

# Towards the Development of Culturally Appropriate Violence Prevention Strategies

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*Banff, Alberta*



FAMILY SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO

*For People. For Change.*

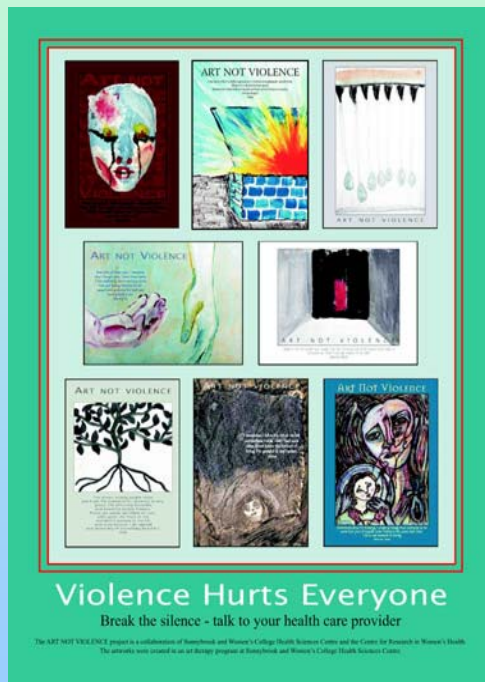


The Centre for Research  
in Women's Health

# Outline

- Introduction to the CRWH
- Violence & Health Program: Projects
- Consideration of IPV in the Tamil community: The role of community norms and values
- Towards prevention

# CRWH - Violence and Health Research Program



## Themes:

- Psychological trauma and mental health
- Physical illness and injury
- Institutional responses and professional practices
- Cross-cultural issues
- Measurement
- Knowledge transfer

# Addressing IPV in Minority Cultural Communities: Research Gaps

- Prevalence and consequences
- Risk and protective factors
- Barriers to help-seeking
- Effectiveness and acceptability of screening



# Violence & Health Program: Projects

- 1) Addressing the gaps: Increasing our understanding
- 2) Risk and Protective Factors for IPV in cultural communities
- 3) Perceptions of and responses to IPV in the Tamil community
- 4) Screening for IPV in the antenatal setting:  
Newcomer preferences
- 5) Curriculum Development & Best Practices for  
EMS and ED providers



# Definition

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** (also known as partner abuse, domestic violence or woman abuse) - Actual or threatened physical or sexual violence or psychological and emotional abuse directed toward a spouse, ex-spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend, or current or former dating partner” (Centers for Disease Control, 1999).

# Working with Women from Minority Cultural Communities

Heterogeneity with respect to social phenomena such as source country, age at migration, visibility, SES, ethnicity, category of migration, religious and cultural beliefs, and/or language fluency **MUST** be recognised

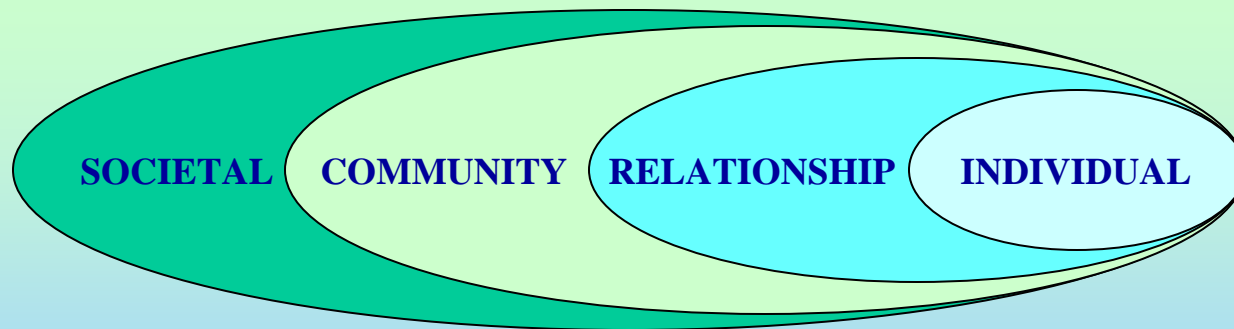
## Research challenges:

- Number of communities
- Who gets included?
- Data limitations
- Many intersecting vulnerabilities

# Prevalence of IPV in Canada

- 7% of women experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by current or former partner in previous 5 years (GSS, 2004)
- 18% of women experienced emotional and/or financial abuse by current or former partner in previous 5 years (GSS, 2004)
- Immigrant women experience slightly lower rates of IPV compared to Canadian-born women (Cohen & Maclean, 2003)
- Risk of IPV increases with length of stay in Canada (Hyman et al., in press)

# Ecological Model for Understanding Violence



WHO, 2002

# Perceptions of and Responses to Intimate Partner Violence in the Tamil Community

## Research Team:

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## Research Staff:

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## Partners:

- Family Service Association of Toronto
- University of Western Ontario-Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children

# SRI LANKA



The image shows the Tamil flag on the left, which consists of three vertical stripes of green, orange, and red. To its right is the coat of arms of the Tamil Nadu state, featuring a white lion holding a sword in its right paw, set against a red background with four white leaves in the corners.

# Why the Tamil Community?

- Involved in a recent Community Health Needs Assessment at S&W (WCACC) that identified violence against women as a critical issue;
- Has already been focusing on violence prevention efforts with our community partner, Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA);
- Expressed a readiness and willingness to participate in further activities related to IPV;
- One of the primary sources of new immigrants and refugees to Toronto, and experiences multiple linguistic, cultural and systemic barriers to care.



# Objectives

- Describe perceptions, definitions, and the language used to discuss IPV;
- Learn about abusive behaviours in the country of origin as compared with Canada;
- Improve access to help by:
  - Providing information for outreach activities
  - Enhancing community capacity to prevent and respond to IPV
  - Informing the development of culturally sensitive health care

## **Methods:**

- Qualitative research methods
- Focus groups with 4 different groups of women representing different ages/stages and generations, and, women who have accessed FSA services for help with IPV



**Source of Funding:**  
CIHR

# Examples of Questions

- What kinds of stories, myths or sayings did you hear while growing up that taught you about how men and women should behave with each other?
- What type of language, actions, or behaviours do you consider to be abusive?
- Are there times or situations when those behaviours would be acceptable?
- What types of interventions are needed for women who experience abuse in your community?



# Findings

*I think that domestic violence is hidden within the Tamil community because if a girl gets hit, not a lot of people find out about that. It's like within four walls.*

*(Youth Group)*

# Definitions

## Young Women

- Physical
- Emotional
- Abusive language
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice
- Controlling behaviour
- Threats of deportation
- Insults

## Women at Midlife

- Using weapons
- Fighting
- Hurting by words
- Too much control over spending
- Controlling behaviour
- Sexual abuse
- Suspicion

# Definitions

## Senior Women

- Physical
- Suspicion
- Beating everyday
- Insulting and criticizing wife's parents or family
- Emotional/Psychological- "hurting the mind"
- Insults, strong words, calling you animal names

## Abused Women

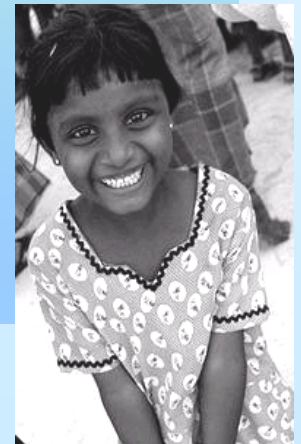
- Dominating, controlling, dictatorial behaviour
- Infidelity
- Marrying with a wife in Sri Lanka
- Suspicion
- Sending too much money to his family in Sri Lanka
- Controlling money
- Complaining about her to his parents or family
- Calling her "bad" names

# Community Norms

- Focus
  - Female virtues and desirable qualities
  - Male privilege and roles
  - Marriage
  - Divorce
- Influences on norms
- Changes in norms

# Female Virtues

- *‘Achacham, madam, nanam’ (fear, ignorance and shyness - qualities expected of females)*
- *‘Adakka ollukam’ (be submissive, obedient and proper)*
- *‘If a man walks through mud nothing sticks to him but if a woman goes through mud, it sticks to her’*
- *‘A woman who laughs is just like a tobacco leaf unrolled’*



# Female Virtues

- Chaste
- Submissive, obedient and proper
- Patient
- Modest
- Act with decorum
- Silent and serious
- Responsible



# Male Privilege and Roles

- *Ann mahanai utti vala pen mahalai adidthu vala (a male child has to be fed well and a girl child has to grow up with beating)*
- *Chan mahan annalum ann mahan allawa (even if the child is the size of a hand, he is still a boy, a son)*
- *Tholukku mehla valanthal tholan. (if one grows above your shoulder, he is your friend)*





# Male Virtues

- Responsible
- Protective
- Strong
- Achievement oriented
- Economically & professionally accomplished



# Norms About Marriage

*Even if your husband is grass, he is still your husband and even if your husband is a stone, he is still your husband*

*If I address my husband like “enga vada” (“come here”, using the familiar form) in a public place, I should be beaten by him. But at home if we are talking it’s ok.  
(midlife woman)*

*Especially after you get married you can’t undo it, you can’t throw the ‘thali’ (a yellow thread or golden chain that symbolizes marriage) away...(young woman)*

# Norms About Marriage

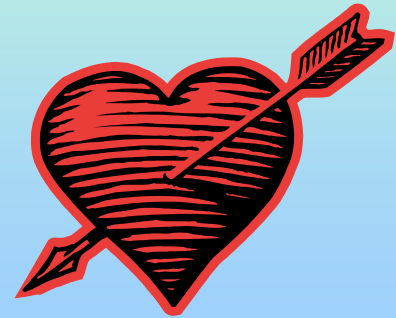
- Married women should be patient and exercise forbearance
- Husbands should be respected
- Usually women are to blame for marital problems (either as wives or as “other women”)
- Men are expected to provide for their wives
- Women are expected to cater to husbands’ needs



# Norms About Divorce

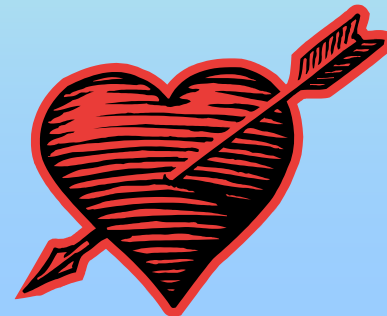
*We cannot separate even in an abusive situation.*

*We cannot go out to seek help for problems but we have to live this forever and only at the time of death, only then can we be separated from each other (midlife woman)*



# Norms About Divorce

- Community shames and blames women who complain, separate, or divorce
- Community isolates separated or divorced women and their children (stigma)
- Women cannot remarry; marital prospects of children are affected



# **How Are Norms Conveyed? Where Do They Come From?**

- Sayings
- Religious stories
- Stories about community members
- Media: movies, TV, songs
- Parents and grandparents

# Evidence of Changing Norms

- Sex preferences
- Child rearing practices
- Recognition of equal rights
- Educational opportunities
- Home responsibilities
- Problems with dowry system acknowledged

# Implications for Culturally Appropriate IPV Prevention

*Don't worry because for our generation almost everything is over. But our children would never want to be like us. If they do not like their partner they will leave them and try to have a boy friend or girl friend.  
(Youth group)*

# Education and Public Awareness: Tamil Community

## Goals:

- Increase equality between sexes
- Expand and/or redefine women's roles & value in the family and community
- Increase community awareness of IPV
- Increase community intolerance of IPV
- Decrease stigma associated with marital conflict, separation and divorce

# Education and Public Awareness: Tamil Community

## Strategies:

- Target boys, girls, men and women of different ages and generations (schools, couples, family)
- Increase inclusiveness of community's social networks
- Use existing media to change perceptions
- Develop media literacy programs to counter existing myths, sayings, images

# Education and Public Awareness: Providers

## Goals:

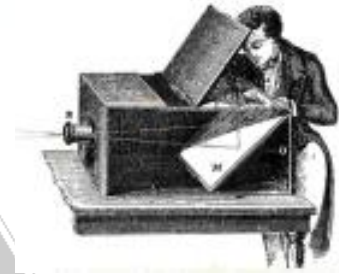
- Increase health and social service providers' knowledge of Tamil community perceptions of and responses to IPV
- Inform culturally appropriate early identification
- Develop culturally appropriate responses to disclosure



# **Education and Public Awareness: Providers**

- Inform development of culturally appropriate safety and support services
- Develop community specific supports
- Decrease dependency, increase skills
- Decrease barriers to help-seeking
- Mobilize to build protective communities

# Credits



- Map of Sri Lanka accessed Sept. 20/05 from the Lonely Planet website: [www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/indian\\_subcontinent/sri\\_lanka/sri\\_lanka.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/indian_subcontinent/sri_lanka/sri_lanka.htm)
- Tamil girl slide 13. Photo: Will Baxter/Special to the Journal-World accessed Sept. 20/05.  
[http://www2.ljworld.com/photos/galleries/2005/sep/12/tsunami\\_survivors/](http://www2.ljworld.com/photos/galleries/2005/sep/12/tsunami_survivors/)
- Tamil boy slide 14. Photo: Refugees International/ Eugene Carlson 01/09/2005 accessed Sept. 20/05.  
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/photo/detail/5099/>
- Tamil woman slide 15. Photo accessed from an online catalogue of wedding saris.