

Synergetic efforts work to end domestic violence in China

A one-and-a-half-day workshop was held in late June to evaluate the enforcement of programs to end domestic violence in China, after the launch of the country's first anti-domestic violence law ratified on March 1, 2016.

Jointly hosted by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), UN Women and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the forum attracted a number of representatives from China's judiciary, police, civil affairs and health departments at both central and grassroots levels.

The discussions focused mostly on the practice, experience and problems during the enforcement of the new law to eliminate violence, especially that generated by the old concept of gender inequality. According to a survey issued by ACWF, in 2010, 24.7 percent of married women in China had been subjected to spouse violence.

"Traditional thinking that domestic violence is a household affair has made it difficult for the victims to stand up for themselves," said Asa Torkelsson, policy advisor from the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of UN Women. "The anti-domestic violence law is a big step towards elimination of [such] violence."

Chen Xianming, deputy director of the Jingyuan Health and Family Planning Administration in the landlocked Gansu Province of western China, told the story of a local woman who had suffered maltreatment in family for not being able to conceive a boy.

The victim surnamed Zhang was found with bruises and injuries to her back and the inner parts of her thighs when she visited the local hospital, making the doctor suspect she was a victim of domestic violence. However, in trepidation, the woman was unwilling to disclose the cause of her injuries.

After reassurance and a bit of conversation, especially after explanation of the protection and the rights guaranteed to women offered by the law, Zhang started to reveal her misery. Due to having twice borne baby girls, her husband became dissatisfied and sought every opportunity to bully her.

By helping her to reveal her trauma, the local civil-affair professionals started to work on her husband, persuading him to change his stereotyped view of masculine superiority.

Her husband gradually accepted this view. In 2015, the family was recognized as the impoverished household receiving support and compensation in efforts to improve their livelihood. This year, they eventually shook off their poverty.

"Protecting women and girls from violence is not only a moral and human rights imperative, it is also critical to the economic and social progress of

nations,” said Dr. Babatunde Ahonsi, UNFPA China Representative. “As long as the dignity and well-being of half of humanity is at risk, then peace, security and sustainable development will remain out of reach.”

The yearlong implementation of the anti-domestic violence law has seen the issuance of some 680 protection orders based on concerns for the safety of victims, a preventive measure for sufferers to avoid reprisal attacks or continuous abuse.

“Our country, which is against domestic violence in any forms, is always calling for the equal, harmonious and polite relations among family members,” said Han Mei, the initiator of the protection order approach and judge of the Supreme People’s Court of China.

However, according to Han, as the evidence of domestic violence is hard to spot, some judges are reluctant to issue such an order, which should be handed out no later than 72 hours after the victims are subjected to violence. To better protect victims by means of the orders, Han advised people not to question the judgments unscrupulously, thus allowing judges to make a judgment with rational and independent thinking.

Huang Lei, the head of ACWF’s branch in Ningxiang, Hunan Province, said that domestic violence used to be prevalent in her town, which is home to around 34,000 people. “Even some officials in the teamwork for anti-domestic violence campaigns were found to be engaging in violence at home,” she said.

That is why training is being provided for professionals and the law explained to common people, especially the children, through mini-movies and social media, such as WeChat and QQ, to inculcate a sense of gender equality.

The unfair difference in status between men and women is often considered a root cause for domestic violence.