your own wife against her wishes • forcing her to watch ‘adult’ magazines and go on the internet • forcing her to use ‘sexual toys’ against her will • genital touching in front of children and making comments towards sexually abusing them • forcing or coercing her to have sex, • forcing a wife for sex when she is not ready, • unwanted touch, • making offensive verbal and postural signs, • having sex with wife while emotionally or mentally attached or thinking about other women. • it was stressed that child sexual abuse is a very important topic as the child is not able to understand it, although may be deriving pleasure from it. • gazing or gawking (looking), • making derogatory comments • fondling • forcing sex
2	<p>Have you ever heard about sexual abuse in Punjab?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes – unanimous ▪ Most women had heard of sexual abuse that occurred in Punjab. ▪ This is mostly directed at poor women or girls by the middle class or rich men. ▪ Some women did state that their uncle(s) in Punjab sexually abused them when they were little girls. ▪ The stigma attached to sexual abuse prohibits women from disclosing what was happening to them when they were little. The stigma creates a wall of silence. ▪ The women said that they were told that “good” girls who belong to “good” families don’t open their mouth even when sexually abused. Their fate depends on keeping these incidences secret. In secrecy, the fate is decided – marriage and/or abortion (in case of pregnancy). The silence guarantees the family’s dignity. ▪ Each woman knew someone, who was sexually abused either in their family, or in the neighborhood, or in the village or city. ▪ They also know someone who was abused as a child; one woman shared that a priest in Punjab sexually abused her husband. ▪ The sexual abuse is prevalent within family members and by outsiders. ▪ Boys often harass girls in colleges and schools. Girls and women very often

	<p>get harassed in buses while traveling. Men often pinch women, touch them, rub against their body and give them lecherous looks.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Male Patriarchy – is this to blame?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Almost all of the women feel that male patriarchy is to blame. ▪ The abuse is inflicted not only on women and girls in Punjab but also in Canada. ▪ Father-in-law(s), grandfather(s), and father(s) have at one point or the other abused their daughters-in-law, granddaughters and/or daughters. ▪ The women agreed that the male need can be expressed as “I have only kept you to fuck you and to bang you”. ▪ Participant said that sexual abuse is linked to power and control. Women may also be powerful but sometime situations make her vulnerable. ▪ One of the respondents gave elaborate explanation on personality types of male and female and how it affects the sexual abuse component. It was mentioned that males and females have different personality types. Males are more physical, while females are more emotional. Females lack awareness and understanding of males. There is some evidence that assertiveness by women may push the perpetrator to “back off” from a aggressive stance of “sexually assaulting a woman”. Can assertiveness training be made available to all women? ▪ Boys are given preference since conception and this gets reflected in the low sex ratio of girls to boys in India. Society through its customs and traditions makes males more desirable. ▪ Participants said that the women and girls get abused, not only by uncles but by their own fathers, husbands and fathers-in-law and people whom they trust.
<p>4</p>	<p>What about Canada? Have you heard of sexual abuse cases here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, everyone agreed that sexual abuse of Punjabi women is taking place in Canada. ▪ Sexual abuse is happening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At home (males to females) ▪ At work (immigrant young Punjabi women) ▪ All participants agreed that shame, ostracization, and lack of awareness of rights and services lead women to be SILENT. ▪ Many felt that by disclosing they would be labeled as “characterless”. ▪ In buses, people sometimes misbehave with women. The participant reported her own experience how she was made uncomfortable by a man who continuously tried to touch her and, when she changed the seat, he continuously harassed her. The women said that she could not say anything and became a victim of harassment.
<p>5</p>	<p>Who in your opinion is the most vulnerable section of the society?</p>

	<p>(Children, Lesbians, Women, Senior Women, Teenage Women)</p> <p>Most women felt that because of the extent of the abuse, little girls, young teenage girls, an non-immigrant women are most at the risk of being sexually abused by someone they know or they trust.</p> <p>Non-immigrant women are also at risk of being sexually abused. The men take advantage of the immigrant women by exploiting their weaknesses.</p>
6	<p>Does the society and the community (both used in separate ways, society means the North American culture and laws; community means the south Asian community) give <u>space</u> for healing the wounds?</p> <p>When the time comes to help women who are abused, most women felt that the experience with the system has been disappointing.</p> <p>Language is the most significant barrier which needs to be addressed. Women cannot articulate well via interpreters.</p> <p>Shame also inhibits women finding the right words. As a result, women are unable to express their viewpoints well to the police.</p> <p>They feel intimidated not only by police officers but also by the person who abused them. According to the respondents, repetition of the discussion of the sexual abuse event to the officer, the lawyer, and then to the judge is first and foremost SHAME INDUCING and then painful and demeaning. In addition, the women also feel that the officers or the mainstream community do not understand the cultural barrier and the feelings of the women who have been abused.</p> <p>They also don't feel comfortable sharing their painful story with a stranger.</p> <p>They are often told that the information that they share will remain confidential but it is rarely confidential when it is presented in front of the judge where the general public sits in the court. They (the community) now know the women; they also know everything that happened to her and, therefore, the cycle of abuse continues.</p> <p>Parents are often worried about the marriage of their daughter and her siblings if sexual abuse is disclosed. They wonder what other people and their own community is going to say. They feel that once it is disclosed their daughter will further be abused by other men and will become an easy target.</p> <p>Participants said that no space is provided to victims by community or by society as a whole.</p> <p>Parents and family most often blames victim. Women are often considered at fault in that she must have encouraged it or would have asked for it</p>

7	<p>Are you aware of some myths and facts on this issue in the community?</p> <p>The women had this to say:</p> <p>Myths:</p> <p>Women bring it upon themselves Dress provocatively and you will get raped It takes two to tango Nice women don't get abused Educated women don't get abused Strangers rape women</p> <p>Facts:</p> <p>Family members sexually abuse women Relatives and friends of the family sexually abuse women</p> <p>Respondents said that women's entry to religious places may become restricted; families restrict interaction with the women who have been abused. They feel that female development gets affected once she is abused.</p> <p>It is often thought that, if virginity is lost, women have lost her everything. It is considered that death is better than to be raped.</p> <p>Sex is considered a taboo. Curiosity and doubts are not cleared and frank discussion on sex is considered bad.</p>
8	<p>What kind of impact does sexual abuse have on the victims' world? How does it change the psyche, choices, worldview, and circumstances?</p> <p>Depression, frustration, aggression, helplessness, self blame, guilt feeling and thinking about the incident and an inability to forget it, are some of the responses that participant gave.</p> <p>The victim becomes dead-like, she loses her life and become scared to trust. She develops complexes. She may become angry, depressed or frustrated. Her life becomes shattered and she may commit suicide, if no one provides her with support.</p>

9	<p>What are the problems with using 911?</p> <p>The women feel that in using 911 one of the biggest problems is language. When an officer comes to the door, the women have to go through the same trauma of repeating everything again. The police ask the same question in different ways over and over. The statements are asked over and over again to find out whether the women are lying. Women get fed-up with this line of questioning and forget about all of the things, which took place because they get nervous. They also worry about what the community will say when they see that there are police at this house.</p> <p>The other problem women had was reaching the phone. The husband and other family members who are involved in the abuse take the phone wire out so that the women cannot make the phone call.</p> <p>One woman reported an interesting incident in which she stated that the police is so fed up with the Punjabi community that, should they come to know that a Punjabi domestic violence has occurred, they deliberately arrive late. This is so because the Punjabi women are “pressurized” into withdrawing the cases. The problem with 911 is that women’s fear and inability to articulate properly result in either no charges or both are charged.</p> <p>Often the women want the violence to end and not the marriage to end.</p> <p>The women questioned the mainstream treatment programs for men. They believed that the existing treatment programs are not productive. They wanted to know more about the culturally appropriate treatment programs for men.</p> <p>Once removed from home, the men refuse to support the family. The court system does not work fast enough to provide for rent and grocery bills to be paid. Eventually women are forced to give up.</p> <p>Women feel that one of the biggest problem is once you call a case is formed. Once the case is there, people will blame the women and family reputation will get spoilt.</p> <p>Police lack the humane nature and their questioning ability is very mechanical. They cannot take into consideration the cultural perspective and lack the ability to think from a woman’s perspective.</p> <p>Women have also identified problems (lack of sensitivity for clients) with existing agencies.</p>
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10	<p>Information/education would you suggest to develop awareness in the community?</p> <p>We need a kind of place where we can feel comfortable talking about our inner feelings; for example, Sahara Women’s Group. It is hard to get women out of the house to seek help but with a little bit of “push” they can heal their wounds.</p> <p>It is clear that women cannot talk from their homes because their extended family is there.</p> <p>There is a need to educate women regarding their rights in Canada.</p> <p>Another important issue is the need to develop a long-term plan to deal with such a sensitive issue.</p> <p>The women said that many agencies deal with crisis situations. But, we need help after the crisis is over. We need more after-care programs like SAHARA Women’s Groups.</p> <p>Brochures and videos should be developed in order to raise awareness in the community. Perhaps, radio and television could also be engaged to raise awareness.</p> <p>Participants responded that there is a need to educate women; “open up our minds and train women on these aspects.”</p> <p>Talk shows, seminars, educational workshops on Sur Sagar should be organized. People should be reached through talk shows, skit, and dramas.</p> <p>Advocacy efforts need to be taken up; curriculum sensitive to the needs of our community needs to be developed and taken up in the schools.</p> <p>Women felt that there is need to organize individual counseling programs for women related to sexual abuse.</p> <p>Media must be used to provide information. Parents must be educated so that they give education to their children.</p> <p>Self defense and sex education should be provided to children.</p> <p>Work at advocacy level and legislative level must be undertaken to help sexual abuse victims and prevent sexual abuse.</p> <p>Sexual activity before marriage should not be encouraged. People should be encouraged to talk and discuss about it without stigmatization.</p>
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<p>11</p>	<p>What suggestions do you have for the research team?</p> <p>We need some kind of system to help women in need. When we identify women who need help, we should be able to follow up with them until they are satisfied.</p> <p>We need mentors who can work with women and address their day to day needs. We need to be able to identify sources at work.</p> <p>The women also felt that some influential members of the community should be exposed who are guilty of abusing women. Other women shared stories of how men with “5Ks” (baptized Sikhs) are guilty of sexually abusing women.</p> <p>Women suggested that there is need to empower women, develop help lines for women, and need to educate them on sexual abuse.</p> <p>Participants felt that women should be empowered through education and employment so that they get to know about their rights.</p> <p>They should be encouraged to speak. Support services must be developed for women who need help.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Would you like to be involved in this project?</p> <p>Yes, we would love to work with you in this project.</p> <p>Yes, most women felt that they would be able to give time.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Other Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband says to his wife that the women who meet in the group are all widows and divorcees • Husbands have tape recording devices attached to their phones so that when the phone rings the recording device is turned on for recording the conversation • Woman’s father would give money to in-laws whenever there was problem. Therefore, the in-laws, in order to receive more money, started abusing her more and more • A lot of children get abused by the grandparents • Parents leave children at home thinking that children will be safe and to save money because licensed day care centers cost a lot of money, only to find later on that the children have been sexually abused • Punjabi community has no concept of solving problems – they ‘love’ to patch things up or ‘cover up’ the situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A woman is not only abused by her husband but also by other family members for example, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

14	<p>Observation and Conclusion:</p> <p>The women were active and participated by giving and sharing their experiences.</p> <p>The women had shared some very disturbing experiences which highlighted that women are sexually abused by the people they know.</p> <p>The abusers are their husbands, fathers-in-laws and friends, uncles or any one in the family.</p> <p>The insensitive legal system, apart from culture and society pressures, also inhibits women from demanding justice.</p> <p>The language was identified as an important issue that inhibits women from availing of police support.</p> <p>The women strongly advocated for developing programs for the women who require services.</p> <p>The insensitivity of an organization working for abused women was also identified as an important stumbling block that inhibits women from sharing her experiences.</p> <p>The use of media was stressed by the women like the use of shows like Sur-Sagar to disseminate information on sexual abuse.</p> <p>This discussion specially brought into the light the vulnerability of immigrant women who get abused by their husbands, father-in-laws and their relatives. They live under the threat of being left and abandoned. The lack of information and knowledge makes them more vulnerable to abuse.</p> <p>Sex education was given significance by this group as they felt that there is stigma attached to this issue and hence, priority must be given to make women and society more receptive.</p>
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Final Recommendations from Focus Groups

#s	Recommendations – joint responses from three focus groups
1	<p>Sexual abuse is defined as:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Inappropriate touching, forcing her to do things she doesn't want to whether in private or in front of others, making offensive verbal and postural signs, gazing or gawking (looking), making derogatory comments, fondling is considered sexual abuse.</p> <p>forcing her means: watching pornography, magazines, using sexual toys,</p>
2	<p>Women have identified sexual prevalence in Punjab. It occurred outside of the family with poor women and girls by "rich" men and it happened to girls and women by their family members and relatives. It also occurs within religious "priesthood".</p>
3	<p>The "Wall of Silence" must be broken through education, awareness and empowerment.</p>
4	<p>The young immigrant women need to be educated about their rights at the place of work so that they are not sexually harassed.</p>
5	<p>Special projects should be developed to educate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - little girls, - young teenage girls, - non-immigrant women, <p>because they are at most risk of being sexually abused by someone they know or they trust. These projects must address cultural values and issues which underpin sexual violence against women.</p>
6	<p>Educate women about the "system" which handles sexual abuse.</p>
7	<p>Language is the most significant barrier which needs to be addressed. Women cannot articulate well via interpreters.</p>
8	<p>Develop linkages and partnerships with police so that both parties understand each other. Develop a project which will educate the women about police responsibilities and educate the police about cultural sensitivity around the South Asian community.</p>

9	Develop culturally appropriate services for South Asian women who have experienced sexual violence.
10	Develop a community development project to enhance the skills of women to seek help in an emergency situation or in crisis situation. The solution of complex problems does not lie in calling 911.
11	The mainstream and South Asian service providers need to understand that the South Asian women want violence to end and their marriage to end. This approach requires the service providers to make major changes in the way they are delivering services.
12	Develop a health promotion and a Social Marketing strategy in order to educate and empower the family and the community.
13	Develop resources in order to educate and empower individuals, family and the community.
14	Develop community development projects to educate children about self-defence and healthy sexual education.
15	Develop a mentoring project, where by women mentors provide help and support to survivors of sexual violence.

APPENDICES

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE PUNJABI COMMUNITY

1. SUMMARY OF APPROACH TO SEXUAL ABUSE RESEARCH PROJECT

<p>1. Social Policy Context of Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Communities • Building Community Capacity • Building Social Capital • Valuing Diversity (Equity, access, etc.) 		<p>2. Purpose of Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop individual, family and community's capacity to understand, acknowledge and address the challenges associated with Sexual Abuse in the Punjabi community.
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<p>3. Project objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the challenges associated with Sexual Abuse of Punjabi women. • To build linkages with internal and external stakeholders to identify, acknowledge and address the issues of Sexual Abuse. • To identify how the complex problem of Sexual Abuse can be dealt within the Punjabi community at the individual, familial and community level.



<p>4. Approaches to developing asset inventory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link the collection of data On Sexual Abuse to issues and Aspirations identified by the respondents. (This gives the Research personal and social meaning for the community). • Do an analysis of the implications of the research for program planning, activities etc. • Identify how community can participate in the program planning and delivery of services. 	<p>5. Research questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How is Sexual Abuse defined in the Punjabi community? b. What are the challenges and complexities of Sexual Abuse in the community? c. How do respondents think these concerns should be addressed? d. How would respondents like to contribute to addressing these concerns? e. Which health promotion strategies will be effective in the Punjabi community? 	<p>6. Research Methodology</p> <p>A. Data Collection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Quantitative research (ii) Qualitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups with women (iii) Literature review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From previous survey/reports <p>B. Data Analysis</p> <p>C. Report Writing (Formal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report for the Punjabi Community Health Centre • Presentation package on findings & recommendations • Summary of findings & recommendations for distribution to the community • Community forum to release findings • Publish findings in academic journals
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* Data collection methods will be discussed in detail at the meeting.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research¹ engages practitioners, researchers and citizens in a collaborative process to meet the specific needs of the community (Israel *et al.*, 1994). Participatory research² originated from community development and determines the process whereby people are engaged in creating knowledge for themselves and they, in turn, take action on the findings (The Royal Society of Canada, 1995).

In the less developed countries, PAR was used as a method to engage the masses in community development work (Brown and tendon, 1983). The following characteristics form the basis of PAR (adapted from Israel *et al.*, 1994 & The Royal Society of Canada, 1995):

- The issues are identified by the citizens and not by the health care professionals.
- The collaborative process forces cooperation and collaboration between practitioners (community developers), researchers and citizens.
- Citizens have wisdom³ (A Community Development Strategy for the Health Department, Region of Peel, 1989) to understand and assess their needs which can be incorporated by researchers in order to obtain valid and reliable results.
- This process ensures that citizens have control over the final outcome of the study. The decisions regarding research are made collectively by the research team which has representation from the citizens. Through this process the citizens do get empowered and develop leadership in order to take actions on identified needs.

The process used in this research report has already generated interest amongst women to address the identified needs. They have organized themselves into a women's' group. They have named their group as the SAHARA⁴ Women's' Group. They are meeting on a monthly basis and are working on another research study to look at how women abuse services are unsuitable for Punjabi women.

¹ Israel, B.A., Checkoway, B., Schulz, A. & Zimmerman, M. (1994). Health education and community empowerment: Conceptualizing and measuring perceptions of individual, organizational, and community control. *Health Education Quarterly*, 21(2), 149-170.

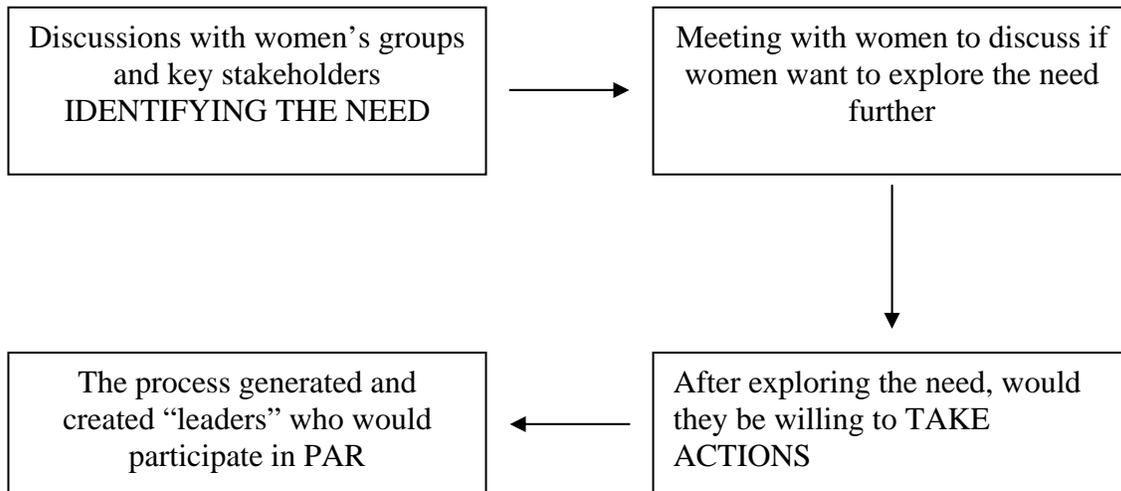
² The Royal Society of Canada (1995). *Study of Participatory research in Health Promotion*, University of British Columbia, Institute of Health Promotion Research.

³ Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health, *A Community Development Strategy for the Health Department, Region of Peel*, January 1989.

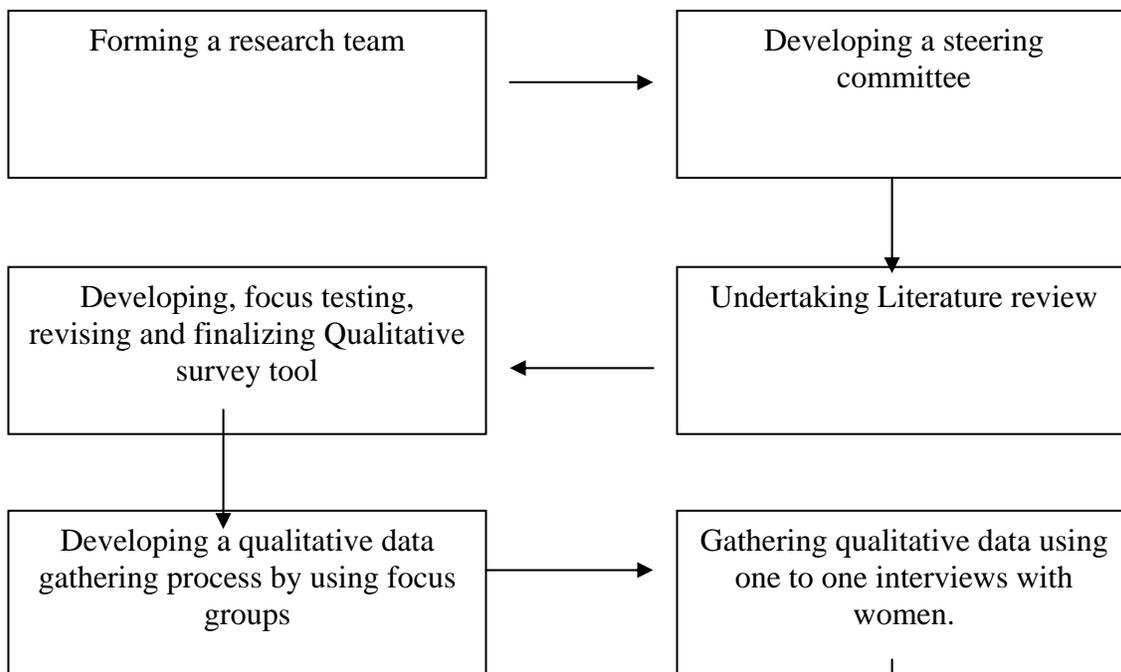
⁴ SAHARA in Punjabi language means "to support".

The process could be summarized as follows:

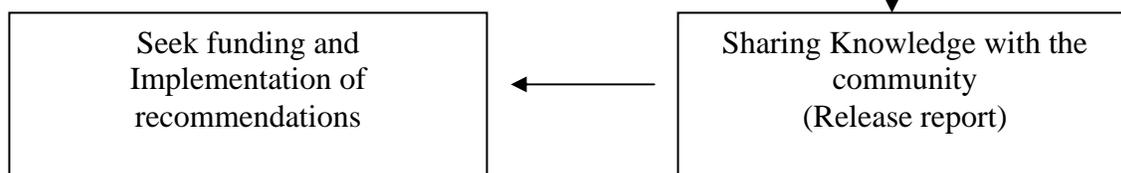
Pre-Research Work:



Research Work:



Post Research Work:



Focus Group Questions:

1. **What is sexual abuse?**
2. **Have you ever heard about sexual abuse in Punjab?**
3. **Male Patriarchy – is this to blame?**
4. **What about Canada? Have you heard of sexual abuse cases here?**
5. **Who in your opinion is the most vulnerable section of the society?
(Children, Lesbians, Women, Senior Women, Teenage Women)**
6. **Does the society and the community (both used in separate ways, society means the North American culture and laws; community means the south Asian community) give space for healing the wounds?**
7. **Are you aware of some myths and facts on this issue in the community?**

Myths:

Facts:

9. **What kind of impact does sexual abuse have on the victims' world? How does it change the psyche, choices, worldview, and circumstances?**
9. **What are the problems with using 911?**
10. **What information/education would you suggest to develop awareness in the community?**
11. **What suggestions do you have for the research team?**
12. **Would you like to be involved in this project?**

Other Comments

**Building Social Capital in the Punjabi Community
SEXUAL Abuse Research Project**

CONSENT FORM

Greetings and Welcome!

The Punjabi community Health Centre is a non-profit community based social service organization whose main mission is to deliver culturally appropriate social work intervention in the Punjabi community. PCHC strongly believes in partnerships with other mainstream and ethno-specific organizations. PCHC has partnerships with Victim Services of Peel, Inter-cultural Neighborhood Social Services, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, William Osler Hospital, Can-Sikh Cultural Centre, and Sikh Heritage Centre.

Punjabi Community Health Centre also runs the following Core Programs:

- SAHARA Men's group is operated from two locations (Brampton and Mississauga). This is a culturally appropriate group program designed to meet the needs of Punjabi men in the areas of addiction and anger management.
- SAHARA Women's group is operated from Brampton. This is a culturally appropriate group program designed to meet the needs of Punjabi women. The group program deals with the after-care needs of abused women and children.
- SAHARA Senior's group addresses the needs of the seniors and is run on a one day per week basis.
- Parenting sessions are organized in collaboration with the Mississauga Gurdwara, Peel District School Board and other religious institutions.
- PCHC provides individual, family, couples, and group counseling programs.
- PCHC provides food bank which addresses the needs of the abused women. Our volunteers drop off the food to the abused women.

Punjabi Community Health Centre has received four years of funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to Build Social Capital in the Punjabi Community. One of the objectives of this four-year project is to undertake research in the Punjabi community to explore the challenges associated with Sexual Abuse of Punjabi women. After the conclusions of the research phase, the project will continue to work with the community to address the identified challenges.

The research team is seeking your cooperation to complete the one-to-one interview and participation in focus groups. Your knowledge, expertise, and beliefs will help us in identifying the challenges associated with Sexual Abuse of women. If you need more information on any of the questions, please do not hesitate to ask me.

YOUR NAME WILL NOT APPEAR IN THE FINAL REPORT. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY YOU WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE ANSWERING.

**Thank you for completing one-to-one interview and participation in focus groups. The Punjabi Community Health Centre will release its findings to the community by organizing a public forum. All participants are welcome to attend the community forum.
Thank you!**

Building Social Capital in the Punjabi Community

Sexual Abuse of Women Research Project

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact any of the following persons if you have any questions about the project, and the methodology, etc.

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Building Social Capital in the Punjabi Community

Sexual Abuse of Women Research Project

**STATEMENT TO TREAT INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM PUNJABI
WOMEN AS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Name of Interviewer: _____

The interviewer understands and promises to abide by the following terms and conditions:

The interviewer will not personally use or disclose the information collected from the persons interviewed to anyone.

The interviewer will keep the questionnaires completed in a physically secure location and give them to the Program Manager of the Punjabi Community Health Centre as directed during the training session.

The interviewer will return all completed data to the Program Manager of the Punjabi Community Health Centre at the end of the interviewing period.

The interviewer will not contact any individual to whom the personal information collected, relates, directly or indirectly, without the prior written consent of the person who provided the information and the Program Manager of the Punjabi Community Health Centre.

The Program Manager of the Punjabi Community Health Centre will ensure that no personal information provided by the persons interviewed will be used or disclosed in a form in which the individual to whom it relates can be identified, without the prior written consent of the said individual and the Executive Director of the Punjabi Community Health Centre.

Signature of Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Signature of the Program Manager _____

Date: _____

Punjabi Community Health Centre