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In a region known as Shinwar, the birthplace of Afghanistan's opium industry, about an hour's drive east of Jalalabad, about 30 families out of a village of 200 had recently run away to Pakistan or Iran because they could not afford to pay poppy-related debts, said tribal elder Malik Afsar, 84. He said no farmer in his village had given away a daughter. But hours later, a farmer from Afsar's area acknowledged that his sister-in-law, a child, had been given away for marriage two years ago to the family of a man who had lent her father money to plant poppies. He said the families would wait until she grew up to conduct the marriage.

Jandad Spin Ghar, regional manager of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, said the group has received numerous complaints involving debt collection, but only one that specifically referenced the sale of a woman because of a poppy debt. His team visited the area to investigate, but families there refused to divulge any information. Ghar said his office has intervened to stop more than 20 cases of girls and women being "given as bad" but most of those were as payment to victims families in cases of murder. Abdul Hamad Razzaq, a Kabul-based human rights researcher who helped investigate 500 cases across Afghanistan of girls and women being given away to settle disputes, said only about 20 were to cover financial debts.

That research, done as part of a report by a new Afghan organization known as the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, reported cases of women as old as 32 and girls as young as 3 being given to another family. Hangama Anwar, a human rights activist working to persuade communities to stop the practice, said the victims often live out the rest of their lives in isolation and shame, treated as servants even if they are wives. "It's a crime," said she said. "It's against all civil laws, and it is against Islam. . . . But the people who are applying the laws don't care."

Training Option 6: Violence Against Women⁶⁰

Virtuous is the girl who suffers and dies without a sound - Traditional saying, India.

Definition of Violence Against Women In terms of CEDAW, violence against women is defined as violence directed towards women specifically because they are women, which results in physical, sexual or psychological harm (and includes threats of such harm). Women are subjected to gender-based violence much more frequently than men, because of the imbalance of social and economic power between men and women.

Gender-based violence This is any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering based on the gender of a person, but usually it refers to women and girls. It includes threats, coercion, deprivation of liberty, deprivation of the right to work, to earn income, sexual or mental rape, stalking or traditional practices, whether occurring in public or private life.

⁶⁰ Source: A Training Manual For The Media - Culture, Religion And Gender Inter Press Service

Some Types of Violence Against Women:

- Sexual harassment
- Rape
- Domestic violence
- Honor killings
- Intimate femicide (murder of a woman by a husband / boyfriend)
- Trafficking in women

Gender Issues

There is a complex relationship between culture, religion and violence against women. Religion and tradition are often used to justify gender-based violence, and such violence is used as a means of ensuring control over women's bodies and sexuality. Examples of this type of violence include domestic violence, and violence against women who do not adhere to cultural and religious norms, such as a dress code. Religion and tradition may be employed to condone violence against women, such as proverbs or religious sayings that suggest that a man has a duty to beat his wife in order to keep her virtuous. These teachings are also used to present violence against women as an inevitable part of life. In many cultures, elderly women advise young women that a woman's life consists of suffering, and that a virtuous woman accepts violence, abuse and exploitation by her husband and male relatives.

Religious images of women as a source of temptation are sometimes used to justify rape. For example, in Muslim countries which adhere to a strict dress code for women, women who do not adhere to such a dress code are ostracized and blamed for any form of violence which might befall them. However, religion has also been effectively used to mobilise against gender-based violence, and many non-governmental organisations which provide assistance and shelter to abused women, or lobby against such violence have been founded by religious institutions. For example, in some countries some religious groups provide counseling and support services for women who survive violence, and religious sermons are also used as tools to preach against the abuse of women and girls. Furthermore, religious institutions in some countries are building relationships and coalitions with other societal organizations and institutions to lobby against and create awareness about violence against women.

Media Issues

The following guidelines can help the media in reporting on issues of violence against women involving aspects of religion and culture:

- Avoid using a tone or language that suggests that women are to blame for violence directed against them.

- Consult a number of sources, including organisations which lobby against gender-based violence, and survivors of violence themselves.
- Avoid stereotyping specific religious groups (for example, portraying all Muslim men as abusive and Muslim women as victims).
- Instead of portraying women as victims, look for other angles, such as successful initiatives to combat violence against women, and women who step beyond traditional roles prescribed by culture and religion.

Definition of Femicide Femicide is the murder of a woman, specifically because she is a woman. There are many forms of femicide, including rape and murder and serial killings. However, the most common form of femicide is intimate femicide, where a woman is killed by her male partner. In some cultures, femicide also takes the form of dowry murders, where a woman is killed because she does not bring enough bride-wealth with her when she marries. Femicide is linked to cultural concepts of male ownership of women, and the lower value accorded to women's lives.

"Honor" killings are a form of femicide, whereby a woman is killed because of her actual or perceived immoral behavior, usually by relatives (often her husband or her father), who believe that she has damaged the honor of the family. There is a high incidence of "honor" killings in Muslim countries. However, the killings are not permitted in terms of Islamic law, and are in fact rooted in ancient tribal custom. Indeed, "honor" killings occur in countries as diverse as Brazil, Egypt, Italy, Uganda, and in many other nations where women are perceived not as individuals, but as vessels for honor of the family.

Reasons given for "honor" killings include infidelity or suspicion of infidelity; refusing to enter into an arranged marriage; marrying against her parent's wishes; seeking a divorce; speaking to other men; or "allowing herself to be raped". In many countries where "honor" killings are common, the state tacitly condones the practice by either failing to prosecute the killers, or by imposing light sentences.

Real Life Example - Samia Imran

Samia Imran, a 28-year-old woman from Pakistan, was in the offices of her lawyer, Hina Jilani, who she had approached to assist her in obtaining a divorce from her abusive husband. Despite the abuse that Samia had endured, her own family was violently opposed to a divorce, which they felt would taint their family honor. When Samia's mother entered the office, accompanied by a man, Samia rose to greet her. The man with her mother drew a gun, and shot her once in the head, and then again as she fell to the ground. Samia's mother left the room with the killer. "She never even bothered to look whether the girl was dead," says Hina Jilani. Samia's murder caused an outcry in Pakistani society, but rather than condemning the killer and those who planned the murder, politicians and the clergy called for Hina Jilani and her partner to be put to death for assisting women to obtain divorces.

Gender Issues

Honor killings are directly related to the concept that women are the property of their male relatives. A woman is viewed as either pure, or as contaminated, which then reflects upon the honor of her male family members. In many cases, once a woman is considered dirty and defiled, it makes no difference whether or not she was a willing participant in the "crime". She must be destroyed in order to remove the stain on the family honor. As with other harmful cultural practices, honor, killings are indicative of a society in which men dominate, and women have a subordinate socio-economic status. A woman derives status from her relationship to men, and is judged in terms of how she performs in the roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. A woman's life literally has less value than a man's honor.

Media Issues

News coverage of femicide and honor killings sometimes implies that the woman was in some way responsible for her own murder. However, it is also problematic and simplistic to demonize the killers. Honor killings stem from broader social issues, such as patriarchal power structures within family and society, gender roles, and the standards of behavior applied to men and women. Ibrahim, a young man who murdered his sister because she had married a man from another religion, stated that, "She is my sister - my flesh and blood - I am a human being. I didn't want to kill her- They [the community] pushed me to make this decision". Samia Imran's mother was also faced with the impossible decision between collaborating in the murder of the daughter or violating social codes and her own belief system.

MATERIALS: Three newspaper clippings

TIME: 30 Minutes

AIMS:

- To interrogate the attitude of traditional and religious leaders towards women and women's rights.

- To analyze the way the media may or may not reinforce negative cultural and religious beliefs towards women.

Break the group into small groups of about 5 people each. Each of the groups should focus on a different clipping. The group should answer the following questions and then report back in plenary. In their discussions, the groups should also consider the type of headline they will use in order to attract readers' attention.

1. What does the article suggest about the attitude of traditional and religious figures towards women?
2. Based on the article, in what ways are women's human rights violated?
3. Is this conveyed in the language, context and sources provided by the story?
4. Discuss and note down how this story could be improved to make it:
 - a) More informative (new)
 - b) More educational
 - c) Spur debate and policy changes among policy-makers and legislators

Handout 1: Newspaper Articles on Honour Killings

Honour Killings On the Rise

IRIN 15 Sep 2006

KABUL, - A weak judiciary, a lack of law enforcement and widespread discriminatory practices against women are fuelling a rise in honour killings in Afghanistan, officials from the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) said on Friday.

Bebi (not her real name) fears for her life after fleeing her house in the southeastern province of Paktia in June. The 15-year-old said she was forced into a marriage that she did not want. "I was engaged to an old man when I was only six months old, how can that be right?" She's now living incognito with friends in the capital Kabul. Facilities to protect women like Bebi are virtually nil in Afghanistan and many resign themselves to their fate. "My husband treated me like an animal, not as a human, with daily beatings and torture and locking me indoors," Bebi said. "I know he [husband] is pursuing me to kill me because he thinks I have disgraced him but God knows it is he who was guilty."

So-called honour killings, which rights activists say have become increasingly common in Afghanistan, are murders of women or girls who are believed to have brought shame on the family name. They are usually carried out by male family members, or sometimes by 'contractors' who are paid to carry out the killing and occasionally by children too young to face the law. The killings are commonly carried out on women and girls refusing to enter into an arranged marriage or for having a relationship that the family considers to be inappropriate. Due to such pressures from families, many women are driven to suicide or flee their homes to escape an honour killing.

According to AIHRC, some 185 women and girls have been killed by family members so far this year, a significant increase on the previous year. But rights activists say that the real number is much higher as many such cases go unreported, particularly in rural

areas. "Unfortunately, many women and girls continue to lose their lives due to this [honour killing] brutal crime. Sadly, it's totally ingrained in [Afghan] culture, particularly in rural areas of the country," Soraya Sobrang, head of AIHRC, told IRIN. Sobrang blamed weak prosecution of perpetrators and a lack of awareness among women about their rights as the key factors driving the practice.

A change in attitude on the part of the police and judiciary was also needed. "Regrettably, police forces in Afghanistan either don't arrest such killers or they don't treat them as murderers," Rahmatullah Weda, an information officer at AIHRC remarked. Afghanistan's government, which says it is committed to human rights and ending discrimination against women, hopes to end the practice but admits there are challenges ahead.

Dad Mohammad Rasa, an interior ministry spokesman, said honour crimes were prosecuted, but that the practice was so entrenched that stamping it out would be a long-term project. "We have created a commission in the interior ministry to try and eradicate such cases but it will take a long time to overcome such crimes as it has become a part of many people's culture."

Despite considerable progress being made following the collapse of the hard line Taliban regime in late 2001 and women's rights being protected under the new constitution, violence against women such as self-immolation, forced marriages and rape remain widespread in Afghanistan. The increase in such crimes against women has also been explained by the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan's southern provinces. The killing, maiming and beating of women were practically institutionalised during their ultra-conservative rule from 1996 until late 2001. The Afghan rights watchdog has registered some 704 cases of violence against women, including 89 cases of forced marriages and 50 cases of self-immolation so far in 2006, again, a significant increase over last year, it said.

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

UN condemns sexist killing of Afghan poet

CBC Arts Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Afghan poet Nadia Anjuman has been beaten to death and her husband and mother have been arrested. The United Nations condemned the killing Tuesday as a symptom of continuing violence against Afghan women four years after the fall of the Taliban. It is common for women to be beaten by their fathers, brothers or husbands and "honour" killings in which women are murdered to save the family from disgrace are still accepted in Afghanistan.

Anjuman, 25, was widely praised for her first book of poems, titled *Gule Dudi*, or *Dark Flower*. She had a large following among students in Afghanistan and neighbouring Iran. She died Friday in a hospital in the western city of Herat where she lived. She had been studying at university. Her husband has confessed to slapping her after an argument, said Nisar Ahmad Paikar, chief of the city's police crime unit. Her mother has

also been arrested, but no charges were immediately filed. "This is a tragic loss for Afghanistan," UN spokesman Adrian Edwards told the Associated Press. "Domestic violence is a concern. This case illustrates how bad this problem is here and how it manifests itself. Women face exceptional challenges."

Before U.S.-led forces ousted the Taliban from power, the regime barred women from working and girls from studying. Women were unable to travel without a male relative accompanying them and if they were caught outside without wearing an all-encompassing burqa, they were often beaten. President Hamid Karzai's U.S.-backed government has created a new constitution that guarantees gender equality. But old attitudes still prevail in rural areas and within families.

Thousands of people attended Anjuman's burial in Herat on Sunday. "Students everywhere are so upset over this. She was such a prominent poet in Afghanistan," said Homayan Ludin, a student at Kabul University.

More than 600 women murdered in Pakistan 'honour killings'

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1024852003>

16-Sep-03 10:15 GMT ZARAR KHAN IN KARACHI

AT LEAST 631 women, and six girls, died in "honour killings" in Pakistan in the first eight months of this year, human-rights researchers said yesterday. About half of the deaths of women - typically murdered by their own male relatives on suspicion of adultery - were reported in the country's southern Sindh province, and centred on the country's largest city, Karachi. But the Madadgar group, which prepared the tally, believes that many more killings went unreported in the conservative communities of Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province, both bordering on Afghanistan. "The number of women who fell victim to honour killings is definitely much higher than the reported cases but it is hard to record each case, especially when you don't have enough resources," said Zia Awan, of the Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid group.

Madadgar is run jointly by the lawyers' organisation and the UN Children's Fund. It found that husbands carried out 247 of the killings, brothers 112, fathers 54, sons 25 and uncles two. In other cases, there was no identification of the alleged culprit. Amir Murtaza, a Madadgar researcher, said the findings were based on daily monitoring of 25 newspapers in the Urdu, English and Sindhi languages. Honour killings are traditionally motivated by a woman having, or being suspected of having, a sexual relationship outside marriage. But they are also known when a woman refuses to marry a man chosen by her parents, marries without her family's consent, is raped, or attempts to divorce or escape from an abusive husband.

A killing may be carried out on the orders of a jirga, a council of village elders, but in most cases the decision is made by the immediate family. Often the woman is given no chance to explain or defend herself. Mr Awan said in most cases men accused of illicit affairs escape any punishment. Honour killings are against Pakistani law, but, in conservative rural communities traditional attitudes hold sway, and often police and the judicial system fail to prosecute those responsible. "There is a need for a strict law

which should hold the jirga or influential people of the villages responsible," Mr Awan said. Witness protection programmes are also needed for law enforcement to work, he added.

A Sindh government spokesman, Salahuddin Haider, said most honour killings in the province were reported in the upper part of Sindh, in the districts of Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Larkana close to the southwestern province of Baluchistan. He had no official figures. He said the provincial assembly was expected to approve a draft law aimed at curbing honour killings. "The government has instructed the police to treat these killings as murder and show no leniency," he said.

A report by the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said that in 2002 at least 461 women were killed by family members in honour killings. Its findings were based on reports from just two of Pakistan's four provinces: Punjab and Sindh. The commission said then the number of killings could be much higher. In the past, the commission has estimated that a woman is raped somewhere in Pakistan on average every two hours.

According to Amnesty International, Pakistani law allows criminal prosecution only if the family of the murder victim wishes to pursue it. In the case of many honour crimes this often does not occur, meaning they can be carried out with virtual impunity. While the government of Pervez Musharraf, the president, has publicly promised action to correct discrimination against women, Islamic political movements have gathered strength in Pakistan since the toppling of the fundamentalist Taleban in neighbouring Afghanistan. Most women were unaware that they had even the most basic rights under Pakistani law, Amnesty has reported.