

Knowledge Attitudes Practices Study On Violence Against Women in Myanmar

For the Project

Promoting Access to Justice: towards a violence free environment for women and girls



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The approach,
the methodology

About this KAP: the approach

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices studies are often associated with quantitative surveys. Surveys work well when there is a clear understanding of what practices are in place, what dynamics underlie them and on what exactly needs to be changed.

But “Violence against women” is a broad and blurred concept. It cannot easily be pinned down. Before narrowing down issues for analysis and work, we wanted to listen the views of people, with open questions. We saw the KAP was an opportunity to explore violence against women with “open”, qualitative methodologies. Questions that could capture the diversity encountered in the areas we visited, in terms of geography, traditions, religion, ethnicity, conflicts, influx of external actors.

Traditional KAP survey	KAP study
Clarity, from the start, on which Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (KAPs) will be addressed. Issues to explore are pre-selected and specific. They are already linked to planned activities.	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices (KAPs) relevant for the programme are not defined from the start. The KAP study sets a BROAD FRAMEWORK and seeks to discover new issues and patterns: it is “open”, inquisitive, incremental. “How are knowledge, attitudes, practices shaping up – now – the vulnerability of women to violence? And consequently: “what specific aspects of these KAPs could be leveraged to empower them?” There is no previous work on GBV in the areas of intervention. The KAP study seeks to avoid prescribing issues to be examined. Prescribing issues would result in “seeing only what we want to see” and possibly missing out on context relevant KAPs.
The starting point is the programme setup. The implementing organization knows and stipulates what KAP should be promoted and changed, and how.	The starting point is the experience of vulnerable women. What KAPs matter in a given context is established by listening to them and by listening to the people that are connected to them. The programme is shaped consequently.
KAPs are set and will not change throughout the programme.	What KAP the programme will transform cannot be fully stipulated from the start. KAPs worth addressing will evolve as the relations and awareness of stakeholders in the programme evolve. As the programme evolves, the understanding of KAPs will also change. GBV is a sensitive topic – and often hidden and denied. If the programme is truly participative and adaptable to the local context, new issues might surface. Other can become less relevant. Trust building, for example, can result in some issues previously hidden to be revealed and discussed.
It has a prevalent quantitative focus, and employs probability sampling. It quantifies trends within a large group of people “how many people have a [pre-set] knowledge, attitude or practice?”	It adopts a qualitative approach, and non-probability sampling It puts women at the center. It then looks at how knowledge, attitudes, practices (of the women themselves or of the actors that can support them) shape their social networks. “What attitudes are currently present within the communities we want to work with? How do they affect the most vulnerable women, in this specific context? How do they interplay now?”
It uses questionnaires, with standardized questions.	It uses in-depth qualitative interviews. They are left open to discover unexpected / hidden practices and to investigate them in-depth.
Focus on individual actors’ KAPs, then aggregated at the large scale.	The KAP study connects individual perspectives to a systemic understanding of change. The KAP is about “sensemaking”, bringing together different perspectives. In addition to individual KAPs, it seeks to capture interrelations amongst actors shaping KAPs.
The baseline captures the state of specific KAPs before the programme. For example: agreement on a statement, adoption of a practice.	The baseline is not focused on tracking specific KAPs, but their interplay. It is a baseline of dynamics. It shall be linked to future “stories of change” explaining how dynamics transformed.
There is no direct link of KAP survey with monitoring systems. KAP surveys are done before and after the programme, but are disconnected from it.	The KAP study should be linked to monitoring systems that are sensitive to transformation on specific KAPs. The approach used – participatory consultation, in-depth interviews - lends itself to be followed up through the programme and to be incorporated as part of ongoing monitoring and reflection, and the PRRPs.
KAP surveys are often perceived as external exercises.	The process is facilitated – rather than lead – by the consultant. The fieldwork is also “training on the job” for the staff on qualitative interviews. Debriefings regularly happen: sensemaking is a collective practice.
The output of a KAP survey is often a written report, with limited circulation.	The most suitable way to convey information will be assessed in the study. A light report will be accompanied by a framework for analysis and by multimedia work. Information on KAP will be most effective when it is used not only by project management, but also to inform debate and changes in the social context that need to be transformed. Hence the emphasis in capturing the voices and perspectives of people in a way that can be communicated and used, also through the lifecycle of the programme.

Rather than looking at “baseline” and “endline” around pre-set issues, it is hoped that this KAP can be the starting point of a better systematization and understanding of knowledge, attitudes and practices in use. As the project evolves, trust with the communities will also evolve, and it will be therefore be possible to go deeper in some issues or to rectify them, with a fuller understanding of the rationale for different KAPs. Some

of the KAPs exhibited to strangers will not be the same exhibited to community supporters, and understanding the difference into exhibited practices and held practices will be itself important. As community members will evolve their knowledge, not only their practices might change, but also their own understanding of the existing ones might evolve. This means that even if practices are not changed, they might be better understood, which is an important transformation in itself.

The KAP was the first step of engagement with a community on a topic that so far had not been dealt with openly or discussed. The first interaction with a community can set the tone of subsequent work. This is why we felt it more appropriate to use in-depth discussions, with a limited number of people rather than a broad number of aseptic questionnaires. In these discussion we learnt that views often formed as interviewers were “thinking aloud”, for the first time about the issue. We could probe thinking with follow up questions, clarifications and examples, which at times diverged with the views initially presented. We also tried to run the interview so that people would never be forced to discuss issues they were not comfortable with. They would be the ones to define what behaviours they felt relevant. And if we had a feeling that they would not be comfortable discussing an issue, we would not insist dealing on it. In many cases we could divert the discussion on issues in the background, rather than on major violent behaviours, which still yielded important information. Treating interviews as open conversation gave us the possibility to be sensitive to women / people, and to initiate a work based on dialogue rather than on “interrogations”.

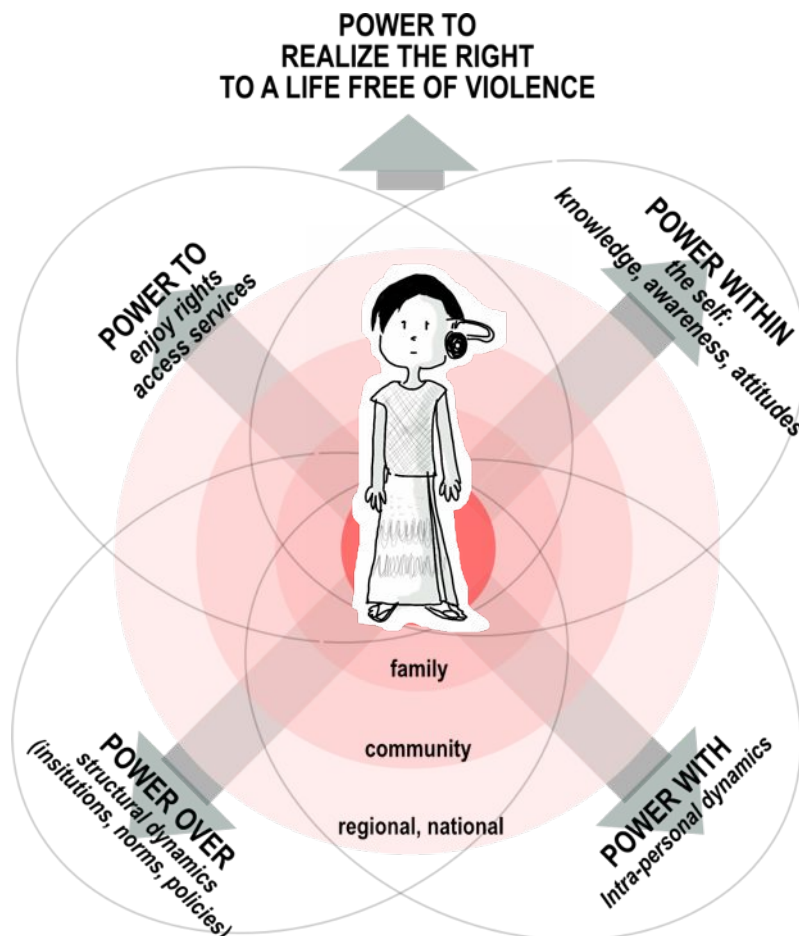
The framework for interpreting the results

The framework used to interpret the results is based on an empowerment framework of ActionAid Myanmar / International. The framework has, in turn, used elements of the “power cube” - <http://www.powercube.net/> - and further elaborated them, based on action / research in assessment and monitoring systems of ActionAid and other international organizations.

This was felt to be an appropriate framework for the KAP, as violence against women must be understood within a power framework, capturing dynamics of power.

To understand violence against women (and to confront it) it is necessary to take into account:

- **different forms of power:** the POWER TO enact violence against women (and the POWER TO stop it) results from the interrelation of the POWER WITHIN (the self - knowledge, awareness, attitudes - of the women confronted with violence and of the perpetrators), the POWER WITH (inter-personal dynamics: support for the women confronted with violence, support for the perpetrators by other actors), the power OVER (power exerted by those in authority, stances of institutions and social norms vis-à-vis violence, and policies and structures in place that perpetrate or contribute to reduce it); the POWER TO enjoy other rights, and having access to resources and services that might support reducing violence.
- **different levels:** the likelihood that violence against women can take place and can be confronted is determined by actions happening at different levels: from the individual, to the family, the community... up to the state.
- **hidden violence, hidden and invisible power:** recognize that violence against women can result in open violence (for example physical acts of violence) but also in more subtle acts of violence, for example psychological. The power shaping violence can also be explicit, hidden violence, or even “invisible” (social norms that are accepted and unquestioned, and yet limit the potential of women to be who they want to be and to fight inequality and violence)



Looking at dynamics amongst the elements

Other frameworks might emphasize the same elements, but look them as “disconnected ingredients” of a programme. The experience of using the framework shows that:

- **connection matters**, no one element can be fully understood without linking it to the other components. For example, the “confidence of the women” (power within) needs to be acknowledged in the context of existing social networks and social norms. Is it supported? Is it frowned upon? The framework also assumes that addressing power will require a holistic approach. Power to limit violence against women (and the linked “power to do violence”) is effective only when all dimensions are considered and addressed. Hence the need to spell them out in the study.
- **KAP might often tend to look at issues of “power within”**. There is a risk to focus on perceptions, attitudes, behaviours that pertain to the sphere of the self. This study looks at knowledge, attitudes and behaviours as an expression of personal power, and to do so it must read them connecting all forms of power within a community. The experience in using similar frameworks shows that making explicit and emphasizing power with and power over can lead to ask more and deeper questions about the context in which the attitudes and behaviours are generated and operate.

Methodology

This KAP did not follow a standard methodology. A training / workshop was offered at the start, to discuss and build capacity of the KAP team around the “fundamentals” and to agree on the framework for analysis. [See appendix]

How interviews were to be conducted, which stakeholders to meet, etc. were defined with participants, how best to ask and make questions flow, how to capture perspectives with videos... all evolved in the course of the study.

Process:

We spent 4 days in each of the project areas.

Three days were spent in villages, doing in-depth interviews. Two teams worked in parallel, one comprising women and one men. Each interview lasted from one to two hours (the interview flow is described below). When possible, we asked participants – at the end of the interview – to repeat some points discussed in the interview on video, and many were happy to do so.

The team-leader sat in interviews with the women’s groups, and then debriefed, daily, the men’s group – this allowed them to check the content of their notes while the interviews were still “fresh” in their memory. Each day we also translated and subtitled the video captured.

The fourth day was spent interviewing government representatives. We chose to interview them at the end to be able to discuss with them the challenges and issues that we had encountered in the field. This made our conversation based on “real life”, and led to discussion of very concrete challenges.

The team leader did field work in all the 4 areas, but she could not access the villages in Rakhine. Rakhine staff joined the fieldwork in Pyapon, after the workshop, to learn by doing the interview process. We then had in-depth debriefings in the Rakhine office each evening following their field work.

The findings were consolidated and presented to staff in the ActionAid office in Yangon, in several events:

- some for the general staff, including staff of the Gender Equality Network to ensure that awareness of issues of violence against women could be spread;
- some with the AAM women’s rights team, to discuss the findings, but also to discuss how the process started with the KAP could be built upon as the UNTF programme unfolds. And how the knowledge and the resources produced by the KAP could be used not only as a baseline, but as an asset for the project. This included for example, thinking about how to use videos (or their content) to spur discussion in women’s, men’s and youth groups.

The interview flow:

- **Introduction and request for consent.** We read a consent form, which explained the purpose of the interview, discussed confidentiality issues and reinstated that participants could opt out or refuse to answer at any point in time and with no consequences.
- **The initial question.** We started by asking “what are inappropriate behaviours against women which can happen in your area” and then discussing these. Each behaviour was written on a card. We listened to participants and explored the inappropriate behaviours as they emerged, one by one, with follow up questions. Conversations were kept free flowing, and we had a mental checklist that included the questions highlighted in Figure 1 as well as the framework for the study.
- **Identifying more behaviours.** When we had explored in detail one behaviour, we moved to the next card, or we asked “what other behaviours” could be encountered.
- **Prompting behaviours.** When participants ran out of ideas about inappropriate behaviours we sometimes prompted with other ones. For example, we asked about behaviours that had emerged in other interviews in the area and we wanted to cross check. Or we solicited – when appropriate – views on other behaviours where we felt interviewees could have an interesting view point. One issue we were keen to explore even if not mentioned was the attitude of men and women on “forced sex within marriage” – to check if it was forgotten or if it was not considered – as it was often the case, as inappropriate.

- **Summary table and scoring likelihood.** At the end of the interview we summarized the behaviours mentioned, by reading out the cards. We then asked them to rate, for each behaviour, the likelihood that it could happen in the village tract¹ (on a scale from 1 - never, to 5 - very often).
- **Videos.** At the end of the interview we asked participants if they would repeat some of the interviews highlights on video. We explained that the video would be used in the context of the research, and that they would not be shown in their own or in other villages in their area, to ensure confidentiality. In most cases they accepted.

Figure 1. Diagram of question flow

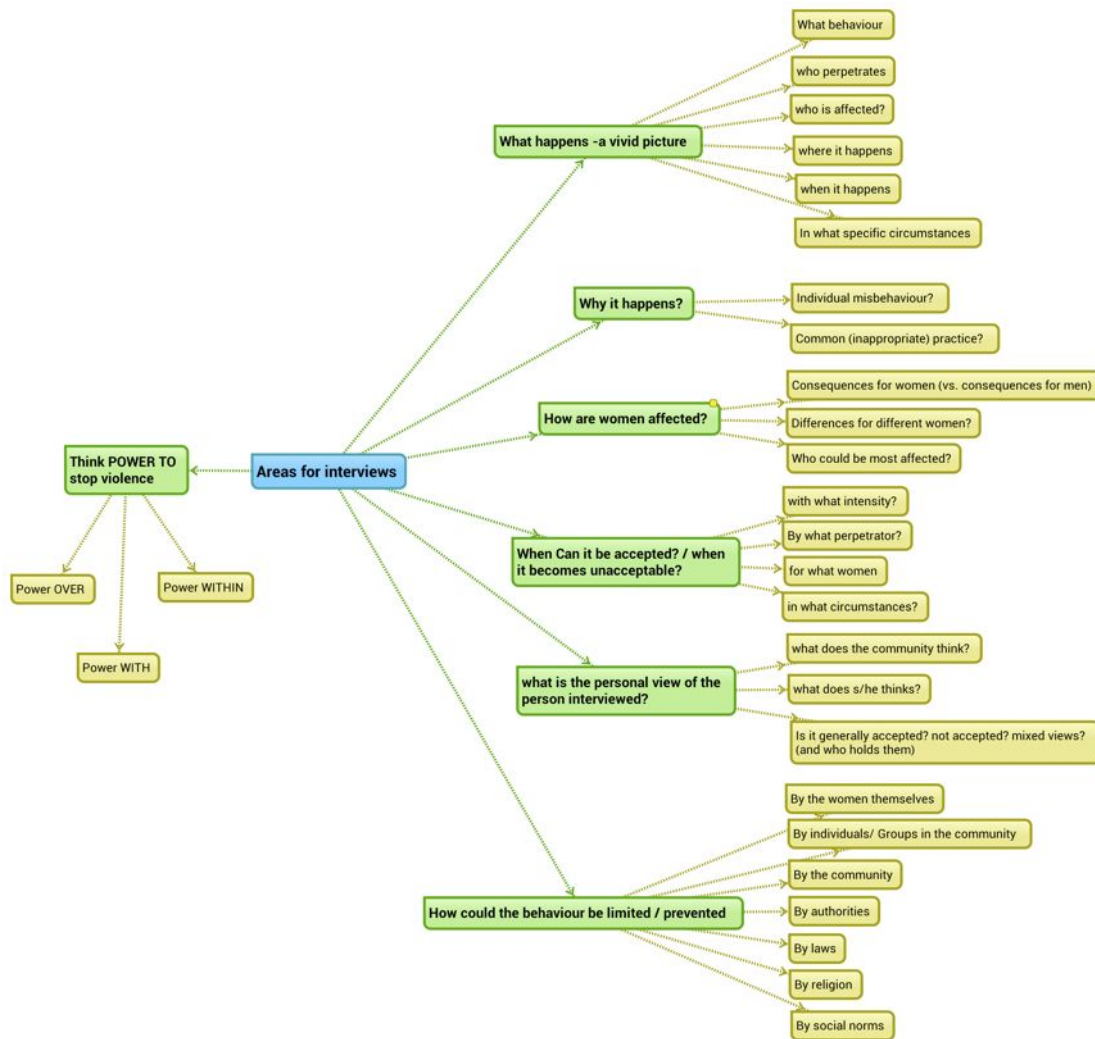


Table 1. Stakeholders interviewed in villages and rationale for interviewing them

Young unmarried girl / men (18 and above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand their perspective as well as to assess what behaviour impacted more on them
Young married girl / men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, with a focus on understanding the perspective of women newly married.
Widows / divorced women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand if there were specific behaviours impacting on this group because of their status.
Mothers / fathers of adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to their own views, they could also spell out their stance re: inappropriate behaviour on their girls (fears for them / support when behaviour happened / preventive behaviour). This was a way to also capture behaviours affecting girls, who were not interviewed.

¹ The lowest level of government administration in Myanmar consisting of a group of 5-10 villages

Care takers of children / women with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We had very limited access to people with disability in the villages. In Kayah, in the village visited (and the neighboring one) no people with disability were reported. In Meikhtila we were informed that the young woman with disability living in the village was abused (and we could therefore not interview her)
Village leaders / elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As those in charge with rules and norms in the village (including resolution and negotiation on issues of violence against women)
“Active women”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We met these women that people considered as “active”. This included women that proved active in working with other organizations, that are vocal in village meetings, and that are – in general – recognized as having a role on social issues in the village.
Youth Group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As those in charge to organize activities for the youth in the villages, and aware of the relationship and challenges for young men and women in the villages
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As someone connected with youth in the village As someone in charge to teach “adequate behaviour” within society As a recognized educated person
Women Affairs Federation Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We planned to interview them, as a key institution in the area. However, they were not operating in the villages visited.
Religious leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We interviewed a religious leader in Kayah, in charge of the “cleansing ceremonies”. In other areas, religious leaders were not available for the interview.
Traditional birth assistants (TBA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As someone who could have information about sexual health – and traditional knowledge around it – and possibly also a view around unwanted pregnancies.

Limitations

Understanding local dynamics as complex as those linked to violence against women would of course require much deeper investigation.

- Limited time.
- Short training to give an overview.
- Interviews not always done following strictly the same process (some started asking “differences amongst men and women”).
- Points lost in translation. In the interviews led by the team leader (foreign), a compromise had to be found in having word-by-word translation and letting the interview flow. There were pros and cons for both. Strict translation could be more precise, and really pinpoint issues. But this became lengthier, and caused the conversation to become more of an interrogation, with a lot of time spent in translations. In some cases, as the staff acquired confidence with the methodology, it was better to leave the conversation flow, to create a lighter atmosphere. It was a case-by-case decision when to do so. This was further complicated by the fact that in some remote areas double translation was needed (local language -> Myanmar -> English).
- Sometimes the interviewed got a bit hurried. Interviews were lengthy, and it was not possible to always have full attention of the interviewee for a long time. In some cases some topics were discussed too quickly, and the point was less explored than it should have.
- Difficult sometimes for the staff to question behaviours and attitudes that are ingrained in Myanmar and that they also perceive as “normal” (e.g. dress code, some good behaviour norms).
- When cases of violence against women were presented it was sometimes hard to resist the temptation to “get the details of the specific case” rather than exploring the dynamics behind it.
- Taboo issues: some issues could not be discussed openly in the meetings. Issues relating to sexual health and contraception, sexual intercourses, abortion could not be really explored by strangers in their first meeting with community members. Yet, between the lines, some observations were made that enabled highlighting some issues in this KAP.
- Some issues were hard to disentangle. For example, when “drinking” was mentioned, it become very hard to go beyond “drinking” when looking for the root causes of violence.
- Dealing with contradictions. Contradictions emerged during the interview. Behaviours that were discarded as “not happening here” were then quoted later in the interviews. Respondents who expressed a position, changed it in the course of the interview. Rather than trying to choose “which answer should we accept”, it is important to acknowledge that contradictions exist. The fact that for many people the KAP was the first opportunity to discuss about issues never openly shared means that they were probably “thinking aloud”, and shaping their thinking in the conversation. This is why this KAP should be seen as the first step of a process to further shape thinking and beliefs around violence against women, where further contradictions and challenges will emerge.

Things to be aware of when reading the report

Bringing in voices of participants. Quotes and videos

When reporting the findings, in many instances **quotes** are used to report what women / people had said. It was felt that quotes could increase readability and bring in more the voice of people interviewed rather than heavier forms of reporting. Note however that these quotes are NOT verbatim, but are extrapolated from notes on the interviews. They do reflect – and in some case summarize - the content of what they said – and they have been cross-checked (“We understand you said that... is it correct?”), but not “word by word”. We also chose not to always attribute the quotes to specific people, to preserve confidentiality.

Quotes are accompanied by a [letter]. It indicates where the interview took place. (see table below). In some cases, some additional information is given to identify the author of the quote. Information about the author is not given when several people in the area had expressed similar views, or when the quote refer to what the respondent assumes to be “the common behaviour” in the area.

We also used **videos**, in the form of short sound bites, to share the views of respondents. The sound bites are available on YouTube – with a private non-searchable link – and are accompanied with a short summary that helps to put the sound bite in context. It was agreed with the respondent that videos could be shared within the research, but would not be circulated for broad external communication, and would not be shared within their village and surrounding areas without their consent. So, if you access the videos on YouTube, please respect this confidentiality and refrain from sharing them outside the purpose of the research.

Video playlists are also available online at:

Pyapon: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIVijAE5onlgi1YT0GmuYNNfEcyn2Acb7>

Kayah: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIVijAE5onlil0IzV54Om6-8Oi4vP03d>

Meikhtila: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIVijAE5onljKQv_6Hx8emma_tfg7dJ_b

Rakhine: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIVijAE5onliUsTJAIA-QP-ksEOhxG1rH>

Cases reported

The report presents or refers to many cases of violence. They were all unsolicited – as our interviews were not meant to investigate cases. When cases were told spontaneously, we listened to them and we used them as an opportunity to investigate perceptions, attitudes and practices around specific instances of violence against women. The report captures some of the cases heard, reported as told, anecdotally (i.e. we did not make any check to prove or disprove the event), as exemplars of what episodes are narrated, and how, by the people interviewed. The fact that more cases are reported in some areas should not be read as an indication that the prevalence of violence against woman is higher there.

Different views, from different areas

The report disaggregates broader issues in small points, and shows in which locations such points emerged. It is possible to see, at a glance, to what areas the issue apply, as the issues are colour coded. Note, that if one issue of “inadequate behaviour” was not mentioned in one area, it does not mean that it would not be applicable / relevant there. It was simply not discussed in the interviews done in the area (given the “free flowing” character of the interviews, some issues emerged and were dealt with in-depth in some areas, not in others). Further analysis might check if other areas experience the same issues, or if they have another perspective. Further analysis might even seek to quantify more precisely some of the issues revealed.

	Pyapon Aye	Kayah	Meikhtila	Rakhine
Issue	[P]	[K]	[M]	[R]
Description, quotes [Location: P, K, M, R]				
Note: when relevant it is also specified if the quote by a man (m) or a woman (w)				

What next? Using this report as a “baseline”

KAPs often emphasize quantitative aspects, so it is easy – at the end of the project – to make a comparison with the baseline. This KAP is more exploratory and qualitative in nature, and will require a different approach in “measuring change”. It is worth highlighting that

- **This KAP does not give numerical / percentage values about the issues explored.** This is because 1) the KAP sought to find *what* issues are worth exploring rather than to give them for granted and use more standardized surveys 2) qualitative analysis requires time, so it does not allow to have a large enough sample – in the time available – to extrapolate meaningful data. When possible, the study offers broad indications about the perceptions around a given belief / attitude (for example “the overwhelming majority thinks that...”), and this might help to gauge future change. The point of this KAP, however, was not to measure attitudes, but to set the scene for understanding *how the discourse around them had evolved*. It is a different type of baseline, of a more qualitative nature.
- **Understanding of issues varies.** Different people had different understanding of what inappropriate behaviors are and of what they entail. The obvious example is rape: all people condemn “rape”, but not all forced sexual intercourses are considered as rape. In order to “measure” consensus (or lack of) on a given issue, the issue should be unequivocally formulated. This KAP might serve as a basis to understand what issues are worth spelling out, clarifying and measuring, and to track how the *understanding* of such issues had evolved. As noticed before, the problem is further compounded by the number of different languages used in the project areas.
- **Opinion shifts.** We saw, in the course of an interview, views around an issue shifting. In a focus group, for example, women had shared ideas, and changed their minds as we discussed. This study argues that “measuring agreement on a given practice / belief” is not very useful in the case of issues that are not often discussed: opinions around them are formed as the issue gets examined. And they change with time. What matters is not the “before and after”, but looking at the drivers of change. (e.g. was this an easy shift in perception? What factors were at play? Are the opinion held by people more “robust”?...)
- **Gather indicators as the project goes on!** When needed, numbers could still be gathered in the inception meetings done in communities. Activities like “raise your hand if you think that...” could be used as an ice breaker but also help to gather baseline quantitative indicators around selected issues (of course it is important that the questions asked are consistent across the groups)
- **Retrospective analysis is useful to “make sense” of change and to own it.** It will be possible (and useful!) in the course of the study, to engage in participatory analysis of how mindsets had changed. The content of this KAP (e.g. videos, quotes, clips) could all be offered as a basis for discussion to understand “do we agree with what is told? Do we think differently now? Why? How did we change our mind?” Rather than engaging in a survey that extracts information from people, this KAP should be followed by an analysis that help people involved in the process to become aware of change, and to share their perspective around it.

Framing the issue:
An overview of
Violence against women

What is Violence against women?

The definition of "Violence Against Women" encompasses a broad range of issues.

For the purposes of this Declaration, the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

A/RES/48/104 85th plenary meeting 20 December 1993 48/104. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

We chose not to define violence against women.

Rather than exploring attitudes, around specific areas of concerns that mattered to "us", at the risk of pre-empting areas of investigation, we wanted to understand what people see as violence against women. What are they prepared to share and discuss? What they do not want to talk about? What issues immediately come to mind? Which ones are not even recognized as violence, and are accepted as social norms?

We are also well aware that what is seen and shared as violence against women is the tip of the iceberg. Accepted social practices or beliefs interiorized by women and men increase the likelihood that women will experience violence. Or are de-facto forms of violence, constraining the potential and freedom of women. So, we questioned, challenged, reflected on the issues and opinions presented by the people we met to start exploring the overt or hidden forms of power that define violence against women.

We soon realized the challenges of opening discussion on the topic without pre-empting it. We could not ask: "what is violence against women" to you?" as the term "violence" would be misunderstood for physical and sexual violence. We would have missed issues of psychological violence, and also issues related to power imbalances that limit the power of women to act and fulfil their potential. And, in villages where physical and sexual violence is very real (but still hidden) mentioning "violence" we would have immediately raised concerns and suspicions. We needed to find a good introductory question, which could be:

- specific enough to capture perspectives related to violence against women (and not to other issues of concern for women but not gender-related)
- broad enough to avoid narrowing down areas for investigation to what "we" think is violence against women"
- non-threatening, i.e. not perceived as "investigating crimes" and raising suspicions
- relevant for both men and women
- not interpreted as: "men's acts of violence"
- circumscribed to instances and episodes of violence against women in the village or village tract, that people could experience, rather than general opinions on the issues as gathered from TV or movies (and yet not too specific to avoid being seen as "investigating misbehaviour in the community").

The introductory question was:

- ***"Which instances of inappropriate behaviours against women could be seen in this area (i.e. in this village tract)***

This question was also complemented with:

- ***"What challenges might you encounter because you are a woman"?*** (This question helped to reveal more subtle forms of violence, relating to social norms and hidden power)

The following tables capture the behaviours that emerged during the interviews. The first set shows in what order these specific behaviours were written on the cards, to be referred to in discussion. The second set shows the stated "frequency, the likelihood that such issues would happen in the village tract where people lived.

Note that:

- Not all interviews are listed in the table. In some cases, especially in interviews with key informants, we did not use the standard interview procedures. Such interviews will not appear in the table.
- None of the interviews in Rakhine is listed: they were done by the local team only, i.e. with no cross checking of the interview procedure used for priority checking.
- The tables do not capture all forms of violence against women that emerged in discussion. Subtle forms of violence against women (psychological violence, limitations in decision making) often were not directly expressed in a form that could be captured on a card.
- Some forms of violence against women relevant for the study – e.g. forced sex within the marriage – were discussed in the interview after being prompted by the team: participants did not see them as inappropriate behaviour, and they are not listed here.
- Some interviews are focus groups, others individual interviews. Focus group participants had generally agreed on the ranking and frequency. Only in a few cases there were divergences – which have been recorded.
- In some cases the frequency table – which was done as a way to close and summarize the interview – led to further discussion on some issues. For example when the frequency stated contradicted some of the views held by the beneficiaries. For instance, in one case in Meikhtila, a group of women had denied that beating could ever happen, throughout the interview, and then they reported it when making the frequency table.
- Some behaviour that are listed in the table were not mentioned explicitly during the interview, but were referred indirectly when describing the consequences of other behaviours. In particular, this is the case of “gossiping”, which is pervasive and influences the behaviour of the villagers to a great extent, and yet was seldom mentioned independently as an inappropriate behaviour.
- The tables contain also “drinking”. It is not a bad behaviour per se, but it was often mentioned as such. So we recorded such instances (and then of course explored the consequences of it, leading to unveil the linked inappropriate behaviours).

Behaviours mentioned in the interview: order of mentioning

(1= first mentioned)

Pyapon

Informant category		Teasing	Grabbing/touching	Harassment after drinking	Beating	Scolding / cursing	Threats with knife, sticks	Rape	Forced sex within marriage	Killing	Gossiping	Adultery	Forced relations	Stigmatized	Trafficking	Other	Other issues	
Married woman	F	6		2	1			4	*	7	0		5	8		3	threats	
AA fellows?	F	2	3	4	7			0	6	0	1	5					0	threats
Young, unmarried women	F	1	2					3										
Young men	M			1	1			2		4							3	bullying, being lazy asking for money when not working + outrage of women's dignity
Elders	M		3		1						2							
Mothers of adolescent girls	F	3		1				2									4	girls abandoned after pregnancy / parents introducing boys to daughter
Married men	M				1	2		3										
TBA /mother of woman with disability	F				2			3									1	drinking and creating economic problems to the family
Widows	F	1	2															
Active Women					1													
Teacher	F		2		3			1										
Young man	M			1	3			2				2						
Man working at the bar	M		2	3				1				5					4	girls abandoned after pregnancy

Kayah

Informant category		Teasing	Grabbing/touching	Harassment after drinking	Beating	Scolding / cursing	Threats with knife, sticks	Rape	Forced sex within marriage	Killing	Gossiping	Adultery	Forced relations	Stigmatized	Trafficking	Other	Other issues	
Fellow	F		1								2					3	not taking care of wife	
Village leader	M		1		2													
Married women with young children	F		5		1			2									2	being forced to do hard work / husband going out (4)
Young married men	M			2	2			4				1					3	pregnant women to do hard work
Interview with teacher	F			2	2									4			1	only men make decisions / [3] neglect the woman
Mothers of adolescents	F	2	1					4									3	stealing girls' items / consensual sex when unmarried [5]
Single, unmarried men	M			1													2	marriage in non allowed couples (behaviour in

				1															dark [both even if consensual]
Young single women	F			1															
Religious leader	M		1		2			3					4						
Young males	M				2													1	discourage women's participation / sex unmarried couples / preventing from accessing education / inheritance
Old men	M	1												3				2	visiting young girls' houses at night
Ancillary Midwife	F		1		4			5			3							2	discrimination, not accepting women's decision
Mothers group	F		1		4			5										2	hard work / neglect by husband and community
Old men	M	2	2		5			4									1	3	showing private parts
Active man	M			1	1			4									2	3	hard work for pregnant women

Meikhtila

Informant category		Teasing	Grabbing/touching	Harassment after drinking	Beating	Scolding / cursing	Threats with knife, sticks	Rape	Forced sex within marriage	Killing	Gossiping	Adultery	Forced relations	Stigmatized	Trafficking	Other	Other issues	
AA fellow	M	3	5	4				1							2			
Mothers of adolescents	F				1	2	3	4										
Village leader	M	1			3			2										
Married men with adolescents	M	3			4			1									2	
Young mothers	F		2		1			3										
Active women - SHG	F		5		2	3					6	1			5	4	following	
Village committee	M		1															
Member of youth women group	F				3			2				4					1	
Young married men	M											3					1	
Leader of youth groups	M		1															
Village leader	M							1							2	3		
Men of different ages	M		1		4			3									4	
Young members of Self Help Groups	F	2	1		4			3										
Fellow	F		3		2			4									1	reject by lover when pregnant
Teacher	F			4	1	3				2							5	early marriage
MWAF representative	F				1			3				2						

Perceived / Stated frequency

(1=Never, 5= very often)

Pyapon

		Teasing	Grabbing/touching	Harassment after drinking	Beating	Scolding / cursing	Threats with knife, sticks	Rape	Forced sex within marriage	Killing	Gossiping	Adultery	Forced relations (by boy)	Stigmatized	Trafficking	Other		
Married woman	F			2	2			1	*				2	2		2	allowing threats	
AA fellow	F	3	3	4	3	3			3		3	2						
young, unmarried women	F	3	3	5				2	*	2							5	arranged marriage
Young men	M				2			1		1							2	
elders	M		3		2						5							
mothers of adolescent girls	F		1	3				1									1	
married men	M				2	2		1										
TBA /mother of woman with disability	F				3			1									5	
Widows	F	1	1															
Active Women																		
Teacher			1		3			1										
Young man	M			5	3			2				3						
Man working at the bar	M		1	3				5				3					3	

Kayah

Fellow	F		2							4							3	not taking care of wife
Village leader	M		1		2													
Married women with young children	F		3		3			1									3	being forced to do hard work / husband going out (4)
Young married men	M			5	5			2				3					4	pregnant women to do hard work
Interview with teacher	F			3	3									4			3	
Mothers of adolescents	F		3	5				2									3	stealing girls' items / consensual sex when unmarried [5] - sometimes
Single, unmarried men	M			3													3	marriage in non allowed couples (behaviour in dark [both even if consensual])
Young single women	F																	
Religious leader	M		2		2			1				2						
Young males	M				2												3	discourage women's participation / sex unmarried couples / prevent access to education / inheritance
Old men	M		3										2				3	
Ancillary Midwife	F		3		2			3		5							5	discrimination, not accepting women's decision
Mothers group	F		3		3			1									1	
Mother group (other lady)			4		3			1									4	
Old men	M		2	2	5			2					3				2	showing private parts
Active man	M			3	3		4					5					3	

Meikhtila

AA fellow	M	5 5 5		3		2	
Mothers of adolescents	F		5	1	3 4		
Village leader	M	2		2		1	
Married men with adolescents	M	2		2		2	marrying young girls for debt
Young mothers	F		3		3	2	
Active women - SHG	F	5	5	4		5 3	2 4 prevent movement
Village committee	M		3				
Member of youth women group	F			5		2	5 1 pregnant women to do hard work
Young married man	M					2	2 refusing to marry when girl is pregnant / rich men having sex with young girls
Leader of youth groups	M		?				
Village leader	F					1	1 3
Men of different ages	M		3	5		3	3
Young members of SHG	F	5	4	1		3	
Fellow	F		5	4		1	3 reject after pregnancy
Teacher	F		4	3	5		2 5 early marriage
MWAF representative				3		2	3

Words matters: A glossary and a list of practices and expression on VAW

It was often challenging to capture the exact interpretation of a behaviour. A step in this direction would be to build a glossary / list inappropriate behaviours, also in local language(s). In the course of the interview probably the same English word has been used translated into different local words. And, vice versa, concepts expressed with the same local term might have been translated with different words in English. The following suggests how to build this glossary starting from the experience of the local language speakers who attended the interviews (or staff that will follow up the project)

- Recall the interviews and note down what words were used (or what sentences were used) to describe the behaviours – put them on cards (also highlight words that are NOT used, but are available in Myanmar / other local languages)
- Arrange them to identify:
 - correspondence with English words (highlighting when there is no exact correspondence, from Myanmar to English and vice versa, i.e. words that cannot be translated, either way)
 - Create groupings of words with a common meaning (what words are synonymous?) / nuances of intensity and meaning amongst words in the same grouping
 - relationships amongst groupings of words, identification of overlapping and grey areas (e.g. the progression from teasing to grabbing to rape)
 - concepts associated: in some case a concept might not be explained with words, but with similar, associated ideas: make them explicit
- The list should include not only “bad behaviours” but also the concept relating to them (e.g. the concept of “dignity”)
- As the programme goes on, the meaning of the words, in context, and the translation in English will become clearer.
- Paying attention to the usage of words will also reveal what diverse meaning and interpretation they can have when used by different stakeholders. Important information on knowledge, attitudes and practices – and about their evolution – can be inferred by paying attention to words.
- Also beware of what words – as well as the concepts they convey - might be taboo: “Sometimes respondents refrained from answering an question because it was not suitable to say certain words. For example talking about “rape” is a strange question for them, and they are not really fine to be open about it [this was openly mentioned in Rakhine, but it is likely to apply to all areas]

Good girl/woman behaviour

Good girl/woman behaviour is determined by inextricable linkages of power within, power with and power over. It is mainly about preserving the **dignity** (or “the value”) of the woman, which is connected also to the dignity of the family and of the village. The prescriptions of “good behaviour” are unwritten rules, social norms that heavily condition the life of women. They are largely accepted and unquestioned. However we found a minority of women and men ready to challenge some of them.

	Pyapon	Kayah	Meikhtila	Rakhine
<p>Bad woman behaviour impacts on the dignity of family</p> <p>The dignity of the woman matters in preserving the “dignity of the family”. Statements regarding this included: <i>“Some women do not ask for help (when beating happens) because this could affect the dignity of the family”.</i> [R] <i>“If a girl is teased, she must have been given a reason to tease. And this might be because ‘the family did not bring her up properly’: so teasing would reflect badly on the family”.</i> (R) <i>“If a girl goes out of the house at inappropriate times and to inappropriate places, people would ask: ‘Who is this girl?’ ‘The daughter of ...’ ‘Ah, so their daughter goes out at night...’.</i> This would reflect badly also in the family: <i>‘The parents did not teach her not to go out’.</i> [R] A relationship outside marriage <i>“badly reflect on the prestige of a family: When women do bad things they can suicide or they are forced to go away”</i> [women, P]</p>				
<p>Bad behaviour of women and men impacts on the dignity of the village</p> <p><i>“If a couple misbehaves at a festival (e.g. the woman allows touching) it can affect the dignity of the village. People will say: ‘look at that man or that woman from this and that village’. There can be some gossips across villages. So if a villager sees this happening at a festival, s/he should denounce it to the youth leader. The youth leader will admonish these couples and inform the village leader about these behaviours”.</i> [young men, K]</p>				

Impact on family and village dignity creates further pressure on girls to conform to the expected behaviour. And, largely, women conform. Looking at what constitute “good girl behaviour” allows a look at the most insidious forms of violence against women: invisible social norms, reducing their space for action and for independent decision-making.

Norms of good behaviour

	P	K	M	R
<p>Wear proper clothes, and a proper hairdo.</p> <p>Women are not free to wear what they want. A good woman should be properly dressed – wearing longi - the traditional dress -, look modest and be properly combed. <i>“They should not wear clothes that show the body (e.g. shorts). Should not show their skin”.</i> [m M] Women should control their movements as well. <i>“They should not try to attract men. A woman should be soft, kind and sit like a woman otherwise she would attract men”.</i> [w P] Norms on clothing are implicit, but in some cases there might be explicit norms to push girls to dress properly. The village leader in M, for example, is against westernization. He wants to <i>“set a fine for these girl who do not dress according to tradition. If they come to a religious festival they should not wear inappropriate clothing. We do not have such a fine now, but I would like to set one. I will discuss this with the administrative committee, the women’s group and the youth group. Then, after getting their agreement we will develop and implement the rule.”</i> But not all authorities want to norm women’s clothing too strictly. An elder in P, for example, mentioned that <i>“as a village elder, I do not like people who criticize women and gossip about them. Sometimes men criticize the woman’s dress, even when she is covering herself very well: ‘Oh, she is wearing this colour or that one’. I also do not accept when the community criticizes badly the women who dress like the city women. It is only a small gossip, but I do not like it”.</i> Few would deviate. An outstanding case was a woman who overtly chose to wear man’s clothes, in her daily life. <i>“I like wearing man’s clothes, and to have short hair. I have done this</i></p>				

since I was young. But I am a woman, and I feel like one. Man's clothes are much more comfortable, and suits me well for my job [breaking stones]". People around her do not seem concerned about her style. Some girl friends tell her that she should wear women's clothes. Others, however, say that she is fine as she is, and she would look awkward dressing in women's clothes now. She had no problem with other villagers, including in the working place, where they are mostly men. "Sometimes, as a joke, someone would tell me 'behave as a woman would', and I would mimic women's movements. Everyone has a good laugh". [M]

Speak softly, be polite. And do not talk too much

Women should avoid "talking too much": a very undesirable behaviour, which is often linked to negative consequences (e.g. being beaten by a drunken husband). Women interviewed often stressed that they are well aware that "talking talking" is not appropriate, and that yet women do it too often. If talking happens in an assembly then men would be right not to listen. And if it happens at home, a husband would be right to get angry. The tone also matters: "If a girl laughs loudly, it means that she does not control herself. This goes against her dignity". [man M]

Be patient

Women should be patient and tolerate the shortcomings of the husband. Losing patience leads to "complaining" and a husband would be right to react to this. Being patient is the best way to keep things smooth in the household: "When the husband makes a problem I keep quiet, I tolerate and I do not answer. So there are not many problems because I tolerate. [R]

Obey – parents and husband – and don't speak back

Women are asked to obey rather than taking a decision. A good woman will do so at all levels, from the family, up to the village level. Even if she talks and asserts her views, she will not be listened to. Women's role in decision-making is largely not recognized: "If a cock makes noise, then the dawn comes. If a hen makes noise, then the dawn does not come" [K]

Do not talk with others about problems with men / husbands

If a woman talks about problems in the house, even only with close friends, she will not be seen as a good wife. A woman should also refrain from talking to a stranger about problems in the village.

Work hard

A good woman should work hard [see section on "hard work" for more]

Do not allow touching.

Touching is largely seen as the first step of a rapid and inevitable fall into misbehaviour. As highlighted in the conclusions, the general perception is that "touching" leads to "inappropriate sex". Community is vigilant, and will monitor it: "If the parents of boys see that you allow touching they will think that you are not a good girl, and therefore they will not allow you to marry their boy" (mother of adolescent in K)

Do not have sex outside the marriage.

Sex outside marriage is definitely not good behaviour. Consequences could be harsh - as it will be explored in the section on a consensual relationship. "When women are grown up, the mind is not very stable, they could have sex with a boy. And this would be wrong (even if sex is consensual). Men can have many relationships, and people do not care. If a woman has many relationship people will think badly about her". [P] Women will be stigmatized even if inappropriate sexual relations are forced on them: "If a woman is raped, she will have a black history and her dignity will be affected. The society will devalue her. According to our culture and belief a girl should be virgin. So if she is raped, she will lose dignity. As far as the man is concerned, people will gossip for a little while saying 'he has a bad habit'. They will not blame him". [M]

Do not refuse sex to your husband

Women should always accept sex with their husband. See the section on "forced sex within marriage" for more

Do not have close male friends

A good girl / woman should not be close to male friends. Closeness will not be approved and there will be pressure for marriage. "A young girl was a teacher in the village. A government officer was then appointed in the village from outside. They stayed in the same house (because he was a good friend of the teacher's brother). They talked, about various things. It was not a romantic engagement. People started watching them, and to gossip. They eventually went to the house, saying: 'You must marry'. The teacher did not like the man, but the man liked her. But she also knew that the community would start gossiping, so she gave up and married. Then they divorced, because they were not in love". [R]

Sound bites



If a cock sings, dawn will come, but not if a hen sings [K]

<http://youtu.be/KZ3qDvBGRHA>

This girl wants to eradicate the attitude behind this saying, promote the role of girls and stop discrimination. And to do so, it is necessary to train the men.



I like wearing men's clothes [M]

<http://youtu.be/LJME9fIWMjU>

A young woman shares that she has been wearing man's clothes since she was young. She does not like women clothes, they are not comfortable. Some female friends tell her that she should wear women clothes (but other thinks that she is fine as she is, and women clothes would not fit her now)



Good behaviour [P]

<http://youtu.be/6NGkX4AHBjc>

To avoid men's harassment women should behave properly. They should be polite and soft. Avoid showing behaviours that can arouse the men. Clothes also matters. A man can differentiate if a woman is wearing a longi or short pants and had messy hair.



A fine for Western clothes [M]

<http://youtu.be/IGAcAtUvgZI>

The village leader is keen to propose and approve a fine for girls wearing western clothes.



What makes me different? [K]

http://youtu.be/_gzCxKK-xok

Most boys in the village like girls who are not active, never speak back and always nod. I am not like that. I cannot be patient when something is wrong and I dare to speak back. The example for such behaviour is my mother, who raised us 7 as a widow.

Protective measures

Good behaviour also includes norms for preventing unacceptable behaviour by others. If a woman or girl does not adequately prevent bad behaviour, she (or her family) would be seen as careless about her dignity. Some women are forced to ignore some protective measures: for example, single women and widows might have to break some norms about moving around and living alone. This might make them more likely to be exposed to harassment and also to be blamed for it.

Genuine concerns for protecting girls from abuse might end up reinforcing norms that limit freedom of women and girls, and creating mistrust for men: *“As a teacher, I worry about rape for my students. I gave some advice to the girls about rape, and about how to protect from it. I did not use the word “rape”, it is not suitable and understandable by children. I explained it is a bad behaviour, like bullying. My advice included: do not allow girls to come alone to school. Avoid all men, young or old. I teach the girls not to be too close to boys. I heard about rape cases in this village, so I thought I should explain something. But I never discussed with other teachers how to best talk about rape, neither had I received advice or materials about it. I had to find my own way to talk about rape”*. [M]

P K M R

Women need to protect themselves, otherwise they are responsible

Both men and women believe that women have the responsibility to protect themselves, otherwise they are at fault. *“If a woman behaves very well there is no potential for grabbing. If a woman is grabbed she is also at fault. If women behaved well most of the rape cases and the grabbing cases would not happen. To stop grabbing in the village we could make women behave well. Also the family has to teach women how to behave. I think most people think the same”*. [w P]

“If a child is raped I sympathize with her. It is not acceptable. But when it happens to an adult, well she should know it, because she is adult. If she goes this way, it will happen. If she wears like that, it will happen. It is not only man’s fault; it also depends on her behaviour. Woman should not go alone, she could meet a man who is sexually aroused”. [m P]

“Rape is like two hooks. If one side is straight, it cannot connect. If there are two hooks, they can connect. It is like clapping, one hand cannot make a clap.” [P]

“Women should avoid the places where there is beer and going into the dark alone. Women should prevent the trouble. Clothes are very important for the women. If you wear inappropriate clothes you could create problems. A few girls and a few women, in villages close to the town, do not wear appropriate clothes. Girls who live alone are at risk. The girl who goes alone in the forest and in the deserted areas is at risk”. [MwAF M]

Do not be alone, do not go out alone.

Very often people said that girls should not walk alone, they should go around in a group. If the school is far, they should go there only accompanied by other friends. And they should not go out of their compound when it is dark, even when accompanied by other women. *“If you do not go out, it is safer for you. If you do not go out, you can be protected from danger. If you go out, something might happen to you. If you do not go out, you can avoid requests of men to meet”* [R]

“Parents should tell the girls not to go alone. They could go with cousins, sisters, and brothers. They should behave like good girls”. [M]

“There will be no problems for my daughter because she does not go alone: she goes with her brothers. I do not want my daughter to go alone because she can be raped”. [M]

Government institutions and police also encourage girls not to go alone as a preventive measure, for example with the leaflet *“Do not go alone”*. The publication also reminds that girls should *“not stay alone in night-time – i.e. with no women’s presence in the house - to prevent cases of incest”*. [P] *“We go to villages and we do special talks. We give pamphlets: don’t go alone at night-time, don’t stay alone, don’t leave your girl child at night. So the women themselves can prevent”*. [police P]

Mobility of women is also constrained when they want to work away *“I want to go away to work. But they tried to traffic me, my mother is divorced, and she does not want me to work far away”*. [M] *“I would like to go abroad but my parents do not allow me because I am a girl. My parents are worried that I could be raped on the way”* [M]

Do not trust strangers, and do not engage with them

Women and girls should also refrain from talking to strangers. *“To prevent cases of rape we could tell to girls: ‘Do not go alone to school’, and ‘If a stranger calls, do not go with him”* [P]

Women are also discouraged to meet men from other villages, and to have a relation with them. *“If a man from another village is in love with a woman, there are lot of limitations that might prevent them from marrying. Men here do not allow women to talk to men from other villages: They want to protect the women in the village because other men can make them pregnant and then not marry them. This is a long-time tradition: everyone enforces the tradition. If a man from another village comes to propose to a girl, the men in this village can come to the house and throw stones to the house, it is generally accepted that this is fine”*. [R]

“Fathers worry about sending girls out of the village [to work]. They worry that relatives might be introducing boys to their daughters. They do not feel good about this. They would not like to see the daughter with another boy from outside the village. It is not appropriate. In the end, if she likes the boy it would not be a big problem, they could get married. But fathers worry

about this kind of things a lot when they are drunk". [P]

A girl should be controlled

"A woman should be controlled since when she is 17/18. Controlling means to have the right companion / go to the right places. Otherwise they can become 'wild children'". [P]

Sound bites



MWAF brochures (Pyapon)

<http://youtu.be/83L5A7ICnUc>

A programme has been set to provide training to girls, and they will spread it in villages. Some leaflets have been produced to support it. Messages include "do not live the girl alone in the house", "Do not allow a girl to go out alone", "do not let her travel even with her father at night time". If the public is informed, MWAF is successful.



I would like to work far away...(Meikhtila)

http://youtu.be/Hs17I_YgVk

A young woman - member of the local youth group - shares that she would like to work far away, but she is prevented from doing so by her parents, because of the risk of killing and rape.



I worry for my daughter (Rakhine)

<http://youtu.be/Yb2Tp6JaDhg>

The mother of an adolescent girl shares how she worries when her daughter goes out. Is she seeing men? Is she having appointments? So she tells her not to go out, and stops worrying only when she is at home.

Inappropriate external (largely men’s) behaviour reflecting badly on women

The following norms might look like a list of “behaviours that man should avoid”. So why are they listed here, if women are the *object* of such behaviours? The point is that if these norms are transgressed (for example, if a man teases a woman), the dignity of a woman will be more affected than the reputation of the man. Preventing external behaviours harming dignity comes at a cost for women (e.g. limitations in freedom of movement, of self- expression..)

	P	K	M	R
Men shall not tease you				
Men shall not touch you				
Men shall not visit your house.				
Men shall not fight for you.				

Men shall not tease you

If boys tease girls, people will gossip: "That girl does not behave very well. This is why they are teasing her. And we share this opinion: people tease girls that do not behave properly". [M]

Men shall not touch you

"If someone tries to hold and grab us, we would be scolded by our husbands. They would accuse us because they are jealous. They tell us: 'Do not dance in the festivals, do not wear new clothes when you go there'" [w M]

Men shall not visit your house.

A woman – especially a girl – should not receive the visit of men in her house.

Men shall not fight for you.

"Sometimes men fight for a girl. This could have repercussion on her dignity". [men K]

Men shall not make bad comments about you

"People often go to festival in groups. Sometimes they are same-sex groups, sometimes men and women go together. Once a group of men met a mixed group. They made inappropriate comments to the ladies. The men who accompanied them reacted, and it ended in a fight. Then the men of the mixed group, complained to the women: "Because of you we had to fight with the other group". [R]

Men shall not propose to you rudely.

As will be discussed in the section on "teasing and touching" *rude proposals can make a woman ashamed and impact on her dignity [K]*

People should not gossip about you

Everyone is very concerned about gossiping. Some said that being the object of gossiping is tantamount to violence against women actually. And in most cases the concern that "people would gossip" influences the behaviour of women. There could be gossiping when men spread false claims, for example with statements like *"I held the hand of that girl..." The girl would confront the boy, asking for explanations "why did you say that" and the boy would reply 'why don't you admit you are in a relationship?'. The girl can go to boy's parents and complain. The boy will promise to the parents to behave, but behind their backs he will still spread false information about her and the relationship" [R]*

Man shall not rape you

If a woman is raped, it can affect her dignity. *"If it happens and they denounce the problem to the village leader, other people will gossip. 'This woman only wants to have money, people would think" [M]*

Can women fight back?

To what extent can women defend themselves, maintaining good behaviour? In most cases is preferable not to denounce or fight back, as doing so might attract unwanted attention. A husband could become jealous. A mother could scold her daughter.

Avoiding the problem is better. Fighting back was mentioned only in a few cases.

"If touching happens, a girl would be ashamed, and would be afraid of the gossip. The community can have a bad impression about her. But some women can be angry, speak back and curse the man or hit back. The girl sometimes share their problems with their friends, and their solution is not to pass by where these boys are". [M]

"If men tease us, we should still go way where the bad men are, we should not avoid walking there, we should tell to the men that this is bad behaviour. I would do so". [M]

Sound bites



We can interact with women, but not in inappropriate ways [K]

<http://youtu.be/ZXaxI5EACMY>

Men and women can interact. A man can for example buy from a woman shopkeeper. But they should never say inappropriate words to them.



What we tell to our girls and boys [K]

http://youtu.be/au4d6_YQKGI

We tell our boys that they should not touch girls, because they do not like it. To treat them as sisters. And we tell girls not to accept touching by boys, because it could lead to rape. "In your body, your private parts are the most important. If you are raped, they will lose their value".

Rationale for the norms, and leverage

	P	K	M	R
<p>Justification for the “good behaviour”</p> <p>The rationale for “good girl behaviour” is seldom explained. Good behaviour is presented as a way to defend themselves from inexplicable risks that are never spelled out: girls are rarely given any advice on relationships or about sexuality – which are at the root of many norms. The mother of an adolescent girl in K, for example, would only say to her daughter: “<i>You are very young and you cannot understand these things</i>”</p>				
<p>Things are changing (and technology helps)</p> <p>Whilst they still worry for their daughters, some mothers also recognize that things are changing. People are becoming knowledgeable (e.g. from TV, from exchanges with neighbouring villages). Girls can deal with and tackle problems on their own. [R]</p> <p>A woman pointed out: “<i>When I was young I was not allowed to go at night-time. Going out is still not allowed, and yet some girls go out and nothing terrible happens. We did not have electricity. Now they have it, it is not dark, so there are less chances for violence</i>”. [R]</p>				
<p>Women can and must learn to deal with trouble, and be free.</p> <p>Only a very small minority of people mentioned that norms should be changed, or that women should be empowered in order to overcome them. Those who did, were assertive and vocal, and it is important to acknowledge such progressive voices in the community.</p> <p>A local teacher in Rakhine, for example, emphasized: “<i>Going outside at night is not really a problem. There are some drunken people, but there are also people with knowledge. I never try to prevent women from going out at night-time. If girls were allowed to go out at night-time, they could talk others more freely and the matchmaking tradition would change. I do not like this tradition myself: I was proposed in this way and I would not want my daughter – now 11 - to go through it. Not all men would trouble girls: many have knowledge. But girls would need to learn to deal with the few drunken ones</i>”.</p>				
<p>Some men love strong women.</p> <p>“<i>Most of the boys want to marry “normal girls”. A normal girl must be honest, not active, obey to the parents and husband and work hard at home and in the farmland. But some men are happy to marry strong women</i>”. [K]</p>				

Good behaviour for boys

	P	K	M	R
<p>What boys are told</p> <p>We asked what was said to men and boys to orient their behaviours towards girls. Responses tended to be on the lines of “<i>I tell to my boys: ‘You should not touch and behave badly with the girls. If you have a female friend, you should treat her as you treat your sister. If you have a lover you should not make sex with her, and we will try to arrange the wedding for you</i>”. [K]</p>				
<p>Freedom to roam</p> <p>Limitation of movement for girls sometimes corresponded to freedom to roam for boys, which was sometimes a nuisance for people. For example, in Kayah, any adolescent boy can pay a visit to the houses where adolescent girls live, if he is close enough to the family. In some ethnic groups the parents of the girl go outside when the boy comes, to allow them to meet freely. In the village we visited, the boy is never left alone, and he would engage in conversation with the parents rather than with the girl. Around festivals boys also visit homes and sing. Even if the family or the girl are not particularly keen to have him around, and they found the boy very rude, the visit cannot really be refused, it would be impolite. Visits could happen late at night, disturbing the family. One father complained: “<i>They should come early because girls go to school and have to study or sometimes they have to go to work. Students should try hard in their studies rather than having visits. Most of the villagers think that those young men are bad. So they made a rule that they shouldn’t see girls at midnight</i>”. Some mothers mentioned that boys would sometimes steal girls’ property to get a token of affection. (Having a TV at home was a factor increasing the likelihood that boys would visit).</p>				

Men's dignity is less affected

Ultimately, some acknowledged that if a man behaves badly, it is women who will face most consequences.

"Women would put pressure on the girl to behave properly [not accepting relationships out of marriage] because the boy is always right. And they agree with it. Women's dignity can be affected very easily here. Men's dignity is affected less." [P]

An old man recalled a local saying: *"Men are like male dogs'. Male dogs tease female dogs and go around and try to have sex. They are never ashamed. Married men usually are interested in other women apart from their wives. Men should not do this and all parents should tell children to behave very well. But if a problem happens the woman will have more disadvantages than the man. So the women should control themselves very properly"*. [R]

Protecting the man

Denouncing a man and ruining his reputation is considered bad. *"It is not good to tell other people that someone tried to grab a woman. It is not good to tell someone that he is a bad man"*. [M] In R some accusations of rape were dismissed on the basis that the man accused had a good reputation in the community.

Forced appointments in Rakhine

This tradition forces girls to accept appointments with men who are willing to propose them, in isolated places. It is in striking contradiction with local behavioural norms for girls, which forbid them from going alone in the evening, and to be alone with the boys.

This tradition seems to be confined to a small number of villages (it was found only in one of two villages looked at in the study) – where it is strongly rooted and puts the young girls at risk of abuse. It grants control to men (beyond family members) as to whom women in the village can eventually marry. A man willing to propose to a girl cannot propose directly to the family – as it usually happens elsewhere in the area. He will communicate the intention to meet the girl to her parents through a middleman, a man from her community (the middleman is not a designated role, it can be anyone in the community). She has the right to reject the proposal, but she needs to go to the meeting. Refusing meetings would offend the middlemen. If a request is repeated at least three times, it cannot be refused. The parents will grant permission for the meeting even if the girl does not like the man.

The problem is that the meeting happens late at night, and in a house where the boy and the girl are left alone. If the girl does not like the man, there is nothing she could do, no one to get help from. Troubles can happen in this situation. The woman could be abused. Abuse is even more likely because the best option for a girl, if abuse happens, is to keep things quiet. Screaming or resisting might attract attention to the fact that her dignity has been threatened, and her "value" will, as a consequence, go down. *"If you scream and shout, when the abuse happens, then people will still say: 'She accepted, so she must like him' and they will not help"*. People interviewed suggested that the practice contributes to abuse, rape, and, to early marriage.

After the matchmaker arranges the meeting, if the couple like each other, they can then set appointments on their own.

If a girl refuses too many matches, both the rejected man and the matchmaker will be angry with her. Matchmakers gain status by their capacity to successfully introducing girls to young men. If a man from another village wants to marry a girl from the village, he will use a matchmaker from her village. If a girl accepts, the matchmaker will gain credit in the other village. But then if she refuses, his own possibilities to marry a girl from that other village decreases: the rejected man would be not happy. There are negative consequences for the girl refusing the meetings: the matchmaker can be disappointed and not willing to organize the matches with the man she likes. And *"if she rejects to see a man 3 times, the youth group in the community will discriminate against her to participate in their traditional activities. Even if she is single, she is treated as a married woman: she cannot participate"*.

The girl could not arrange the meeting directly, if a direct meeting is organized, the couple must marry even if they do not love each other in the end. [R]

Many in the community seem to oppose the tradition, but everyone is also unanimous in saying that "because it is a tradition, it should be respected". It is unclear how this tradition came about. Some people said *"at the time of our grandmother it was not like this, there was no middleman"*.

- The girls do not like at all this tradition. But they cannot do anything about it. Some girls might have a

boyfriend already, who had not proposed yet. Even so, they could not refuse the request for dating, and this can create problems with the boy they like. They also know that if abuse happens, they will pay the consequences. *"If a girl tells the mother, the mother will scold her. And if she gets pregnant people will see that she had sex before marriage, and gossip about her, not the man"*.

- Parents worry but they accept. The men do not dare going against this new tradition. However they also see some value in it: *"The girl might not like the proponent now, but if she meets him she might like him, so she should grant the appointment"*. Some feel that matchmaking is still to be preferred than allowing girls to meet boys consensually in remote areas of the village, because they could have sex and become pregnant. In other words, parents are more ready to accept abuse in a meeting arranged by the matchmaker than consensual sex outside the marriage. Some parents said that they would prefer the traditions other villages have. There a man proposes to a girl at night-time, but they come to the house of the woman. Between them there is a wall. They cannot see each other directly. They do not like the practice of the arranged meetings in the villages by the matchmakers.
- The mothers do not dare to refuse, and they see the tradition as part of the ritual to follow: they had accepted this tradition when they were young. But they also admitted: *"When I was young, when the new tradition started, it was not too bad"*. Some mothers might suggest: *"If you do not want to talk with the man, then hide in the house"*. Others follow their daughter, and hide near the place where the meeting happens, to help her in case of need (but it was not clear, in practice, what they could do).
- Young men interviewed said that they personally do not like the practice (but other men in the community do), but *"it cannot all be stopped at once, our ancestors practiced this - it is local culture and cannot be changed"*. One boy said: *"I do not like this culture. It is not really good for the women. But we cannot stop this practice now, we must stop it in the long term. It is not suitable for the woman to be treated as a servant: 'I want to meet you at midnight'. He said he wants to talk to other young people and try to stop this"*.

Exploring forms of power

Before going deep into knowledge, attitudes, practices relating to specific instances of inappropriate behaviour, it is useful to highlight some general considerations around the power elements of the framework, showing common trends and issues.

Power within

Assertions around *power within* are largely influenced by accepted norms of “good girl/woman behaviour”. Most people interviewed (women, girls, men, boys, as well as people in a position of authority) seem to have internalized such norms. “Good behaviours” are affirmed as personal convictions, and yet they are obviously entangled with the “hidden power” of social norms.

Only few people will openly challenge “good girl behaviour norms”. Such people are often seen as “active people in the community” and, in the case of women, their behaviour and attitudes can generate gossiping.

	P	K	M	R
<p>Women might chose to accept violence (even when community does not)</p> <p>We heard about cases where women are beaten, harassed, hospitalized for violence and still chose to go back and live with their husbands. Such cases will be reported also vis-à-vis specific issues of unacceptable behaviour. Other community members had expressed concern: “<i>The woman should divorce</i>”, “<i>She should not live with the husband</i>”. But – aside from such concern – no support mechanism for them is in place.</p> <p>We also become aware of cases of women facing violent husbands, who never had the courage to denounce violence. Community members might express concern for them, but no practical steps have been taken to support them.</p> <p><i>“Some men beat their wives everyday. Women are patient and accept. The community says ‘the husband is very bad’. In one case, people encouraged the wife to divorce, and the village denounced the beating to the village development committee. The committee tried to negotiate with them, but the woman wanted to divorce. The man did not want to divorce. Then he took some drugs, trying to commit suicide. She looked after him and ultimately they made peace.”</i></p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Talking about personal issues is embarrassing</p> <p>Discussing issues of violence against women – and the linked attitudes relating to them – can be embarrassing for women. In many cases women mentioned that “<i>we would never talk about the issues, even with friends</i>”. Some responded they had never discussed issues relating to inappropriate behaviour, or linked to the sexual and personal relations.</p>				

Power with

	P	K	M	R
<p>Talking with other women</p> <p>Women avoid seeking the support of others also because of social norms. “A woman could not ask for help (on drinking related issues). It would be bad for the family”. [P] And “In the village, if a woman talks about her problem to other people and the husband finds it out, he will make more problems for the wife”. [K]</p> <p>Issues would not be discussed amongst friends: “Unacceptable behaviours are not discussed amongst women. Teasing is the only one which could be discussed amongst friends”. [P] And even if things are discussed, some think it is purposeless. “I believe that also other women would want to close the alcohol shop, but I do not know for sure, because the women do not discuss. And even when we discuss, nothing special will happen, so it is not worth it”. [P]</p>				
<p>Talking with men</p> <p>An active woman in Kayah believes that external organizations talking with men in the village would bring benefits. Meetings and training should “give examples and evidence and advantages of communities doing better because women are stronger”.</p>				
<p>Sharing with foreigners</p> <p>External organizations might be an ally in discussing issues of violence against women, and some active women reinstated this to us. However, we also experienced that sharing with foreigners is prevented because of peer pressure to show the village in a good light. We experienced peer pressure among other group participants – when a bad look from participant silenced another. We saw how self-censorship might limit willingness to share with external actors. Some participants advised us that they did not want to discuss issues “to avoid that other villagers would think badly about them”. Or we were asked to keep issues confidential because “if people knew we are saying this [for example that beating happened in the village], they would think badly of us”. In Meikhtila we chose to shorten our visit to one village when we sensed that even light touch discussions on inappropriate behaviours were too threatening for the people involved.</p> <p>“We worry that people will gossip about us because of this interview. If other people know that we said that rape has happened, other people will gossip about us. Because this is another family’s issue”. [M]</p>				
<p>Support from family</p> <p>When a woman marries, the in-laws will own her. However, in case of difficulties in the marriage, her siblings can support her, for example with financial resources.</p>				
<p>Role of neighbours in denouncing violence</p> <p>In most cases neighbours would not denounce or try to stop instances of violence against women happening in nearby households. In the case of beating, for example, we heard people mentioning cases happening in the houses near to them, and yet not intervening because “it is up to the woman to denounce”. Willingness and propensity to denounce seem to be the exception rather than the rule. But neighbours had also intervened, and supported women. More details about the behaviours of neighbours in specific instances of violence will be given in the following sections.</p> <p>Some active young women, for example, would like to support a woman who is abused by her husband. They would like to discuss with village leader, the village committee and the woman herself. They would like to go to the police. But they do not know what to do in a place where neighbours and villagers do not interfere with each other. “What would be the reaction of other people in the community? The village leader would tell ‘why do you denounce this to me? If the woman does not denounce it to me, if she does not come, I cannot do anything’. The villagers would say ‘they should not be involved in other people’s family issues’. And the woman would say ‘thank you, but you cannot help because my husband is very bad’. But we should intervene because all of us, as women, should help and sympathize with each other. We do not want anyone to be beaten and we must do something. But we are a minority; most people think we should not interfere with other families. The vast majority is not like us. [wM]</p> <p>Neighbours might also manage to support women against the family when the family would not succeed. “My husband drinks. He is violent with the family. His own sister and mother tried to support and defend me, but he is now making problems to them. However neighbours have a good influence on him. When they come and try to solve the problem, he behaves. However, shortly after they are gone, trouble starts again”. [woman R]</p>				
<p>Fear of gossiping / conspiracy of silence</p> <p>Gossiping is very powerful in pushing people to conform to proper behaviour and it was often</p>				

mentioned in the course of the interviews. It is a worry for many, and yet rarely gossiping is singled out as an “inappropriate behaviour”. It is rather seen as an inescapable and pervasive behaviour. Fear of gossiping might reduce the likelihood of women to denounce violence. Community pressure leads women to conceal violence rather than supporting them to come forward to denounce. Paradoxically, the woman might not denounce for fear of gossiping, and yet violence and abuse will be known anyway, in a close-knit community. Around many issues of violence (including beating, rape, as it will be discussed later) there is a conspiracy of silence.

Pressure to conform

All women “behaving differently and boldly” mentioned that there is pressure to conform. *“We have many challenges for being different. When we arrange the meetings most parents do not want the children to go and participate. We feel that the village does not understand well what we are doing. Other people gossip because I am not highly educated (like most people in the village), so they think that their children should not come when I call them”*. [M]

There are incentives in behaving properly, as good girls are valued in the village, and will not encounter obstacles in marrying. However, active women also stressed that even if “good girls” are preferred as wives, there are also men in the village that admire strong women. *“Some boys would be happy to marry strong girls. But most of the boys want to marry ‘normal girls’. A normal girl must be honest, not active, obey to the parents and to the husband and work hard at home and in the farmland”*.

Sound bites



We are different [M]

<http://youtu.be/FuSeLxiggLw>

The same woman explains why she is different from other girls in the village. Most people would not interfere with “other’s families businesses”. But she feels responsible, she feels she should help.

Power over

Violence against women is often fostered by local power dynamics. The same power dynamics and institutional set up inhibit the possibility to obtain full justice. A minority of women explicitly mentioned the lack of decision making for women as a form of violence against women. *“Men should not always lead, because by doing this some people will think that women cannot lead. When people make decisions without asking the ideas of women, it is inappropriate behaviour and violence to women”*. [K]

Decision making within the family

Families are institutions. Looking at the role of women within them also involves exploring issues of “power over”. Often women do not have decision-making power within the family or the village, and they are constrained by social norms limiting their power.

	P	K	M	R
<p>Women can decide day-to-day expenses (but not major ones).</p> <p><i>“Women can decide what to cook, how much to give for donations to the temple. They manage the money in everyday life”</i> [w K]. But any other decision needs to be approved by the husband <i>“Some women have to ask husband permission to buy a dress”</i>. For example, one woman was keen to build the new house in a more fashionable style, with a detached kitchen, but the husband rejected the idea. There was no discussion: <i>“This is why I do not like my husband: I would like him to discuss and negotiate but he does not want to”</i>. [K]</p> <p>The husband can dispose of money as he wishes and some may make decisions without consulting their wife, for example <i>“they would give some family belongings to other people without telling their wife. The consequences are quarrelling and an aggravation of the problem. The couple could even divorce”</i>. [K]</p> <p>When the husband is away women are in charge, but they will be monitored. <i>“The husband sends money every 3 or 4 months. And when they come back they see that the money is gone, because expenses are high in the family. They will blame the wife for spending all the money. Some men can understand the expenses in the house, but some do not understand and they will make problems”</i>. [R]</p>				
<p>Women “belong” to the in-laws</p> <p>In Kayah several respondents mentioned that – once married – a woman will not belong anymore to her family, but to the in-laws. This can discourage investment on the girl (she is a resource that the family will lose). This also weakens the girl when she experiences abuse in the new family: her old family is not in a strong position to support her. However there were different views, in K, to the extent to which the wife’s family could interfere in negotiations and discussions involving their daughter once she was married: different families had different takes on it.</p> <p>Some noticed that there is now more attention to the girls: <i>“The trend can change because people noticed that most of the daughters look after their parents. If they study more and get degrees, they could do this even more”</i>. [Teacher in K]</p>				
<p>Women do not inherit</p> <p>In Kayah, women do not inherit family assets (e.g. farm and animals), women will depend on the men. Some parents will give jewellery to the daughters. All those who – spontaneously – mentioned the issue (young men, teacher) found the norm unfair.</p>				
<p>Wife should tolerate</p> <p>In many instances it is assumed that “a wife should tolerate”. Many would agree that <i>“Women tolerate drinking [and other misbehaviour] because of the family. When it is too much the woman should stop tolerating, but if it is not too much, she should tolerate for the sake of the family. Too much is when the husband becomes violent (for example, he tries to kill his wife)”</i> [P]</p>				

Sound bites



A married woman is owned by her in-laws [K]

http://youtu.be/7_nTWUQYd2Y

When a woman marries, she does not belong to her family any longer. Her husband and in-laws can tell what they want her to do, whatever the decision is.



Financial decisions are made by the man [K]

<http://youtu.be/thEtoQkVae8>

Even when they both earn money, financial decisions in a couple are made by the man.



If the men do not agree we cannot lend our fund [K]

<http://youtu.be/7MAvOqX9Ncs>

An NGO gave to the mothers' group a fund to be used for caesarean cases. They want to lend it with interest, but most of the men do not agree with the idea. The mothers' group will try to negotiate an agreement. Hopefully they will succeed. But if the men do not agree, they cannot do it.



Girls must marry who their parents want [P]

http://youtu.be/_XwTI3Pj3RE

Two girls (unmarried) agree that girls should marry who their parents want, because they depend on them.

Village level

Referral chain (where does the buck stop?)

When asked how an issue can be tackled and who should be involved, the overwhelming majority of responses mentioned a chain of: family (with the husband's side having more power) -> village leader -> higher authorities (e.g. tract leader). Every important decision converges towards the village leader. In some areas [P, M] people mentioned that for serious cases they would be entitled to go directly to the police, bypassing the village leader, but in reality we did not find any evidence of this. When the police had intervened, it was done at the request of the village or tract leader.

But the extent to which issues – even big ones, such as rape – are passed on to higher authorities varied across different areas. In Pyapon and Rakhine serious cases had been passed on to the police and the court. In K – an area long isolated by conflict, agreements were to be found in the village, through negotiation (at least in a case the rebel army was involved). In Meihktila, where people were well aware of legal provisions, issues were in practice “kept within the village”, even against the will of the affected people.

	P	K	M	R
Referral chain (where does the buck stop?)				
The village leader (and the elders) rule				

The village leader (and the elders) rule

Oligarchic power structures (i.e. where a small group of people has control) are in place, and everything converges towards the village leader. The village leader is not officially appointed, and he is an expression of the self-governance of the village. The dynamics leading to his choice, and the relationship he has with other elders in the village could not be explored in-depth within the limited time available. The village leader is king. All important decisions will eventually converge to him. It was clear that he is always the one in charge to contact higher authorities when needed – and he can become a bottleneck, blocking access to justice. Government representatives who are tasked to solve issues in the village (e.g. a divorce),

would also consult him.

Going to the village leader

When asked “what would you do to stop an unacceptable behaviour”, most women immediately said: “*I would go to the village leader*”. But when asked if this is really a realistic first option, they admitted that in reality they would not, and they would refer to their family, and the family would consider what to do. Actually no woman could give an example of talking directly to the village leader about valid issues, with the exception of very active women, openly challenging village rules and decisions (e.g. an active woman in K challenging a rule against bringing a husband from another village in her village).

Women’s issues are seen as minor, anyway, and this discourages bringing them to the leader. “*They would go to the village leader for some big fighting. They would not go for women-related issues. They are minor*”. [P]

It is however possible to approach other actors before going to the leader. For example, “*if harassment happens, the girl should inform the youth leader. The youth leader should investigate the case to get to negotiation. If the problem is not solved they need to go to the village leader and committee, and they will decide who is wrong. In this case there is no compensation, but people can be admonished. It has happened in this village*”. [K]

Women’s participation in decision making

Women rarely participate in meetings. There is one place per family and it is usually the man who goes. “*Sometimes the women can participate in meetings when their husband is tired or he is working outside or he is drinking alcohol*”. [K] Not only do women have limited access to the village assembly, but when they participate, they rarely talk. [K]

Some men admitted that “*if a woman tells something in a meeting, other men cut the discussion and move to another topic. No one would ask the woman to continue again*”. [m K]

Some women also indicated why women are less apt to be involved in decision making:

- **Women should not be leaders:** “*I would like to buy chairs and tables for the village, because when there is a celebration we must rent them. So I am trying to collect the money, but people say: ‘She is a woman, she should not be a leader’*”. [young woman, M]
 - **Women are too talkative to be involved in decision-making.** “*There is one saying ‘women can destroy a country’ [in Myanmar, not Kayah] and this applies to women who are too talkative. Women assume that being too talkative is not useful in decision-making and in participation. In the end it might be an attitude of the women*”. [w K]
 - **Women can talk inconvenient truths.** Women would be likely to discuss issues that are not usually on the radar of men. And men do not want to hear this, otherwise they will have to do something about it: “*If the women propose something – like a clinic - the men have the responsibility to do it. When the women talk then the men have to do things, so they prefer that the women do not talk too much*”. [w K]
 - **Family upbringing matters.** Family has an important role in shaping if women are prepared to actively participate in decision-making in the village. One active woman explained that she is confident to discuss in the public assembly because most of the parents would tell their children, “*you are girls and do not speak back*”, but her mother is a widow, so she had to stand alone and her daughter consequently learnt by her example that she should also stand alone. [K]
 - **Attitude of the husband.** Husbands can also have a role in discouraging women from taking part in decision-making. “*The village leader usually accepts the wishes and requests of women. But the husbands cannot accept their wives’ participation in meetings, so at the end the women admit that they are wrong and they give up*”. [m K]. Being active in a village can come at a price. “*The only other woman who dares to talk in the village is always scolded by her husband when she participates in meetings and talks*. [K]
 - **Pressure to conform:** “*Young women are discouraged from participating. When some young woman wants to participate they say to her ‘why do you want to participate, when all the others are not doing it?’*” [K]
-

Set up of local norms (without women’s involvement).

Villages will set their own norms to regulate behaviours of people and punishments. Such norms are revised and negotiated by the village leadership. Rules are decided in the assembly and become immediately effective as approved. In K the assembly approving them is made exclusively by men, women do not take part in decision-making processes

Some of these rules punish inadequate behaviour against women (for example, rules have been established on beating and fighting in the couple, adultery, rape). They are administered through the village leader as well as the elders, and involve paying a fee. In K they are also associated to cleansing ceremonies [see page 38].

In M a new rule against “westernized clothes” was going to be proposed by the village leader, but it only applied to women wearing Western clothes, not to men. We also found evidence of

a woman lobbying against an existing norm, forbidding women to bring their husbands from outside into the village. *“I could not bring a husband to my village, even if we both wanted to move here. A woman might want to be close to her parents and assist them, and the husband would be happy to support this. I tried to oppose this rule, but I was denied the permission by the elders. And what the elders decide, young people must obey. Because I insisted, some people in the village are now angry with me. (And yet, that rule had been lifted in the past, in the case of a woman close to the family of the elders!)”*

Can the village interfere in family matters?

Most occurrences of violence against women – with the exclusion of rape and attempted rape – would fall into “family problems”. This means that even when women are abused and hurt, and even if the situation is known - villagers and the village leader would not interfere. Action could be done only if a family member or close relation asks for help. For example, men had been quoted resisting paying a fine for beating because *“we are beating our wives, our children, why should we pay?”*

Absence of MAAF

The need for an alternative channels for denouncing issues of violence against women was evident in the course of the KAP, as exemplified by the following quote: *“Well, also the village leader drinks and makes problems to his wife, so how could people complain to him?”* [P] In some cases the village leader prevented people from addressing a violation at a higher level. Women interviewed were not aware of any service or special assistance for the women, beyond the village leader.

Other authorities in the village

In some exceptional cases other leaders might intervene. Religious leaders (monks) could be involved in some issues (for couple fighting) [P]. In K the religious leader performs the cleansing ceremony, but in this case, as explained above, it does so together with other village authorities, he is not an alternative to it.

Sound bites



Being talkative in meetings is not good for women [K]

<http://youtu.be/BRmqD68Gv4I>

Women do not participate much in meetings. It is men who take part in them. Women have an inferiority complex. Their main concern is that if they participate in a meeting, they would be seen as “too talkative”, and this is not good for a woman



I will live here with my husband [K]

http://youtu.be/afAUr3lin_o

If girls from the village want to marry outsiders, their husbands will not be allowed to live in the village. I will marry, and I want to live here. And if the leader of the village tells me something, I will speak back. Why can't I live here? Other girls might accept this imposition, but I will not.



What women cannot do [M]

http://youtu.be/O-sy3ipq_el

Young women share what they cannot do because they are women. One cannot be active and lead activities, such as getting common chairs for the village. They are not allowed to drive a motorbike. Another cannot work far away, and has been trafficked.



A woman must denounce [M]

<http://youtu.be/zqScJt2opc>

Referring to the case of a woman who is beaten - but does not dare to take action about it - a girl active in a local group explains that they cannot not do anything to help. If a woman is beaten, she must denounce the case personally to the village leader. Other people cannot do it on her behalf.

When women do not have a say: sharing the nuts harvest in the village

If they ever go to meetings (which is rare, and would happen only if their husband does not attend), women feel they are not listened to. One woman told that she participated once to a meeting, where a decision had to be made about how to share the nuts produced collectively by the village. Her husband could not attend, so she went. The women had informally discussed the issue, as they met and worked in the fields. They had agreed that each household should receive 6 boxes. Men, however, wanted to distribute only 4 boxes to each household, and sell the remaining nuts on the market. At the meeting the woman spoke: "We want 6 packets". The men were quick to dismiss her with no discussion, saying "it is not possible, we will give you 4 packets". She only said this once. She did not dare to insist or to repeat. Few other women were present, but no one dared to say anything. She is not sure if speaking out had consequences. No woman congratulated her for speaking. She does not know if people are now gossiping about her now. Another woman present in the focus group said that they never went to a meeting. Only their husbands go. She is not interested in going. It is not "woman's work".

Government and other institutions

P K M R

Education curriculum

It was noted that the school curriculum now does not address gender issues. There are teachings on "morals" but it does not include gender. Government representatives in K suggested that teaching what inappropriate behaviour is to children at a young age could help prevent mistreatment, such as beating women. Summer camps could also have a role in education against gender based violence.

Availability of MAAF

MAAF representatives lack in most of the areas visited. Some people mentioned that a stronger presence of MAAF could help some issues – even if they could not always precisely explain which issues could be supported and how. *"In our village we should have a village protection group. If we had a women's protection group with support from MAAF these cases would not happen"*. [R] *"There is no MAAF in the village. It would be good if there were one. If there was one, she could create awareness on women's issues. She could also reduce early marriage."* [teacher M]

Some however doubt that MAAF would be really efficient. In K, for example, the presence of the government is low and there are no MAAF. But a village leader's wife in the area – according to government representatives – would have no power to support other women: *"People might tell things to her, and in this way she can tell the village leader. But it would still be the village leader to make decisions. And in many places wife and husband have the same ideas"*.

In Rakhine some respondents said: *"If something happens to our daughter, we should raise the case with MAAF and possibly with police in the area"*. When probed further, it then became clear that they do not have experience of raising cases with MAAF. They think that MAAF might do something, but they do not know exactly what. *"Policemen are men and have weapons: they can punish the men and do something against men. MAAF cannot do that"*. [R]

In none of the areas we approached a MAAF member at the village level, despite looking for the representative in place, and it was not clear if the representative was not there or not willing to be found and interviewed. MAAF at the township level were, however, very approachable and willing to discuss in the interviews. They all acknowledge the challenges in reaching out to the villages.

Even active people in the village might not know the MAAF nor had they approached them. A fellow said, for example, *"I do not know about the MAAF. The midwife might know more about the MAAF because she is a member of the local committee. So she would know what a MAAF is"*. [M]

Availability of other social services

In Kayah each village should have a village affair's person, but the officer from the social welfare department is not really sure of how this would work. She does not know who should support the MAAF in the village and how they coordinate. They have contacts with the MAAF at the township level, but there is no contact at the village level. The social welfare department has only very few staff. So when they go to the villages they do not have much time to discuss issues in-depth.

Women in the police

"In any case of rape, women can denounce through by phone, letter or in person. Also the parents or caretakers can denounce. The person who denounces must bring evidence (e.g. clothes). We write a report with evidence about the case and we then send evidence and the victim to the hospital. The hospital will check the woman's body and the evidence. They then come back to the police. The prosecutor (who can be the highest level in the police station) will interrogate. There will be a policewoman on the side. She is there only for witnessing the investigation, to avoid that the victim can complain about the investigation process. There is no woman police officer here who could investigate such cases in our area". [Police P]

Sound bites



Suggestions to reduce beating [K]

<http://youtu.be/nGP3bs5b224>

Education in school and to young children, would help to prevent violence against women.

Alternative forms of justice

Punishment from God

Especially in Kayah, there was a linkage amongst condemned behaviours in society and religion, and all misbehaviours had to be redressed by religious ceremonies – as detailed below. In some cases, accidents have been seen as punishments by God for (alleged) bad behaviour, and they can impact against a woman. An active woman said that when she had a cycle accident, other people did not help her. They said "*it has happened because she has affairs with other men*". As an active woman she is also the first one to be suspected as responsible when a chicken bone ceremony foretells bad luck: she will be subjected to gossiping and interrogation.

Rebel forces

In Kayah a girl – 10 years old – was raped by a relative, with a mental disability (before the rape he had not have a history of mental disability, but after the rape his mental health deteriorated). The girl was stigmatized, and suffered damages in her womb. Her family accepted the compensation. They did a washing ceremony as per tradition. Because the rapist had been in the rebel army in the past, the family handed him over to them for punishment. No one had heard from him since. The interviewees added that because the army does not accept rape, the rapist might have been given a death sentence. No one knows for sure what had happened to him. His body was not found. They then did the cleansing, according to the tradition.

Cleansing ceremonies in Kayah

In the animistic villages in the Kayah region several ceremonies and rituals are in place which have relevance to violence against women. The religious leader, in conjunction with the elders and the village leader, administers them. Most interviewees recognized the value of these ceremonies: they are considered the right way to address issues.

Cleansing ceremonies. When inappropriate behaviour happens, it needs to be addressed with a "cleaning ceremony". Each village has different rules, but overall cleansing involves making an offer to the village authorities (both the village committee and the spiritual leader). It is often *toddy* – the traditional alcohol – and animals that are offered, as well as some money. The offer might be shared differently: paid by the woman's family, by the man's or by both. In the village visited, the ritual offer consisted mostly of money and chicken, which had to be cooked and shared with the religious leader and the village leaders. When the

ceremony happens, women who are menstruating cannot stay at home, they must leave the village. In the case of adultery, for example, the man must bring the chicken curry to the *To Gon Tain* (the tree of the spirit) and he has to walk around it three times. He should then leave some of the chicken curry outside the village (for the spirit). If the affair has involved people of two villages, the man has to pay one pig, and chicken. He will circle the *To Gon Tain* 3 times and he will walk once around the village. If this is done properly, the ceremony will avert misfortune in the village. In the case of rape, a similar procedure applies. In addition to the ceremony – compensation for the family of the woman is negotiated (unless marriage is agreed). If the rapist runs away, the parents of the girl will have to do the ceremony.

The cleansing ceremony is done in the case of beating, adultery, rape and also for consensual but not-allowed relationships (e.g. relationships amongst relatives not of the same generation. For example, uncle and niece). Whilst in all other cases the cleansing ceremony “closes the case” and, for example, a rapist can marry the survivor, in the case of not-allowed relationships the couple is rejected from the village and disowned, and they should live separated.

Fortune telling. At the annual festival, the religious leader will read the fortune of a village through a ceremony that involves suffocating a chicken and reading its bones and feathers. All the inhabitants need to confess their faults and sins before such ceremony, because if they do not do so, they will bring bad fortune. People worry about that. The religious leader believes that everyone tells when they had an affair. Both men and women had admitted sin, and women might be even more likely to admit: “Men do not want to take responsibility. Men do not want to tell. Because they do not want to marry”, according to the religious leader. He also mentioned a case of a man now living in Thailand. He called the parents from there to tell them that he had an affair, so that they could do the washing and avert the bad fortune. The fortune telling ceremony can easily become a form of social control on “deviant people”. If during the annual ceremony the chicken bones come out badly, the whole family needs to investigate if something bad had happened, and if their children had done something wrong. And if something is discovered, the village leader has the power to force a marriage if there are the right conditions.

Whilst linked to local religious beliefs, these traditions are also part of the norm and rules governing the village. They might apply to people of different faiths. A woman complained that even if she is Buddhist, she must accept *To Gun Tain* traditions, and they have a bad impact on her. Because she is an active person and people are already gossiping about her, she fears bad results from the fortune telling ceremony, because people will start investigating, and she does not like being investigated. But if she refuses, they will gossip even more about her. Sometimes she had chosen to rebel against the traditions. Near her house there is a hump on the road, and accidents are prone to happen. And when an accident happens, tradition requires paying a chicken to the religious leader, and they would then shoot with guns in front of the house, to chase the evil spirit. Two months ago there was an accident and she refused to give the chicken. She told the elders that that she would rather put a signboard: “Please take care on the road”.

Sound bites



Cleansing ceremony for extra marital affairs

<http://youtu.be/NVU1ZO2yyYk>

If a man from one village has an extramarital affair with a woman from another, he will have to undergo a “cleansing ceremony”. He shall pay a chicken, a pig and walk around the *Gon Tain* tree and around the village. If the couple is from the same village, they both have to pay 2,500 Kyats and the man will also pay a chicken and walk around the *Gon Tain* tree.



Gossiping and chicken bones

<http://youtu.be/PTCIGf1oBM>

She does not like gossiping, but gossiping happens a lot in the village. The traditional fortune reading through chicken bones can create more gossiping. When the result is bad, people will start be suspicious. [They will want to know whose bad behaviour is causing misfortune to the village]. And gossiping will increase.

Sanctions

	P	K	M	R
<p>Certainty of punishment</p> <p>The worse cases of violence are ruled, and sanctions are clearly defined. For example, in the case of rape, the traditional system would use compensation, the legal one jail. But in both cases, if rape is denounced, it would be punished. For “lesser” aggressions, rules and norms are fuzzier, and sometimes not respected (e.g. in the case of the fee for beating in K).</p>				
<p>Negotiation, compensation vs. justice system</p> <p>At the village level, issues are largely solved outside the formal justice system (i.e. without the involvement of tribunals and forms of punishment). They are solved through admonition, negotiation and compensation. This means that the perpetrator of violence – once admonished and fined – will still be in the village, and free to act. When dealing with rape, tensions between “compensation” and “legal solution” will be explored more in-depth (see for example, the section on “grabbing”, p 57). Many people mentioned that admonition and fines often cause a small decrease in the inadequate behaviours (for example, a husband would drink less, or beat less), but this might only be temporary, and resume soon.</p>				
<p>Exemplary punishment vs. graduated sanctions</p> <p>In discussion with government representatives (e.g. in K), when the absence of norms for addressing instances of violence (e.g. beating) was pointed out, the solution proposed – after some deliberation – tended to be “exemplary punishment” – possibly accompanied by media coverage - as a way to discouraging others from doing violence. Examples of “graduated sanctions”, more broadly applicable, were not mentioned.</p>				

Sound bites



Compensation vs. law [M]

http://youtu.be/13LQZ5ya0_w

The village leader explains what are the advantages and disadvantages of getting compensation or recurring to law in the case of rape. With compensation women can get a capital for business, but people will assume they are only interested in money.



Compensation vs. law [M]

<http://youtu.be/UbNjnxjkaM>

When rape happens in the village, it is usually solved by compensation. The advantage for the woman is to get some money, but perpetrator can do it again. Limited knowledge of the law in the village means that rape will mostly be solved through compensation. Using the law, in the view of the fellow, would help to reduce the occurrence of rape.

Divorce

Divorce is rare. It does not respect the Buddhist tradition [P].

When asked about divorce, MAAF representatives could only recall very few cases. Couples rarely decide to divorce, and women would tend to tolerate a bad marriage for the sake of the children.

Amongst those who can grant divorce, the tendency is to try and mediate instead.

Divorce is regulated by law, but – aside the legal provision – village leaders might also grant divorce – when it is consensual. This form of divorce is defined and accepted as such within communities, even if it is not ratified in court.

	P	K	M	R
<p>Divorce by law</p> <p>The divorce law has unequal provision for men and women. A government representative in K mentioned that the couple needs to be separated for one year if the divorce is asked by the</p>				

man, and for three, if it is asked by the woman. However, what the law states is largely unknown in villages.

Divorce granted by government functionaries

Government functionaries (e.g. MWAFF) could be involved in divorce cases, and asked to provide a letter of approval to this end. When talking about their involvement, they made clear that their main worry is to bring back peace in the couple, and to negotiate – rather than divorce. They will seek to also involve the village leader to negotiate an agreement [P, M].

Divorce through the village leader

The village leader might grant divorce if a couple wants it [K, M]. This form of divorce did not seem to include certifying divorce to higher authorities. The village leader acts as a mediator. The negotiation for divorce also involves negotiating alimony.

The divorce cases negotiated by village leaders mentioned to us in the interviews involved young couples, with no children. *“There is a case of divorce, but they do not have children. The wife lives nearby and the husband in another village. They are officially divorced, by the village leader”* [M]. In another case, young couples separated after losing their child [M].

The village leader would only grant divorce if the husband consents [it is not clear – and we did not discuss in detail - if consent would also be always required from the woman].

“If a woman wants to divorce, if this is her desire, I would allow divorce. If she cannot be patient any longer, she can denounce the problem to the village leader. The village leader will solve the problem in accordance to the desire of the couple. But if the husband does not agree, I cannot make a decision on the behalf of a couple. If they fight again, the husband himself will be bored about the situation and will agree to divorce. But I cannot do anything if the man does not agree”. [leader in M]

“If they do not agree, they must live separately. If a husband does not want to divorce and the wife does, he – the leader - would send him to the tract leader and then to the police”. [leader in M]

Women willing to divorce unilaterally are at a standstill: *“I cannot divorce because my husband does not want to divorce. I said him: go away from this house. But he refuses to do so. My friends suggested to divorce, but they do not know how to do it. I think I cannot divorce if there is no agreement by my husband. The village leader is a friend of my husband, there is no point in discussing with him”*. [M]

De-facto separation

Some couples **live separated**, without having made a formal request for divorce. For example, in one case encountered, the wife left the house to avoid violence. *“I was threatened by a knife and stick by my husband. I lived in another village before the divorce. After the threat, I came back to the village and lived with my parents. My husband did not follow me because I have brothers who can protect me. I did not even denounce the problem. I just ran from the house and came back here”*. [M]

Private negotiation

A volunteering social worker in [M] reported the case of a 25 year-old woman who consulted her because her husband married to another woman and took all the money. She could not tell the problem to the family because the family was not in good health. The in-laws did not want to help her. They thought that the son was not wrong. This woman wants her money and belongings back. She could accept if the husband marries another woman. *The social worker suggested going to the husband and negotiate? She also suggested another option: go to court and inform the police. She chose the negotiation way*. [M]

Disowning the husband

A case of disowning the husband was mentioned by an elder in K, *“A wife told her husband to marry the lover and repudiated him from the family. This is even worse than divorce”* [however, it was not explained clearly what repudiation would entail].

Sound bites



Divorce needs men's consent [M]

<http://youtu.be/IMGZEIwFPyc>

A village leader explains that if a woman wants to divorce, but a man does not give consent, he cannot divorce them. However, he could order them to live separately, until the husband eventually gets bored of the situation and consent to divorce.

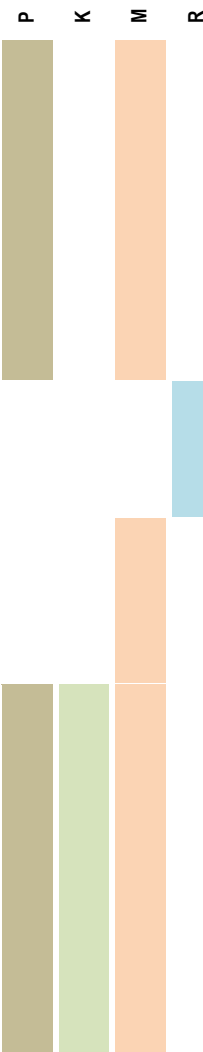


An equal right to divorce [K]

<http://youtu.be/lujzyd7tuls>

Men and women do not have the same rights. If a man wants to divorce, he needs to wait for one year. If a woman wants to divorce, she must wait for three. The law favours the man and should be reformed.

What prevents divorce?



Not knowing how to divorce

People do not know how to obtain divorce or where to seek for advice.
"My son-in-law had once beaten my daughter when he was drunk. She wanted to divorce him. They went to the tract leader; he said he had no authority to divorce. They went to the police, and they also said: "We cannot separate you, because a legal process is involved". After the police, they did not look for any more advice: they reconciled. I now say to my son-in-law: "Do not drink, or I will take you to the police station". [a woman in P]
"People in the villages do not know the law, and they do not know where to go. Some refreshers and trainings are organized in some villages". [M WAF M]
"I talked about my problems to my friends and they suggested to divorce. However, they cannot offer any advice about it. They just know that divorce exists". [M]

Divorce might not be the solution

"I will have a peaceful life when he dies, and because he drinks so much he might die soon. Now I try to avoid him. Even if I divorce, he would cause problems. So divorce is not really a solution, the solution is to avoid him". [R]

Choosing not to divorce

Several cases have been cited of women mistreated by the husband that chose not to divorce, even if people in the community tell them to do so or if they would approve it. *"Despite the beating and despite relatives not agreeing with the ill-treatment, ultimately there is no divorce". [teacher M]*

Divorce should be avoided

Divorce is discouraged by the authorities involved. All these mentioned that there is pressure on the couple to negotiate. Both government functionaries and village leaders mentioned the need to talk to the couple, do counselling, ask for apologies when they are due. In all the cases mentioned, this strategy had avoided the divorce, and the couple got back together. People interviewed said for example that: *"Divorce should be avoided. Even in the case of adultery, the wife must remain in the house". [m K]*
 In the case of adultery by the husband, the relatives of the couple and the village leader will negotiate and will support the wife. The couple should not divorce and the man should pay compensation to the woman he had an affair with. Such agreements might also include a clause of not getting in touch again with the lover. If they do, they will have to give compensation to the committee. [K]

Sound bites



Avoiding divorce [P]

<http://youtu.be/ozkUG8Bbq8M>

A M WAF officers talk about how she dealt with a request for divorce. The M WAF had dealt with other two requests for divorce, and they all ended with the couple getting back together again.

Consequences of divorce

P K M R

There are no negative consequences

"My husband drinks everyday and creates problems everyday. If I divorce, the children would be happier. It will not affect the dignity. Now everyday my husband curses us, and this affects the dignity of the family. If I divorce there would be no drawback, I cannot think of negative consequences. I am now trying to divorce. But I have no idea of what could happen after divorce, and what the arrangements and consequences could be. I know that when the couple divorces, the woman can get half of the belongings. But we have no properties. I do not know who would keep the house". [M]

Gossiping

"If a man drinks, it is better to divorce. The consequences for the women will be gossip. If she marries another man, everyone will say 'she will not be ok with this man because she already had problems with her former husband". [M]

Children

Divorce is avoided for the sake of the children. *"Wives tolerate drinking and harassment for the sake of the children" [P]. "Divorce is not an option for the sake of the children. All the problems have been tolerated for the sake of the children. Men do not think about the children in most cases". [P]*

Divorce can stigmatize children: *"Some women cannot divorce because of the children. In this village divorce is bad history for the children in the future: people think that 'children of divorced parents will be as bad as their father' [M].*

Mistrust on women asking for divorce

Some women might seek divorce to get alimony:

"We cannot say that it is always the man's fault. It is also women's fault. They cheat and misbehave. Some people came here talking about being beaten, asking for divorce. The story was bad and I was moved. But then I consulted the village leaders. We need the help of the village tract leader to solve problems, because some women might denounce their husbands for the money" [MWAFF P]

Sound bites



Women cheat as well [P]

<http://youtu.be/ygYMfmnew8A>

MWAFF experienced that sometimes women cheat: it is not always man's fault. Once a woman came to see her, asking for divorce, and saying that the husband tortured her. She summoned the village tract leader, and he explained that that woman had a history of divorcing to get money from the husband. She had done before.



Divorce is bad for children [M]

<http://youtu.be/fHktWOoJX7o>

Mothers avoid divorce because it is bad for their children. When they grow up, they will carry stigma.

Instances of
inappropriate behaviour

Instances of inappropriate behaviours

When (consensual) relationships go wrong

Protecting women from inappropriate relationships is the root of many norms of “good woman behaviour”, whose consequences have been discussed in the previous section. Inappropriate, in the areas visited, extends to any relationship and intercourse outside the marriage - even when consensual. Adultery as well as sex amongst young unmarried lovers surfaced in our interviews as “inappropriate behaviour”. Having sex outside the marriage is definitely a “no no” in all areas visited. Yet, these happen, and are mostly hidden. When relationships are discovered, measures are taken. In most cases women suffer the negative consequences, but some cases have been mentioned where men were more adversely impacted.

A proper relation is the one that ends in marriage, and is negotiated by the parents: “I will tell my daughter, if you like someone, tell us first, we will investigate. We do not care if he is rich or not. We do not want to have someone drinking or gambling. We want to find someone who works very hard. We do not want our daughter to run away with a boy. We want honest men. One would not want her daughter to be friend with rude boys and girls because she will imitate them”. [P] For the young women we interviewed, arranged marriages are mostly fine. “A girl would listen to her parents, but if the girl has a boyfriend, then they might run away together. But it is difficult to say when a marriage is forced. The parents know better, so they are doing it for the girl. If there is no boyfriend, then the girl should obey the parents”. [P]

Sound bites



Adultery is not acceptable [P]

<http://youtu.be/Sqcss7LcHDE>

Adultery is not acceptable. But when it happens, women had to accept it for the sake of the children.



Adultery is not accepted [K]

<http://youtu.be/yJ7WgICyUHE>

In the community, adultery is not accepted. If a man has an affair, he will be admonished by relatives and by the village leader. If he continues, he will have to do a cleansing ceremony. And if he continues, his wife will be depressed. And it will have a negative impact on children.

P K M R

Sexual intercourses outside the marriage pose problems

“Young couples having affairs pose a problem to be solved. The families will be involved first, and if there are complications, the affair should be denounced to the village authorities. While the issue is being dealt with, if they are not relatives, both of them have to stay at the man’s house. If they are relatives they have to stay at the woman’s house. After solving the problem they can go back to their home. If young lovers are discovered to be ‘guilty’ of touching, the dignity of both will be affected. But it will be easier for the boy to marry, difficult for the girl. (K)

Seduction by the rich man

In many cases people had mentioned that women might suffer from relationships with older and richer men. Such relationships have been described in such a way where the line between consensus / coercion is hard to draw.

In some cases the men had used their financial power to force marriage or a relationship: “Some men just pretend that they are helping the vulnerable girls who do not have knowledge. They want to exploit them. For example they lend money to a girl and the girl cannot give it back, so she is forced to marry them”. [K]

“Old men might lend money to a girl’s family. When they cannot pay back, the old man marries the girl. It did not happen here, but it could happen. If it happens the elders could help the girl to get half of the property of the man”. [M]

In other cases, they can abuse of girls and then simply pay compensation.
“Rich men are in a position to rape girls by using their economic power. They can then solve the issue by compensation. The best option for a woman is then to accept the money and solve the issue”. [M]

Compensation for consensual relations

Consensual relationship / adultery can result in compensation. And when there is compensation, a woman can be accused of plotting to profit from the situation:
“Rich men might persuade a woman to have sex. It happens in the village. One man pretended to help a widow. She knew that the rich man was married. When she become pregnant, the rich man refused to marry. The woman denounced the problem to the village leader. He had to pay compensation to the woman (but not for the baby, and this was not good). Now most of the villagers gossip about her, because she made a business with the compensation. The baby might suffer consequences, people will tease him because he has no father. Many people do not want to have much to do with either of them. If the woman had not behaved like this, people in the community would have helped her, as we help a relative”. [M]
“A couple eloped. They stayed away for one night and then came back to the village. Then the woman asked for the compensation and the man had to pay 800,000 for this case. The consequence for the woman is that villagers say that the woman was very interested in money, this is why she informed the village leader. People did not say anything about the man: the relationship was consensual. The woman is probably ashamed. Her lover had a bad impression on her, because she asked compensation. This woman who eloped is a shopkeeper. Most of the people do not want to buy from her shop after this event”. [M]

Unwanted pregnancy

Pregnancy forces lovers to disclose their relationship.
“A relation is often revealed / discovered when there is pregnancy” [elder in K]. *“There are some affairs, and people sleeping together. Both man and women will need to speak out when the woman becomes pregnant. If they do not do so, bad things happen in the village”.* (m K)

When an inappropriate relationship is discovered because of pregnancy, what are the options for a woman?

□ ◀ ≡ ▶

Marriage

For most respondents, the best option for the woman is to marry. This applies to consensual and non-consensual relationships (e.g. rape, as will be discussed further later).
“If a pregnant woman - abandoned by his lover - cannot marry another man she should suicide”. [Leader M]

Abortion

If an unwanted pregnancy is discovered, a woman might try to seek abortion (A TBA explained that she had to assist women that seek clandestine abortion elsewhere and suffer the consequences of bad interventions).
“A friend became pregnant, and I accompanied her to the clinic. She was rejected by the boyfriend, she could not accept this. When she first went to the clinic it was because ‘there is something wrong in my abdomen’. When the pregnancy was discovered she told me not to tell anything to other people, including her parents. I worried that she could suicide. Her parents worried about the abdomen and followed up. She was sent to another clinic in the village, and another friend accompanied her. In this clinic the midwife discovered the pregnancy. The first clinic had kept the information confidential. They gave her some drugs and told her that abortion was not possible. In the second clinic the midwife scolded the girl and called the parents. They also scolded me for not talking. The midwife said: “You must find out who is the father, otherwise I will call the MWAF”. The pregnant girl did not want to marry the boy, but eventually she had to do so. The baby died shortly after delivery. The couple then divorced. People say: “They married soon, now they divorce”. But there is not much gossiping or consequences for the girl. My friend did not have protected sex. She did not know what a condom is”. [M]

Seek compensation or alimony

Compensation can be granted in the case of adultery, and in the case of pregnancy, the father should pay alimony for the child.
“Boy and girl might meet when their parents are away fishing, and this can result in pregnancy.”

It happened in another village. The girl had a poor mother, the boy was rich. They were lovers, she got pregnant. The boy's mother tried to separate the couple by sending her son away from the village. The girl's mother raised the issue to township level: the boy had to admit he was the father. He was called back, and stayed around, but only for a while. The girl and her family were ashamed: she was pregnant without husband. Everyone looked down on the girl. The families became enemies. The dignity of the girl's family went down. The whole family's dignity went down. Officially they could claim alimony for the child, but they did not. The mother is poor, the other sons have a good living, so they would not want any money. They only wanted him to admit he was the father. If I were in the same situation I would put pressure on the other family to get money. Taking money from the man is not shameful. The father should give the expenses of the child. So the neighbours would think 'that boy has the monthly support from the father'. [R]

"A couple had sex, the woman became pregnant but she did not know she was. They split, and each of them met another lover. Then the woman found out she was pregnant. She quarrelled with the new lover because of this pregnancy. The father refused to marry her. She denounced the problem to the village leader and the tract leader. After negotiation the man had to pay 300.000 K to the woman and sign that he will be responsible for the baby until he goes to school. The baby died after the delivery. Most of the people blame her. She did not behave properly. The boy had to pay but was not much blamed. Now this woman married another person (one year after the delivery). And the father is single". [M]

Knowledge of contraception.

Of all the areas visited, the only place where awareness of contraceptives was highlighted was Pyapon: *"In this village there is no abortion. If they do not want the baby they can take the pill or use contraception. Married women do their contraception here, but before they did not know how to do it, and they delivered many children. The usual way is that they take pills or have injections. The midwife gives pills and injections. There is no unwanted pregnancies, the village is so peaceful". [P]*

In other places, knowledge and awareness of contraception are very low: *"Here only some university student would know about it. I [a fellow] attended a health course and I heard about it. Some girl might know that condoms exist, but they would not know exactly how to use them. I do not know if married couples in the village would use them, and how they would learn about condoms. I do not know if it is possible to buy them here. I have never seen a condom here. I never saw a real condom. [M]*

Even Traditional Birth Assistants might not know about contraception. The TBA interviewed in Rakhine was not aware of condoms. The only advice she can give to couples is to abstain and do not live together. The only thing she we taught is that she should use gloves when giving birth... but she does not use them. [R]

Staff and local volunteers said that *"talking with villagers about reproductive health is hard, we feel uncomfortable talking about condoms. Even midwives are shy to talk about this"*.

Sound bites



Marriage after unwanted pregnancy [M]

<http://youtu.be/AKt7iwYL8CA>

If a girl becomes pregnant when having a relation with a rich man, and he refuses to marry her, her best option is to persuade another person to marry her, hiding her pregnancy. The alternative would be to suicide, according to the village leader. It is the husband, however, who will pay the consequences of being cheated.



On contraception [M]

<http://youtu.be/XgvZ7Bjwgb8>

Girls in the village have no information about reproductive health. Some married a boy they did not like because they become pregnant. Such marriages were not happy (and ended in divorce).

Marriage is refused

Despite being the best option for a woman, a “shotgun wedding” might be refused by the man or by his family.

P K M R

If permission for marrying is denied, the woman will suffer most

“If a couple is discovered, they can only marry if they get the permission of the parents. If they do not give the permission, the woman will suffer, because no other man will marry her”.

[Teacher in K]

Parents might reject a woman

If a girl is not suited for the family, the parents of the man will resist the marriage.

“A young man, in his 30s, worked as a security guard by the lake. Some girls, in their 20s, constructed a temporary hut by the lake, to catch fish. One night the man went to the hut, and slept – without having sex – under the same mosquito net with one girl. When the other girls saw this they said: “This is an unsuitable situation, you must marry”. They accepted and the man brought the girl to his parents. But his parents did not like the girl, because she is poor. They hit her. She remained for two days in the house and then she went away. The girl’s parents sought justice. The police summoned the boy. His lawyer persuaded the police that the boy did not commit any crime. And he was released. The elders tried to help the girl, but nothing could be done. ‘Because we do not know much about law and police, we could not help her very well’. [R]

The lover refuses marriage

“Consensual sex is not an abuse, what is not acceptable is to refuse to marry a girl when she becomes pregnant. This can happen in the village, after a consensual intercourse”. [M]

However, we heard of cases where the man had refused marriage.

“If a rich man refuses to marry his lover, the best option for her is to accept compensation or make a private deal with him (and this can be done privately, within the couple: not necessarily the village leader will be involved). To protect her reputation she will have to marry someone else – even if she does not love him – and she will try to do so without revealing the pregnancy. In my view this husband is “cheated” because she did not disclose the relationship. He is the one who really pays the consequences”. [M]

Sound bites



Family might reject a couple [K]

<http://youtu.be/f6ur4jd-WgU>

Even if a couple love each other, the extended family might deny them the permission to marry, and reject them.

Early marriage

In the areas visited, women marry quite young, often below their 20s. In some areas it was hard to find young women to interviews who were 18+ and yet not married for our focus groups of “single young women”.

P K M R

Low education, early marriage

“Many people marry when they are adolescents. The villagers seem to be happy about this. But I think that this is a problem. The girls, when they finish primary school drop off. When they are 16/17 they are preparing for marriage. This is too early. When they marry, they marry who they choose: these are not arranged marriages. Some couples run away without telling the parents. I do not know if other villages experience the same problem, but according to other friends and colleagues who work in other villages, the situation in places closer to Meikhtila is different: there are not so many early marriages. Here, early marriages are due to the low education of people and the fact that the village is not developed. There is a lot of drop

out from school. Some students are clever at school, but parents do not allow them to continue studying. Most of the parents in the area do not encourage education. People in the village think that early marriage is good. And people have little education. If there was less drop out from school, there would also be fewer early marriages". [teacher M]

"Women are young, they have not much education, they marry at a young age. The students go to town to study, so they have less opportunities for courting at the village. For those who stay at the village, there is not much to do, so they go around and chat. (Those who study outside would tend to get married with people from other areas)". [R]

Young people in the village do not have many options

"Young people do not have much to do, so they go around and chat. And they will initiate relationships and marry young". [m R]

Virginity blood

The "virginity blood" does not seem a big issue. It was not discussed with respondents, but rather with staff in interview debriefings. They mentioned that young boys and girls might not be aware of what "defloration" exactly involves. And that a "blood proof" of the virginity of a lady is not sought. The issue surfaced when discussing if young girls could hide having had a relationship, and there was no clear answer on this. More clarity of what people are likely to know (and do not know) re: sexual intercourse would be valuable when approaching issues of sexual and reproductive health.

Note: No evidence was mentioned about forced arranged marriage amongst young couples. The young women interviewed mentioned that their marriage will be arranged, but it will be done with their consent, and expressed trust in their parents to help them choosing a good husband.

The "Yee Sarr" tradition in Rakhine

A man can propose to a girl without asking her parents or making a wedding ceremony. He could give an appointment to the girl somewhere out of the village and - from there - the couple would go to the man's home. (In normal circumstances a woman would not go to a man's home, it would affect her dignity). After sleeping together, they would inform their parents and they would be considered as married.

We were told that in some cases men might not honour the appointments they give. They could promise a woman to meet her in the arranged place. And when a woman goes to the agreed place - with her belongings - they would not be there. If the woman then tries to go to her loved one's house, the man might reject her: "go away!" A woman might still insist, try to stay with him but she will be eventually sent away from his place. This lowers her dignity because she goes on her own to his house.

Not acceptable couples

In Kayah most people marry within the extended family, but some couples of close relatives (e.g. uncle and niece) are not acceptable, and stigmatized by the villagers. Both lovers suffer - but it was suggested that the woman might struggle more. When such relationships are discovered the couple will need to go through a cleansing ceremony - failing to do so, it is believed, will cause illness in their family. The cleansing ceremony will not suffice to regularize the couple: they will be rejected from the village. They should live separately. No one will help them. "People think badly about that woman and there will be gossiping about her". According to some: "The women become depressed, they feel that they have no aim / ambition in life". Nowadays some of these couples might live away from the village, but remain discretely in touch with their relatives. If they have a child, the woman will be considered as a widow or as a divorced lady. The father should take care of the woman by living far away.

Sound bites



Couples breaking the tradition offend the village [K]

<http://youtu.be/e2SsZUuJue0>

The village rules prescribe that some couples are not acceptable. They include, for example, relationships amongst uncles and niece and some relations amongst cousins [however, most relations amongst cousins are encouraged]. If a couple breaks the tradition, it offends the village. And such

couples should be rejected.



Reducing disadvantages for women in isolated areas [K]

<http://youtu.be/igH5KJFIhic>

Some areas in Kayah are hard to reach, and have their own traditions. In some villages in the hills, some relatives cannot marry, because of the local traditions. Women can be affected by this. Now there is more media freedom, the issue should be discussed and the disadvantages for women in such areas need to be reduced.

Adultery

Some interviewers had mentioned adultery as a case of violence against women.

	P	K	M	R
Adultery happens <i>"There are many adultery cases. There are secret relationships in the village. Some women are single, and some are married. Men must support the women they have a relationship with. [m P]</i> <i>"If a man is at sea for work, other men might go to his wife. Sometimes the woman accepts, and this is not right. In this village, few people go to secondary school, and lack of education encourages these cases. Adultery is linked to the surroundings, to the living standard, to the rule of law, to financial status and education. In this village there are cases and some people do not realize that his is a crime against other's people property and territory." [m P]</i>	■	■		
Nothing can be done <i>"The wives who are betrayed can only say bad words to the husband. There is nothing else they can do" [m K]</i>		■		
Adultery might result in diseases Adultery is inappropriate behaviour because it can transmit sexual diseases. <i>"Adultery can cause sexually transmitted diseases to the betrayed wife". [m K]</i> <i>"If a woman has an adulterous relation, she will get sexual diseases. She gets the disease because she is not good". [w P]</i>	■	■		
Adultery might result in suicide <i>"The betrayed wife might suicide. It happened in the village in the past". [m K]</i>		■		
It always looks bad on the woman <i>"Adultery is bad because love cannot be shared! And people will think that a betrayed woman is not appropriate. She will be looked on badly". [w P]</i> <i>"If a woman is discovered to have a sexual relation outside the marriage, her future will be destroyed, and no one will want to marry her. She will be blacklisted". [M]</i>				■
Adultery can cause repercussions in the village Because extramarital relations can cause misfortune to the village, there is social pressure to confess them, especially when fortune-telling ceremonies do not turn out fine. People believed to be "misbehaving" would be investigated. Once confessed, a cleansing ceremony would be needed. [K]		■		
"Double marriage" In some cases married men do not disclose that they are married and they try to marry another woman. It might happen when they are working away from their village: people there would not know if they are single or not. <i>"It happened to a woman from the village. She engaged with a man she met when they both were working away from their villages After few months the wife of this man and his children came to visit him. When she discovered that he was already married, the woman asked to her village leader for help. She finally got some compensation and came back to her village. Now she is married to another man in her own village. But people still blame the woman: she should have investigated better about the</i>				■

lover.” [M]

Compensation for adultery

An example was quoted, of a woman who had a relationship with a married man and become pregnant. *“She is now living in the old village with her son. Her brother lives in another house, in the same village. She asked for compensation from her lover. The village leader mediated and she received it. The village leader also asked her not to get back in touch with the lover, but sometimes the man comes to visit his son and talk to him: the man would be allowed to see the son, but not to meet her”.* [K]

Single women

Relationships might be inappropriate, but also being single is problematic. We encountered many single and widowed women in the course of the interviews. They were often fine with their status, affirming that being single or widowed did not cause particular issues to them. Some, however, highlighted some areas of concern:

P K M R

It is better to be alone. But the community prefers married women.

“As far as family life is concerned, leaving alone is better than living with a husband. I have enough money, I earn what I need and live peacefully. When my husband was there, he was drunk and made problems. So, looking at family life, I prefer to be alone. But within the community, it is better to have a husband”. [R]

Women living alone are more likely to be bullied

Single and widowed women might encounter problems (e.g. bullying, teasing). Such issues seem to relate more to the condition of “living alone” rather than to their status.

“Since we became widowed, if the men in the village get drunk, they can break our fences, curse, bully. Or they can damage the walls. If the children say something, we would tell them: ‘Just keep quiet, do nothing, we must tolerate’. We feel powerless.” [R]

“We do not feel safe any longer. There is no one to protect us. We worry more. When our husband was alive, he would defend us. Husbands can make troubles, sometimes. But when he was not drunk, we would be together and he would defend us”. [R]

“The problem is not to be single, it is to be alone. When a woman is alone, a drunk man could come to the house and rape her: this is also why the society thinks that she should not be alone. I now live with my mother, so I am fine”. [P]

“If a man leaves the wife, the wife might struggle for her survival: for herself and for the children. Such women might then have to marry again – their parents want them to marry – so that the husband can support them. She must marry for security. A divorced woman can be teased more than a single woman. People will have a bad impression of her”. [MwAF - M]

Some widows might be discriminated against

“When we were widowed, the villagers discriminated us. They would not treat us as the others. We feel we are discriminated. If we had no husband but we had money, we could be treated differently. Or if we had a son standing for us, it would be different. If we had a husband, we could stand and be treated like other people”. [R]

“Sometimes we borrow money from others. Even if we only have a small debt, the moneylender will tell bad things about us. Married couple might have larger debts, but the moneylender does not treat them like us. We feel very bad when we have to borrow money”. [R]

Lack of support from women and MwAF

“Other women do not make space for the widows. Even the MwAF woman [there is one in the village] would not discuss with them. She would not discuss with them, but she would discuss with other people”. [M]

Single women and widows might lack support

A woman who is not married will not have support, which is a concern in particular at a later age. The social nets within the communities do not cater well for them, so they feel a pressure to get married.

“My niece and nephew love me, but they do not take care of me as they do with their parents. If you do not marry, it is not good. People should marry. Even if I married with a bad man, I would now have children to look after me. Other people think that my life is good because I do not have a husband making problems. And – apart from the time when I was not well – all was fine. But when you are not well, you need a husband and children. I do not plan to marry, even if someone would still marry me. I do not want a husband. I want children. [R]

“Old people can still marry. When she is 50 or 60 a woman can still marry again, because women cannot survive alone: they need a husband”. [P]

A single teacher, when asked if she feel pressure to marry, replied: *“Yes, because for a woman living alone is not good: there will be no one to take care of her when she is old”. [P]*

Village leaders might support

“When my husband was alive, he quarrelled with another man. And after the husband died, this man attacked me, tried to stab me [she did not know exactly the reason]. He came when my son was away, abroad. I would not normally have problems with that man, but he was drunk. I had to run away and hide, leaving my children alone – and worrying for them. Since then I suffered from heart conditions. The village leader reproached him: ‘Do not quarrel and do not fight with other people in the village. If you do it again we bring you to the police. He stopped threatening”. [R]

Sound bites



I am a widow living alone, and I am afraid [R]

<http://youtu.be/K7JDCseuj1c>

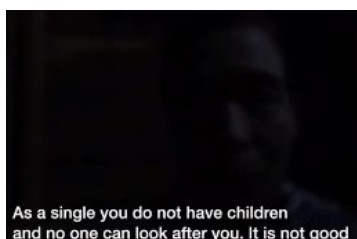
One widow shares how people - especially drunken men - create problems to her. For example, they damage the wall of her house, or her bamboo floor. She cannot do anything about this. She cannot defend herself. She is alone, and she is afraid.



I am alone now, and I feel better [R]

http://youtu.be/43ipxJ39I_M

A widow explains how - now that she is alone - she feels better. In the rest of the interview, she mentioned that when looking at life within the community, it is better to have a husband. But for family life, it is better to be alone.



Being single is good, but not when you are old [R]

<http://youtu.be/IXIofUdUR-o>

A single woman shares how she had a happy life as a single. But now, as she becomes older, not having children to take care of her is becoming a problem. “You should not marry to have a husband”, - she said in the interview. “You should marry to have children”.

Teasing, touching, grabbing

Teasing refers to verbal approaches (mainly directed to girls). Touching includes “holding hands” or any other light touching of body parts. Grabbing indicates more threatening approaches, e.g. restraining women and touching private body parts. In reality the concepts were not so clearly cut. In the interviews we had often to rely on mimic to clarify what “degree of touching” was described by the interviewees.

Grabbing – in an aggressive way – was definitely considered inappropriate. Perceptions on teasing / touching were more nuanced. It was sometimes challenging to define when they are acceptable and when they are not. In the end, most people explained that all these behaviours are potentially negative, but could be acceptable if a woman consents to them. *“If a single man touches the hand of a woman is not violence. But if he is bullying, it is violence”*. The acceptability of “touching”, however, varied within communities and amongst people in the same community. Even when there is consent, touching might still not be acceptable: it clashes with norms of good girl behaviour.

Appropriateness of touching

	P	K	M	R
<p>Age matters</p> <p>Young women are mostly very annoyed by teasing and grabbing, but they concede that light teasing and touching are also part of courtship. So, they might accept it from boys, but they would condemn teasing and touching by older men.</p> <p><i>“Usually it happens amongst people of the same age. But if older people try to do so, it is not acceptable, and the girl should tell her parents, and parents to the head of the village, and the village leader should deal with it”</i>. [P]</p>	✓			
<p>Touching and courting</p> <p>Teasing and touching are often the first inappropriate behaviours that young women and parents of adolescent girls mentioned: they are pervasive and linked to courting. As such, they can be acceptable, when light, and when the girl reciprocates. <i>“Teasing in light words can also be accepted”</i> (woman in K). <i>“Teasing with words is acceptable. If the girl accepts, it is fine. If not, the society should not accept, as well”</i>. [P] <i>“If teasing is appropriate, and it is intended for marriage, it would be good”</i> [P]. But views differ, within and across communities: <i>“Teasing a young girl (14 to 20) is not right. Because they could have a relationship. I personally do not like a relationship in a young age”</i>. [P] <i>“The boy proposes to the girl by holding her hand. We cannot accept this. Some young people can accept teasing, but their parents cannot accept their children to be teased”</i>. [m M]</p> <p>If a girl does not reciprocate, and the boy persists, she might be in trouble: speaking out, denouncing the issue might reflect badly on her.</p> <p>Also when they are consensual, teasing and touching should be done discreetly, as they can ruin the reputation of a girl and expose her to blame. So, either if a girl likes a boy or not, it is in her interest to hide the teasing and the touching <i>“But now everyone would tell this to the mother. Especially when girls like the boy, then they do not tell it to their mother. If someone likes a girl, he would follow her and try to tell, or send a middle person to give the message”</i>. [P]</p> <p>Overall most respondents suggested that young boys and girls are confused about how to go about courting and touching. And this is compounded by the lack of discussion about relationships in the family. As a young man indicated: <i>“If we do not hold hands, we cannot have a lover. If you grab hands you can eventually get a lover. If you do not grab hands, you will not get a lover.”</i> In the same community in Meikhtila girls would say: <i>“Holding hands for proposing is not good and can affect women’s dignity. Boys should propose in a polite way”</i>.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Touching “insiders”</p> <p><i>“We would not grab a stranger. We would not grab ActionAid staff, for example, because they are educated and they could inform other people”</i>. [M]</p>				
<p>Touching and grabbing publicly for married couples</p> <p>Teasing, touching, grabbing are not appropriate behaviours in public even for married couples. Family fights and jealousy might lead husbands to break this rule, shaming their wives. <i>“In the village most of the older women would go to others’ houses to watch television. Sometimes the husbands would go there and take them away, grabbing them in public. They are afraid that they could meet other men, and are jealous. Women will be traumatized and stressed. A</i></p>				

woman feels that she is not free. They are also ashamed because they are grabbed in front of other people". [M]



Where do they happen?

These inappropriate behaviours can happen anywhere. As it is easy to imagine, they are mostly reported as happening in isolated places or in the very crowded festivals in the village. Young girls are the most likely target: "People in this village do not tease old women". [P]

	P	K	M	R
<p>Festivals</p> <p>Festivals were frequently mentioned as an occasion where girls and women are most exposed to touching. The preparation of festivals – when sometimes boys and girls cooperate in activities – might also lead to episodes of touching. [K]</p>	■	■	■	■
<p>TV room</p> <p>In Meikhtila, people watch TV in TV rooms, which are dark places. Here people – boys and men – might try to touch and hold the hands of women and girls, without their consent. "It happens mostly for the beautiful girls". [M]</p> <p>In Kayah, boys would try to visit girls' houses in the evening, and houses with TV are preferred. Parents are inconvenienced by these visits, but it would be impolite to refuse them. [see box]</p>		■	■	
<p>Outskirts of village (for lack of toilets)</p> <p>In Rakhine, girls need to go out because they haven't got toilets in the house. And this put them at risk: "A young boy grabbed a young girl, telling her that he loved her. She managed to escape. Some neighbours suggested her to inform the man's parents and tell the story. The parents of the man agreed to scold the boy". The behaviour was seen as unacceptable in the respondent opinion. "It breaks the rule of the our local culture. However it is rare that such cases happen in the village." [R]</p>				■
<p>Events in the village in the evening</p> <p>When there is theatre and women go there (or to other village events at night-time), men can grab women. [P]</p>	■			
<p>On the way to school</p> <p>There is no secondary school in the village and girls need to walk a long distance. Parents worry a lot about girls when they walk to school, because sometimes they come back late. Girls are still sent at school, but sometimes their mothers will go and get them. [P]</p>	■			
<p>In front of the bars</p> <p>Bars and places where men gather and drink are often described as "no go areas" for women. They are more likely to be teased and touched when there. [Look at the section on the "drinking issue" for more]</p>	■	■	■	■

Consequences for women

Most people interviewed – as per norms of "good behaviours" - mentioned that teasing, touching and grabbing will have consequences for the woman. They would be seen as a "bad girl" and somehow responsible for attracting attention.

	P	K	M	R
<p>The woman who is teased is also blamed.</p> <p>Many reported that teasing could have a negative impact on the dignity of the woman: she will be shamed. People will be thinking: "she can be teased, so she must be bad". (w K). In most cases people will assume that a girl who is teased or grabbed has some responsibility for it. "Sometimes when girls walk around the village they can be grabbed and proposed. The reason is that girls attract the attention of the boys: they want to be proposed". [M]</p> <p>Teasing can be counterproductive also for good girls. It can harm them because "by being teased, they might become interested in love". (elder in K)</p>	■	■	■	■

Parents would tend to condemn it, and scold the girl who is touched – regardless of if she consented or not. Mothers themselves – whilst admitting that touching was part of the courtship leading to their own marriage – do not approve touching. As a consequence, girls would not denounce this behaviour, for fear of being scolded or to be put in a bad light.

A girl accepting touching is frowned upon

"If parents of boys see that you allow the touching, they will think that you are not a good girl, and therefore they will not allow you to marry their boy". (mothers in K)

Consensual touching is eventually accepted if the people involved get married with the agreement of parents

"After touching, a boy and girl could have an affair, they could become a couple and have the agreement of their parents. If they become a couple then there is no problem". (leader in K)

Likelihood of teasing and touching limits the mobility of girls

Women are aware that they should not go to dark areas, quiet places. Women end up avoiding places where men gather (e.g. the bars). This applies in particular to girls, but also to older women. A widow recalled that when she was married, *"I used to sell snacks, carrying them on the head. Old men would follow and tease me: 'your life is hard, you sell snacks, would you marry with me?' So I stopped going to that place". [P]*

A girl is often prevented from going out alone [see good girls behaviour]. A teased girl might become ashamed to go out. *"If she is late in joining a group, and she then has to walk alone to go somewhere, she will stay home. Friends might suggest that she should talk to the parents of the boy, so he will be scolded, but she might prefer to withdraw and stay in her house rather than risking to be teased again". [R]*

Girls might feel that is better not to share that they have been teased or touched. *"Not only they might be shy or afraid of gossip. They also know that if they tell to their parents, maybe the parents would prevent them from going to festivals". [M]*

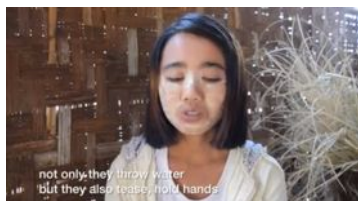
Girls feel frustrated and powerless

Young girls might end up feeling powerless. *"Beautiful girls are teased. It could affect the psychology of the girl. Sometimes the girl can be depressed, sometimes the girl wants to fight back. But she cannot fight back. The girls are angry and cannot do anything. They just feel frustrated. Sometimes they can talk to their parents or friends. The girl's parents can go can ask to the boy's parents to admonish their son. But it does not happen frequently. No one else could stop this behaviour". [M]*

Chose silence as an option, if teased/grabbed

Most girls, in most locations do not complain about inappropriate grabbing. If they tell their parents, the parents would scold the girls, so they better not say anything. However, there are different views on the issue. In a focus group, when talking about a case of grabbing, one young woman said: *"I would keep quiet if this happened to me, because then the village would look down on me".* But the other participants said: *"No, we should tell, so that these things are punished and addressed". [R]*

Sound bites



Behaviours I do not like [M]

<http://youtu.be/ioJym5xXZmE>

As a way to recap what we discussed in the interview, a girl talks about some of the behaviours she does not like. They include teasing, grabbing, restricting movement and freedom of women.



Grabbing and holding [M]

<http://youtu.be/HxnEL2KBOUM>

If a boy I do not like tried to grab me, I would be ashamed. And I would be ashamed to share this with other girls. To avoid this in the future, I will avoid to pass by where the boy is.



Grabbing girls [M]

<http://youtu.be/ETbdWpZXSXQ>

Proposing a girl by grabbing her is not appropriate and can affect her dignity. Boys should be educated not to behave like this.



We do not talk about teasing [M]

<http://youtu.be/9KS9CzuJu00>

A young woman - member of the local youth group - explains that girls would not talk about being grabbed and teased, for fear of gossiping.

Power with... against grabbing

Neighbourhood watch?

Interventions by neighbours were rarely mentioned. In some cases, girls even complained that, when they are teased and touched, their own friends might leave them alone to cope with the situation.[R] One of the few examples of interventions was the following: *“If they see that touching happens on the way to the theatre, they would ask the girl: ‘What happened, was there an affair? Did you have a relationship? Is this why you were grabbed?’. If the girl says that there was no relationship between them before, they might complain with the leader about this”*. [P]

Talking with friends

Teasing and touching are one of the few inappropriate behaviours that women discuss together. They would not tell about this openly, but they would discuss it in confidence amongst friends.

Addressing and sanctioning the issues (issues of power over)

Men and boys are far less likely to face stigma, but they can be punished. When these inappropriate behaviours happen amongst young men and women – they might be concealed by the girls or addressed amongst involved families – as part of courting and young people behaviour. If the perpetrator is older, then authorities in the village might intervene.

Fighting back

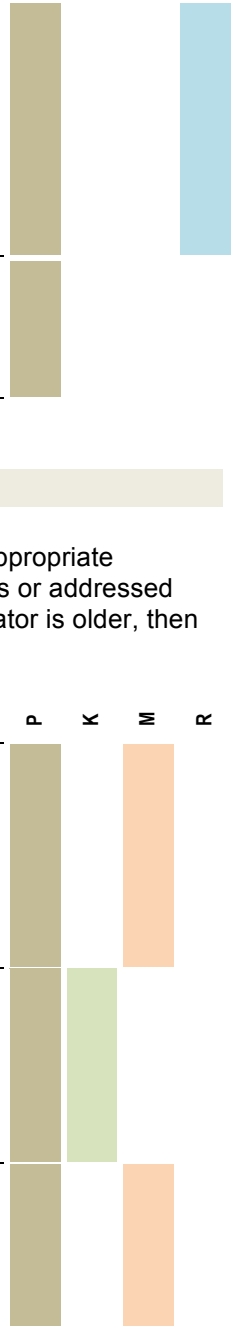
In a few cases women said that if teased and grabbed they would fight back, for example by slapping the man. *“We are women, so we can speak back and curse the man, and we can slap”* [M]. But it was also added that: *“If it happens again we could not do anything”*. Overall this attitude seemed to be the exception rather than the rule. Some girls said: *“If harassed, we would not talk to the guy direct because the guy is strong. When the guy does so, we would ignore him and then talk to our mother”*. [P]

Complaints to the boy’s family

When the teasing / touching / grabbing involves young couples, the issue is mostly solved amongst their parents. For example, *“the girl’s family might ask the boy’s parents to stop the teasing / touching”*. (mother in K) *“There is no formal complaint about grabbing and saying rude words. It happens very often. Both parties negotiate and the case is over”* [P]

Ask mum (but leave the men out of this)

In the case of teasing / touching for a young girl, the first port of call is the mother. Grandmothers might also intervene: *“If my grand daughters are teased, I would go to the parents and ask them to stop”*. [P] The father is only informed later, for fear of escalation. *“If teasing happens, the mother should be involved first. She would check the boy. If the case*



is not bad, they will take care of it themselves. If the issue is bigger, they will consult with the father. The father would beat him, regardless if the boy is good or not!". [P] However, another woman in the same focus group disagreed: "If it is a good boy, the father would be fine". [P] A father said: "If it happened to my daughter, I would hit the man. Yes, I could be punished for this, but I would not care, I would solve the problem this way, but not by informing the village leader". [M]

Mothers can address the issue vigorously, to avoid the intervention of the father: "There is rule of law here. First the mother should beat the guy. If they think the boy will do it again, they go to the village leader. If the father is informed the case would be bigger. The father will be more upset. Anger is different between men and women. Women can control their anger better. But before going to the village leader, the father should be informed". [P]

In the case of married women, informing the husband might be challenging. Some women, asked what they would do if touched in a TV room, replied that: "We would not want our husband to do anything because it could create problem. The husband would quarrel and fight". [M]

If the intervention of the mother is not enough, then fathers and possibly also elders or authorities will be called on: "If someone sees a man grabbing a girl s/he will complain to the mother of the girl, and the mother can go to the village leader if it is necessary. The village leader could solve and negotiate this, if not, they will go to the police station. The man can promise that he will not do it again. The police station could try to do something, if not, they can go to court".

The case is dropped, or forgotten

The inappropriate behaviour might not be addressed. Women might feel too shy to denounce. Or mothers, as the initial rage vanishes, will not pursue the issue further. "I wanted to beat the boy with my shoe. But I did not beat him in the end".

People forget quickly, and they would not blame a man for long. "When it is season, people go to the theatre, and sometimes men grab women. I do not accept this. But society accepts it and tends to forget were quickly when the man apologizes". [P]

Complaints to authorities

Most women interviewed mentioned the possibility to complain with higher authorities, and said, straight away: "If touching/grabbing happens, we will go to the village leader". Or even: "We would make complaints to village leader and to the police station. First we would try to tell off the guy, if he does not stop, then things can go up to the village leader. [P]

When this was probed, it emerged that women would not actually be likely to take such measures, and that – before presenting an issue to the village leader – other steps should be taken. It was also clear that they would not denounce it directly: other people would get involved. When the discussion veered on what actual steps should be taken, most women did not know exactly what they would do and where they should go. No one could provide any tangible example. Concerns about denouncing surfaced.

Some mentioned many steps before contacting the village leader: "Guys could be following you and then try to grab you. When it happens, the girl will talk with her mother. She would talk to her parents, and the parents would talk to the parents of the guy. Or they could talk to the headmaster and the headmaster would stop him. A girl should definitely complain with her mother or the parents of the boys: we do not like when boys do so". Other young women preferred a direct way: "We would denounce to the village leader. First, we would tell our mothers. We would then go with our mothers to the village leader, or with our husband, if we are married. We would not want our husband to do something before seeing the village leader. We would tell him not to do anything: 'Go to the village leader and the village leader will solve the case'". [M]

The role of authorities would be to admonish, rather than sanctioning the men involved. An elder said: "Teasing is inappropriate. Whether it is done in a polite or impolite way does not matter. It is an inappropriate behaviour and it happens a lot. We do not solve this 'officially', with the intervention of the village leader. But one of the elder persons would admonish the boy and tell him: 'you should treat this girl as if she was your sister'". [M] The leader of the youth group knows that "Girls could denounce this problem to the village leader. In some cases the man had to pay compensation to the woman. But I am actually not sure about what would usually happen if it is denounced to the village leader. He might admonish the young man". [youth M]

Grabbing might be a gray area: norms are lacking. Big cases for grabbing might be sanctioned with compensation, but stalking girls would not be. A village leader said, for example, that elders would not accept teasing / touching, but they do not actually have a rule for this bad behaviour.

Compensation might apply to grabbing

In reality, it is rare that a case makes it to the village leader, and that is deemed bad enough to

require a sanction. In some instances, compensation was granted for grabbing. In R a case of grabbing, by a drunken man, was solved by giving 150,000 Ks to the family. In M a girl grabbed in front of a shop was granted 300,000 Ks. Compensation might not be the solution of choice for the woman. In the case in M, it was recalled that: "The village leader decided to pay compensation and not to inform the police. The girl did not want to accept. She tried to solve the problem by the law, but the village leader was afraid of the man because he is rich. The village leader wrote the referral letter but negotiated with the tract leader not to help the girl. The girl could not go to the higher authorities directly. Finally the girl had to accept 300,000 as compensation. [...] Because this happened in a public space the girl was shamed. And because she accepted compensation, now everyone in the village thinks that she values only 300,000 Ks. They think she is interested in money. [...] Solving by the law can protect the woman. This girl did not know much about the law so she did not try to get the legal services because it can cost a lot of money". [M] Another person said that in this specific case "most of the people have sympathy for the woman. There was no consent, but still people think that they are lovers. [M]" The need for going beyond compensation was also expressed. Compensation is not good enough because "The community will think that the young woman is very interested in money, this is why she informs the village leader". [M] But also because it might not discourage the perpetrator: "One can solve the problem by compensation once. But if he does it frequently, then there should be punishment by the law". [M]

Involvement of MAAF

Some people had mentioned that if there was an efficient MAAF member in the village, issues could be better addressed. "For grabbing and rape we would go to the police station first. After we would go to the M. Women's Affairs Federation. The police will catch the perpetrator. The M. Women's Affairs Federation will solve it in different ways". But they did not know exactly what the MAAF could do, because "it is something legal. We do not know the law, but we know that there is some legal way to solve the issue". [P] And some mothers said: "If our daughters are grabbed, we would go to the M. Women's Affairs Federation. Or we would just hit the man so hard that we would kill him". [P]



Sound bites



The man has to pay a chicken and/or a piece of pork and some traditional alcohol.

Ritual compensation for grabbing (Kayah)

<http://youtu.be/9u6NuckjOfY>

When a man grabs a woman without consent, she and her family can denounce him to the village leader. The perpetrator will then solve the issue according to the tradition. He should pay a chicken or some pork and some traditional beer. The chicken should be eaten together with the family of the girl and the village elders.

Beating

Most people, in most areas admitted that beating took place in their village. We heard about many examples and stories of beating, shared by people in the villages, but also in town: the existence of beating was acknowledged across places and social classes.

Negative consequences of beating, beyond the physical ones, were acknowledged. *“Beating has consequences for women: it makes them even more afraid, passive: ‘They do not dare to speak anymore, or to participate’.* [K] Or: *“After being beaten, a woman can be depressed and afraid, she cannot make decisions”.* [K]

Causes

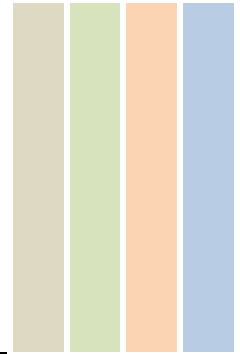
	P	K	M	R
<p>Alcohol</p> <p>The most quoted cause for beating was alcohol. The scenario most often presented is as follows: husbands drink with friends. When they come home, the wife complains (about the drinking, about the expenses on alcohol, about financial problems) or refuses to do further work (cooking dinner, doing massage...). Beating would then start. In some cases drinking was described as a bad habit. In others, alcohol was linked to family problems and financial issues.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Jealousy</p> <p>Jealousy was also mentioned as a cause for beating, and often in connection with drinking (a drunken husband would accuse his wife of having an affair).</p>				
<p>Boredom, dissatisfaction</p> <p>Some linked beating to boredom and dissatisfaction: <i>“Men might become dissatisfied and bored with married life. Most men love the wife after the marriage, but then they become bored and interested in younger girls”.</i> [K]</p>				
<p>Social and financial status.</p> <p>Different views were expressed about the linkages of beating with financial and social status. Some of the people interviewed in town highlighted that beating happens throughout society, and also involves well-to-do women. They corroborated this with examples of acquaintances subjected to beating. [K] Examples were also given in M: <i>“The woman and her husband they both work for the government. Once the husband hit the wife the whole day. She denounced this, and she was supported by the local leader and given counselling”.</i> In other cases a bias against “uneducated and poor people” emerged. <i>“When the couple has financial problems, they quarrel. And this can result in beating. They do not have knowledge. They do not have education, they live in far away areas with difficult transportation. So they do not know the consequences of the beating and they beat their wives. In most of the uneducated families there is beating. If the person is educated they will know the consequences of the beating, so they will not do it”.</i> [M]</p>				
<p>Power</p> <p>In some instances the respondents linked beating with displays of power: <i>“In some families the husband wants to show his power in front of friends and relatives. Beating in front of friends and relatives can happen”.</i> [M]</p>				
<p>Violent behaviour</p> <p>Some respondents perceived some men as “violent by nature”. They mistreat their wives but also other people in the village. But there is no way to restrain them, and everyone is affected. <i>“In the village a man drinks and makes problems to family members. The wife cannot say anything back. He would say ‘I do not need to depend on you, you have to depend on me’. He sometimes beats the wife, she bleeds, she gets unconscious and once he broke her hand. The wife needs to hide, he threatens her with knives (he always carries one). He also makes problems to the in-laws. The wife requested divorce, the issue was raised to township level. But in the process, the man worsened. He also makes problems to the villagers: he beats people in the village and he has even been to jail. When he was in jail he asked the wife to get money from her parents to pay for his bail”.</i> [R]</p>				
<p>Responsibility of the woman in starting the beating</p> <p>Many people said that women might be partially responsible for the beating. If they are beaten</p>				

is also their fault. A young woman said: "A man would only beat a women if she did something wrong" [P].

Talking too much has been often mentioned as a reason for beating. "When the husband comes home drunk, the wife cannot refrain from talking, talking, talking and scolding him, annoying him" [K] or "When we talk too much, the husband is right to hit. Myself, and most people in the community agree with it". [P]

A woman should also know that being patient would avoid the beating: "If women are patient and do what the husband wants, they will not be beaten". [K] "The only way to stop the beating is to obey the drunken men". [P]

If beating leads village authorities to admonish the couple, the woman will be scolded as well: "They think that the woman must have done something wrong if the husband beats her. A man would not beat his wife without a reason". [M]



Sound bites



"Women talk talk talk..." [P]

http://youtu.be/6twxOpObO_M

Women somehow deserve to be beaten: they are far too talkative when men are drunk



Beating is also the wife's fault [M]

<http://youtu.be/G4MADTuwjxM>

If there is beating in a couple, the village leader can negotiate with them to bring peace. It will admonish both wife and husband, because a husband would not beat a wife for no reason.



On young married couples [M]

<http://youtu.be/5IPzqXDQDM0>

According to the village leader, beating does not happen in the village. Only young couple might beat each other, when the husband drinks and does not give money to the wife. Couples marry young, and this can create problems.

When is beating acceptable?

Most respondents agree that beating is not acceptable: they do not accept it, and they feel that society should not accept it. Most village leaders strongly declared that "beating is never acceptable". [K] And women and men in the villages visited also largely agree that it is not: "If a woman is at fault, she should be scolded, but not beaten". [K]

When digging further, circumstances that makes beating acceptable emerge, as listed below. Some of the circumstances seem to be accepted by all respondents, as a hidden social norm (e.g. beating a woman for not performing her chores or having an extramarital affair). Beating is acceptable when:

- **beating is "light"**

According to an elder "light beating, with hands and not sticks, would be acceptable". [K]

- **a woman does not do her duties properly**



Most people approved of beating when women do not do their duties properly. “When a woman does not do her duties and when she goes away from the house, she could be beaten. Duties include, for example, cooking, washing and taking care of the children. They also have to help the husbands in the farm. There could be light beating, only two or three times. Most of the men do not beat very seriously”. [M] The view is shared by people of different ages, by man and women, by the traditional elders as well by progressive youth. A young and progressive man said: “Beating can be justified when the woman spends a lot of money. Or when the woman does not do any work, or does gambling – it could happen in the village – and the husband has to work the whole day”. [M]



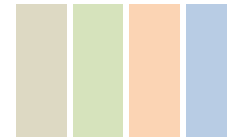
• **it was “unintended”, and when situation is dire**

For some, light beating, when drunk, could be excused. A man said “I have beaten my wife, after drinking, because she would talk, and complain about the financial situation. I feel sorry when I become calm again. If the family has enough money and a good job everything would be fine. But I do not think it is a big violence: I do not really intend to beat, and the beating is light: my wife does not ask for help from her relatives, and the leader does not intervene”. [P]



• **a woman has an affair with a man**

In several instances both men and women said that a woman having an affair should be beaten. This view was also held by the most progressive women in villages: they strongly disapproved of adultery and approved of beating as a punishment.



• **Occasional / first time beating might be condoned**

“The first time a woman would accept the beating (anyone could be wrong, one time). If it is repeated then it is denounced to the village leader”. [M]



Some had expressed the concern that beating is seen as a normal, acceptable behaviour. Children might become used to see beating in their house, and believe that it is “part of life”. “For some children the beating is normal. They usually see this in front of them every day, they accept it as normal”. [teacher, M] A single woman in R also expressed aversion for hitting women in front of the children: “Because men hit their wives, the children see it and might think it is acceptable”.

Self-defence

In most cases women can only count on themselves to stop the beating. Strategies reported for self-defence included:

P K M R

Hitting back

Some women – a minority – defend themselves, and hit back. They can manage to do so because, as the husband is drunk, they can overpower him. When a woman hits back a drunken husband who is beating her, people will approve. [P]



Hiding

“Most of the men drink alcohol in the evening, when they are free. Some men make problems, the wives will have to hide in the neighbours house”. [M]



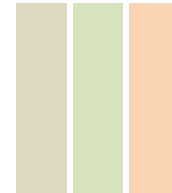
Power with

The willingness of women to seek help, and of neighbours to offer it, varied across areas and within the same village. However, as discussed before, in the introduction to “power with”, there are limitations in the room for action that families and neighbours have.

P K M R

The role of the family

When there is fighting, family members might try to protect the women. [P] The family can be a safe harbour for women: “If the husband comes home drunk, women might escape to their relatives and stay there until he is sober” [K]. Siblings might tell her: “Your husband is drunk, stay with us for some time”. [P] Most of their relatives – especially of the wife – do not accept the beating. So, in some cases



the family members (parents and in-laws) will try to mediate [K], but the husband will not always listen to them and respect their advice. [P] Beating might also lead to arguments: the relatives of the wife against the relatives of the husband. [M]

The role of neighbours

It is very hard – within the thin walls of houses in the villages – to hide fighting. Neighbours mentioned hearing noise and fighting, or seeing women rushing out of the house, hiding themselves. [M] They know what they are saying and doing: “*The couple argue, because he does not want to work... We know what they say when they fight because when they argue, they speak loudly and neighbours can hear them.*” [R]

So, when they hear the fighting and they are aware of the beating, what do they do?

The predominant view is that beating is a family affair: “*Most people think that this is a personal problem and should not interfere*” [teacher in K]. In reality, reported responses varied, also within the same village, and included:

- ignore the case (it is a family business). Taking action, overall, seems to be more the exception than the rule. “*When we try to stop the beating, the other neighbours say to us: ‘Why do you try to stop it? This is the usual case, it happens in many other families, don’t bother’.*”
 - being afraid to take action. “*Her husband curses and beats her when he drinks. But no one can help during the fighting because they are afraid of the man. And because he is an elder, people cannot speak back to him*”. [M] “*They would not do anything, because they are afraid of the husband. This man is very rude. If things get serious they might inform the village leader. But they would not immediately ask for help. They would only take action afterwards*”. [M]
 - take discreet action. This involved helping negotiations, giving some support for the beaten wife (e.g. in Kayah). In P some men mentioned that “*neighbours can stop the man from beating only if the man accepts it. If not, neighbours could call the relatives to try to stop the beating.*” [P]
 - report to authorities. In P some men mentioned that “*If a man does not stop beating, neighbours could go to the police station. Sometimes they make complaints to the village leader.*” [P]
 - stop taking action when behaviour is repeated: “*The neighbours try to stop this only if men and women concerned accept it to be stopped. If they continue fighting, they do not intervene any longer*”. [P]
 - gossip. “*If it happens, the neighbours might be gossiping about this.*” [M]
-

Refusing interference / Interference by neighbours might be unwelcome

Helping a woman who is facing beating can be counterproductive and not appreciated. It is “their family problem”.

“*If an outsider tries to help and stop the beating, the woman being beaten might refuse the interference. She would fight back the woman who helped her*”. [K] “*If someone interferes, when there is beating, he/she will be seen negatively later, as couples get back together after a few days.*” [P]. “*If the couple is helped to solve problem then they can be angry with the person, because he had interfered in family affairs*”. [M]

Hiding the consequences

Women are afraid of other people’s judgment, and would tend to hide the consequences of beating. “*Even after serious beating they would pretend they just had an accident*”. [K]

Women are not happy to discuss publicly the beating

A social worker explained that addressing the issue of beating in the villages is very challenging, for lack of time and because women resist talking about it. [K] A woman should not talk about it otherwise “people will think she is not a good wife”. [K] It is hard to look for help, even talking with close friends is frowned upon. When beating is discussed with friends, they are likely to suggest to keep silent and to be discreet.

Sound bites



When she tells this problem to her friends they suggest her not to talk about this

A woman should not talk of family problems [K]

<http://youtu.be/QQi9nAOxAiQ>

When a woman is beaten, she asks for help, but there is no help. She cannot talk about her problem to anyone. And if she shares her problems with friends, they will tell her to be silent and to be patient.

The role of the village leader

The village leader will monitor the issue and react only when beating becomes excessive. Beating that is “not serious” is tolerated. [M]
Beating happens within a private family sphere, where outsiders, including the village leader have only limited leverage, as witnessed by the village leaders.
In Kayah, men resisted paying a fine for beating [see later]. There, when beating is bad, the village leader might try to solve the problem through mediation and associated punishments. The problem might be reduced but not eradicated: “*Admonishment did not stop the drinking, but the husband beats the wife less*”. [leader in K]
In M, the village leader might admonish a man not to do it in the future. “*And if a man does it again a woman could divorce*”. In reality, divorce would not be granted unless there is the consent of the husband. In the end leaders and villagers admitted that they could do little to stop the problem: “*The village leader cannot really solve the problem. Because if the problem continues they will continue to fight.*”

Village leader and knowledge of the law

Not all people in a village are confident that the leader is fit for solving issues of inappropriate behaviours. They might not know the law. “*The village leader might not know about the law. Our leader now is old and not educated. If the new leader is young and educated, maybe he knows more about the law. We should have a more educated leader to solve many issues*”. [young w, M]

Who can denounce?

In Kayah, only the wife or her immediate relatives can denounce beating to the village leader. If only a neighbour denounces – as they might overhear the couple fighting – the village leader will not take action. [K] If a woman feels threatened by her husband and fears to denounce him, she should talk to her family. The family should support her in defining the best course of action, and in contacting the leader, if needed. [K] However, if there is strong evidence and proof of violence against a woman, the leader could decide to take action on the case: “*It is hard to hid cases of hard beating, the news will be spread from mouth to mouth and eventually the leader will come to know about it*”. [K]
In P, usually the woman would not make complaints to the village leader, but people in the village might tell this to him. So the village leader could take action and stop the behaviour, “*but when he forgets the case and stops watching it, the case can start again*”.
Some women in M, concerned for a woman who is regularly badly beaten, are trying to find a way to push authorities to take action. “*The husband is mistreating his wife (and also beating her). He also has a relationship with another woman, so from time to time he goes away from the village and leaves the wife to take care of the family. He sometimes threatens the wife badly, and scares her, and she has to escape at her sister's house. He should be denounced to the police. However it is not possible for us to denounce him. It should be the wife to do so. But she will never denounce him, she has never denounced him even though she had so many bad experiences. Her sister is also encouraging her to denounce and divorce. But nothing can be done unless the woman, herself, denounces the husband*”. [M]

A fine for beating

In the village in Kayah, beating was punished with a fine – according to a norm established by the head of the village and the elders. The fine was also linked to a “cleansing ceremony”. Most people interviewed mentioned the existence of the fine, but remembered different amounts. Women said that the fine was a good way to prevent and deter beating. But some noticed that it is not enforced any longer, because “*many men beat their wives, and they do not want to pay*”. They would say: “*I am beating my wife, my children: why should I pay?*”

Other forms of punishment

In most cases the husband’s drinking will be simply admonished, and he might have to apologize in front of the wife. Being shamed can prevent – at least temporarily – the beating. [P, K]
Different strategies were reported in the Kayah villages – beyond the one village visited. They included separating the man from the wife and holding him in the house of the village leader. In the worse case, legs could be chained.

Using the law

“*The country has a law to prevent this, but women do not go to the court, and they have no access to legal aid. But if the woman knew the law, they would still not go.*” [K]

The role of MAAF

A potential role for MAAF was mentioned in P. If a woman is beaten, “she could complain to the MAAF, but her neighbours would try first to solve the issue locally”. [P], Some said that it would be better to avoid involving the MAAF “for the sake of the children”.

One MAAF in the township reported how she intervened to address beating by a village leader. She discovered the issue by chance, when delivering a questionnaire in the village. As she became aware of the issue she reported him to the General Administration in Pyapon, and he was removed from his post.

A volunteer social worker supporting organizations in M is well aware of the beating problem. She advocates for women to attend counselling clinics where women beaten by their husbands can get assistance.

The role of the police

According to a MAAF representative, when the police intervene on beating, it is mostly for men fighting each other. “There are only one or two cases by year of men beating women. When we intervene, we try to reconcile the couple.” [P]

Sound bites



A fine for beating [K]

<http://youtu.be/TaJ1vII9Zwk>

If a couple argues and fight, the woman can denounce the husband to the village leader. The village rule establishes that he will then have to pay a chicken. The couple, the leader, the elders will eat the chicken together, the leader will admonish the husband and the case will be solved.



I am beating my wife, my children: why should I pay? [K]

<http://youtu.be/cb95dUdjLB4>

Most men drink alcohol and then beat their wife. The village leader had to address this problem and proposed putting a fine: 5,000 Kyats. People used to pay it, but they do not pay it any longer. “I am beating my wife, my children, not yours. So why I should pay?” And they stopped paying.



A village leader should be educated [M]

<http://youtu.be/eDjNhYY7kkA>

A village leader should be educated and know the law. This is what a girl says after having discussed that the current leader is old and might not know the law.



If a fine is not enough we would inform the police [K]

http://youtu.be/7OXKR_TcPVk

If a man drinks and beats his wife and children, she could ask her relatives to solve the problem. The village leader can also intervene, and impose a fine. The first time, they are only admonished. The second time they might pay a fine of 30,000 to 50,000 Kyats. And if the bad behavior is repeated, the police would be informed

Hard beating, Stabbing, Killing

Episodes of physical violence (hard beating, stabbing, killing) were reported in all four of the villages visited, or in the surrounding areas. These forms of violence are all strongly disapproved by most people interviewed.

- Killing was punished by the police.
- Some bad cases of violence (e.g. attempted stabbing, reported by women interviewed) were never properly addressed. The women escaped the violence by moving away (for example, to their former village). But they did not receive any support from the community (for example, they had no opportunity to formally divorce) and the violent behaviour was never sanctioned.
- We also encountered cases where – despite acts of extreme violence (beating leading to hospitalization, attempted stabbing) – women continue to live with violent men, even if discouraged by the community. In these cases respondents reporting the case commented that the woman should not accept living with a violent man, but they do not explain how, in practice, this could be avoided, and how the woman could be supported in moving away.

Some examples of the cases reported are summarized below:

A woman, stabbed, goes back to live with her husband [in Rakhine]

A husband would never say anything when the curry was good, but always complained when he did not like it. One day the wife answered back. A quarrel started and he stabbed her. She was brought to the hospital [and no measures were taken against the husband, it is not clear if she denounced him at all]. People in the village think that she should not live with the husband again. But she chose to go back home and live with him. The issue was not raised with the village leader or to any other level.

A rejected young man stabbed and killed a young woman [in Rakhine]

In a village 3 miles apart from the one where we held interviews, a young boy (25) got in love of a girl living by the paddies where he worked. He would see her everyday, on the way to work. He proposed her, but she rejected him. At the end of the season the boy went back to the village. One day the girl went to town with her sister. The boy waited for her on the street. He tried to bring her to his home, to force the marriage. She tried to escape. The boy stabbed the girl, and ran away. The girl was taken to the hospital, and before passing away she told people what had happened to her. With that evidence the parents took up the case with respected people in the village and went to the police. The boy was jailed for 10 years.

Stabbing the wife [in Meikhtila]

A husband stabbed his wife. He was jealous, he accused the wife of having relationships with others. After killing the wife in the forest, he came back with the knife in the village. When villagers saw the man with the knife they were scared, and they understood that he had killed the wife. The husband was in prison for 3 years. During that time the children lived with their grandparents. This man is now free (he moved away from the village, to work away).

Killing after rejection [in Pyapon]

A man killed his former girlfriend, and then tried to commit suicide. He had given money to the girl when they were together, and when she started a relationship with someone else he was outraged. He met the girl on the way, they had an argument and he killed her.

Sound bites



– My 4 daughters and myself were at home
He came and he tried to stab me with a knife

One man tried to stab me [R]

<http://youtu.be/2glvA2g67HE>

A widow explains how a man – who had quarrelled in the past with her former husband – tried to stab her. The issue was ‘solved’ eventually by the village leader, who admonished the man. She feels that fear resulted in heart problems. Now she struggles to survive, and she needs to worry about her livelihood.

Rape

We become aware of cases of rape in all the areas we visited, in the actual village itself or in their immediate surroundings. Information about such cases is shared in the points below, or at the end of this chapter. Many cases happened within the family, in the house of the survivors or of their relatives, and were perpetrated by relatives or close acquaintances. In some cases rape happened in isolated farmland, or on the streets around the villages. Rapists often abused their close relationship with families, or the absence of the men in the house when they left for work at the sea.

For all respondents rape is never accepted, and is sanctioned. All areas visited - in addition to the legal instruments to solve rape - had also local mechanisms for addressing rape (through compensation). Many of our discussions compared the legal and traditional system, to understand local perceptions and preferences around them. In Kayah rape also required animistic cleansing ceremonies (see section on cleansing ceremonies, p. 38).

What people initially meant by “rape” varied. Continuous exploration of what local words were used to talk about rape, and match them with translation would help in further sharpening the local understanding. On one side, in some locations – mostly in Kayah – what was translated as “rape” seemed to extend pretty much to most sexual intercourse amongst unmarried couples, whether consensual or not. On the other side, in all locations, the understanding of “rape” was rarely extended to encompass rape within the marriage. Carefully checking what words are locally used to describe types of sexual relations, and what they mean, would be useful. It would help to understand a concept which needs to be unpacked – and how. People involved in the programme, staff and beneficiaries, should be clear when the same concept muddles together behaviours and practices that should be better seen as disconnected. For example, which behaviours are considered “rape” when actually they are consensual relationship (e.g. some consensual sex outside the marriage). And which are not considered as rape, when actually they should be (e.g. forced sex within marriage).

When rape happens it not only affects the people directly involved, but the reputation of the whole village. It might be stigmatized, and sometimes denied. In Meikhtila, in particular, we were confronted with denial of rape and – more broadly – of issues of violence against women, despite the fact that – as communicated confidentially by some respondents - the village had experienced several cases of rape, in recent times, and that other cases had happened in the nearby villages.

Sound bites



Rape cannot happen in this village [M]

<http://youtu.be/izZDmcmuFxl>

Rape cannot happen in our village. Girls go in groups and do not talk to strangers. And it is impossible that rape can happen amongst friends or in the family.



Most boys are good here, rape cannot happen [K]

http://youtu.be/JZ4HHz_9yLg

Most boys are good here, there are only few cases of boys to touch girls. Rape could not happen here.

Beliefs around rape

A good man cannot rape

A young girl (13), living outside the village and working on farmland denounced she was raped. Nothing was done because “no one believed her”. Actually, according to the respondent, “most of the women believed her, but the men did not”. The respondent herself believed the girl. The alleged rapist was active in village development activities. So people

trusted him. Recognizing that rape happened would mean to lower his dignity. The girl's parents might have believed the daughter, but they took no action.

The rapist is often mentally disabled

Some, in Kayah said that “*rapists are likely to be mentally disabled*” [note however that the local case of rape was perpetrated by a mentally disabled person].

The rapist is often a stranger?

Some hinted that the rapist is likely to be a stranger, and quoted – as a practice for protection from rape – avoiding strangers. However, when the issue was probed, many people recognized that “*it could be done also by someone who knows the girl*”. No one, however, mentioned practices of incest as likely.

The rapist is older

Some tended to believe that the rapist is likely to be older than the woman (and that young women will be the likely targets). “*I am not aware of rape between people of the same age. It is easy to threaten young girls. The old person would tell the girl: ‘I will get sweets or cakes for you’. Or maybe say ‘your mother is calling you’. Maybe there could be a man with a knife. I know that a man raped a 9 year old. I do not know if rape could happen to me. But if I have the same age, I could push the rapist away*”. [P]

Rape as revenge

“*Old men might rape girls because they have some problems with the parents of the girl. They would do it for revenge*”. [P]

Sound bites



Old men can manipulate girls, and rape them [P]

<http://youtu.be/dGxGrVnEDmg>

It is easy for old men to manipulate young girls. They can offer them candies, or ask them to follow them telling “your parents are calling you, I should take you there”. Young girls can easily believe them, so they can be easily abused

What justice for rape?

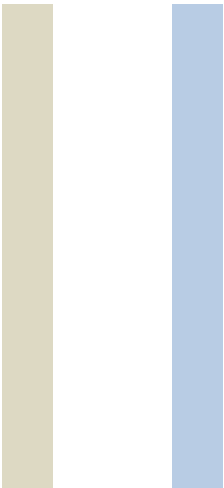
The 4 areas proved to be very different as far as denunciation and dealing with rape was concerned:

- In Pyapon one case of rape in the same tract was often mentioned and referred to by interviewees. The case involved the rape and killing of a young girl and was solved by the police.
- In Kayah, several people recalled a case of rape that happened in the village. It involved a young girl, who survived the rape and now lives in the village. In Kayah rape would still be solved using compensation, linked to religious ceremonies involving the sacrifice of a chicken. Legal justice is not yet seen as an option. In the case mentioned, the rapist was handed over to the rebels and nothing has been heard from him since.
- In Mekihtila some informants mentioned rape cases in the village – and ActionAid staff were also aware of some, given the long term work in the village (we heard about 4 cases, one of which was a girl with mental disability). However, some interviewers denied that rape could exist in the area. Those willing to share information about the cases – or admitting the possibility that rape could happen – mentioned that rape was always solved through compensation. Those denying rape – including the village leader – strongly supported the legal system as a solution and ruled out the use of compensation.
- In Rakhine respondents mentioned many cases of rape: either cases happening in the tract, or talked about within it. We heard about attempted cases of rape, not denounced for fear of revenge by the man involved; alleged rape, which was also not denounced, as the girl denouncing was not believed; cases of rape that were “solved” through marriage; cases of rape of women with a mental disability (denounced to the police), cases of rape denounced to the police by the village leader (informed by the family or by neighbours); and a case of serial rape solved through summary justice.

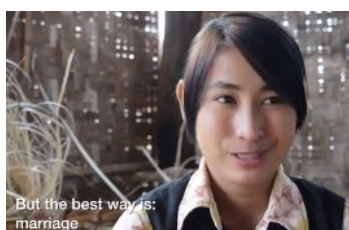
Marriage is the best solution for women

Most respondents, across all categories, will agree that marriage is the best solution for a rape. In K, for example, before asking for compensation, parents would check if it is possible to agree to a wedding. In this case the washing ceremony is made and there is no compensation. In the experience of the social workers we interviewed in the area, a woman would always want to marry, because she is the one bearing the stigma of the rape. But the perpetrators might refuse to marry, and this is trouble for the woman.

In Rakhine a case was reported where a man raped a young girl: *“He was wealthy and he had a good relationship with the girl. So when the little girl wanted to go somewhere he would bring her there, with the approval of parents. One day he went to town with the girl, on a motorcycle. On the way he had forced sex with her. She knows that if she tells this to her parents her value – and the value of her parents – would go down. So, without desire, she agrees to marry. They went away for 2 days. The parents were angry with her. They disowned the girl. She explained the parents the reason. They might believe her, but they cannot accept that man to become the husband. But if the girl says “I was raped”, she will lose the value. She will stay with him all his life even if she does not like him.* [R]



Sound bites



How to solve a rape case [M]

<http://youtu.be/XB4xP60CdZw>

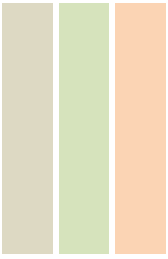
A rape case can be solved through compensation or through the law. But the best way to solve it is by marriage.

Legal system: perceived advantages, and challenges / disadvantages

Support from institutions / challenges in accessing it

In all four areas, MAAF are not available locally to help negotiation and case solving. Government representatives both in K and M mentioned that when MAAF staff is present in an area, they can have a role in supporting negotiation and access to legal system, but this does not take happen in remote villages, such as the ones we visited.

For many, the police would be the most effective body: *“The village leader and police station are the place to go. MAAF can help, but not like the police who can detain the accused and put him in prison”.* [P].

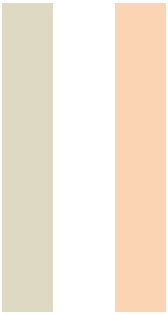


Awareness of functioning of institutions

Most people would not know how to deal with government institutions. For example, in a FDG group, women were not clear about how to report a case. One thought that it is possible to directly call the police. Another one believed that everything needs to be done only through the village / tract leader. [P].

Even the leader of the village in M was not really aware of the procedure that a woman should follow to denounce a case of rape to the police.

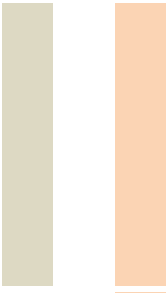
In the same area, a social work volunteer supporting govt and local NGOs estimates that only a small minority of people – 1 out of 10. And some people would not know what to do at all: how to use the legal system or even the traditional systems in the village.



Punishment and example

The legal system ensures that perpetrators really pay for their action, by going to prison. And this, in turn, is an example for other men: *“Solving a case by law is an example for other men: by seeing the punishment they would not dare to commit the rape”* [P – however, the view is expressed by government representatives but not by villagers]. Or: *“If rape is solved by law it will be an example and it can reduce the problem. If there is punishment other men will behave morally”.* [M]

On the contrary, compensation is not good, because the perpetrator can commit rape again. *“He just needs to pay the money and all is set, so he does not need to worry”.* [M]



Cost of accessing the system



Government officers explained that applying the law involves high costs for “*transportation and for living cost in town. When they go to court, they are absent from work and they miss the wage. The law has provisions for this, but they would be paid only at the end of the trial (the offender will have to anticipate expenses). If a woman informs them that she needs support for that, the MWAF might help. It is done case by case, they do not have guidelines and procedures. They encourage the court to make a decision quickly*”. [M]

This view is echoed in villages: “*if we try to solve by the law it could cost a lot of money, this is why most of the people cannot solve issues in this way*”.

Speed for denunciation

A village leader cannot propose a settlement for rape. “*If there is a rape case, it needs to be investigated in 24 hours. Evidence (girl’s clothes) has to be investigated, so it is important to call the police quickly. They must have evidence: for example, go to the hospital. They can denounce without evidence, but the case will fail. In some cases people denounced too late, so there was no evidence and the case failed*”. [MWAF P]

Confidentiality

MWAF personnel is aware that some women do not inform the police because they do not want to solve the problem by the law. It can affect their dignity: “*If they go to the court, more people can know about the case*”. [M] On the contrary, negotiation in villages ensures more confidentiality. A village leader explained that “*the issue will remain confidential. Only the village leader will know about the rape. The villager, the normal person, will not know about the rape case*”. [Leader M]

Compensation: perceived advantages and disadvantages

Compensation is dealt with in villages, it is simple and accessible

For the family of a woman who is raped, compensation ensures some justice, when other modalities are not accessible. It is negotiated locally, whilst accessing a court would not be easy for a woman and her family. Also, for those living in far away and remote place, access to the court (and costs involved) would be beyond reach.

The feeling is that if the case goes beyond the village, it becomes “*bigger and difficult to solve*”. “*If the case goes to Pyapon police station, it is complicated and there is no compensation. It is filed for investigation. Compensation satisfies the girl’s side. The society accepts compensation. Most cases are solved through compensation. If the victims are fine with compensation, there is nothing to say*”. [P]

The family of the perpetrator can “save face”

Compensation also is advantageous for the family of the perpetrator (and possibly, for the village as a whole), to save face. Some girls had been under a lot of pressure to accept compensation: when they tried to raise the issue at township level or to involve the police they had received much pressure to accept negotiation instead. For example, in the case of attempted rape in R, the family of the man involved “*worked hard to convince her to accept the money for the sake of their family*”.

Compensation provides financial support

One of the main benefits of compensation is that a family can get some money. “*Through a legal case they would not get any money*”. [M] Not necessarily the money is then spent to support the woman. A volunteer social worker in the area experienced a case where “*the parents took the compensation and then spent the money as they wished, rather than for the child, but, when the money ran out, they started blaming the child again ‘you have been raped’*”. They had the benefit of the money, but they continued to blame the girl”.

Negotiation does not work well when strangers are involved

One of the challenges of negotiation and compensation, is that “*if a perpetrator is a stranger, there could be more challenges in bring him to negotiation, and if this happens, the woman who survived the rape will bear worse consequences*”. [K]

Compensation “sells the dignity” and does not value the woman

As the leader in M said, “*if a woman gets the money she asks for, she could use it for investment. This is the advantage of the traditional system. But the woman could face rape again, because it is like “selling herself”. Every person will think: ‘We can rape her and just pay the money’*”. The legal way can bring benefits to her and other women. It can be an example of the punishment for other men and reduce rape. It would protect her and other women”. [M leader]

This view was common in the area, and in the villages around: “*The benefit of compensation is*

to get the money. However, it can affect the psychology of the woman: she is worried and cannot live happily with the family as before. Another disadvantage is that the perpetrator can think: "Oh, if I can pay the money, I can rape the woman". [volunteer social worker, M]

When there is compensation "the woman is not valued any longer. If she wants to marry, the in-laws will not agree and will try to deter the man from marrying her. If a woman is married and has children, the compensation can give a negative image to the children". [M]

In Kayah, where compensation was fully accepted and the government less present, villagers did not express such opinions. But government representatives at the township level said that "in villages, most of the people do not value the women, so even if rape happens, they solve the issue according to their tradition (with animal sacrifice). They do not try to solve it legally".

Some women might want to make money out of compensation

Cases were mentioned of women giving false accusations to get compensation money. For example: "She is not trusted in the village. In the past she had sex with a mentally disabled man, asked for compensation and got the compensation. Compensation could be a way for some women to make money. Most of the people say this. And in the case of this woman, it is true. It might be different for other women. For some women, compensation could be right" [M]

Factors determining the compensation

There are no fixed rates and rules for compensation. It is negotiated with the support of the village leader. In K, "the amount of the compensation might depend by many factors, including if a woman is pregnant or not". The amount paid seemed to be around 5/600,000 MMK. A case in the area where 700,00 was paid was considered high.

In M, "it would not be different if the survivor was virgin or married. The feelings are the same, so there should be the same compensation. The compensation should be a big amount of money. It would be according to the desire of the survivor. The woman will not ask too much. If they ask too much, the village leader would arrange for an agreement". [Leader M]

If compensation is not successful, what happens next?

In Kayah, we asked some groups what would happen if compensation is not agreed. Such cases do not seem to have happened. After some deliberation, the consensus was that they could inform the police. The feeling is that when one approach is chosen (traditional compensation or legal), people would stick to that.

Summary justice

Some years ago, in a nearby village, a widowed man, 35 years old, raped many newly married spouses who had no children. He did not have a proper job. He did not drink. When he came to know that the husband was away – e.g. for fishing – and the spouse was alone, he would rape her. The woman wouldn't say anything, fearing the reaction of the husband. He raped 9 women. The last time, somebody saw him going away from her house. The next day they enquired with the woman. At the beginning the woman denied anything, afraid that the husband might divorce her. They enquired further, and they discovered that he had raped 9 women. The elders discussed quietly. "If we keep this man in the village, he will continue to create trouble". The day after that, they killed that man and they hid the case. When the police came and asked about the case, they played innocent. In the village he only had a couple of relatives. They did not dare to raise the issue.

Consequences for women

P K M R

Parents would scold the girl

If rape happens, "the parents would scold the girl". [K] According to an elder in the same village, however, "parents should not beat the survivors".

Can a survivor marry?

In some cases, the survivors live with their family (their siblings or their parents) But in some cases they managed to marry. For example, in Rakhine, a young girl who was raped by his uncle got married with a man from another village. She lives there, and she has children.

Support for survivors

When a case is addressed through the legal system, little additional support is provided to the survivor. "A girl got raped by her stepfather. She was poor and so skinny. She was sent to the

clinic of MMCHA until she gave birth. Other donors and supporters other than MMCHA gave some money to her and her mother when the mother came and took her back. Some money came from MMCHA itself, and some from individual, private donations. After that they do not know what had happened. The girl in the clinic had good food and the clinic was good, so she was feeling better. But there was no psychological or other support. She was so weak and stayed there until she delivered the baby. Then she went back to the village in the delta. There are some trainings going on there, so she might have had the possibility of following them, but we did not follow up on this". [P]

Sound bites



Later on, people blame more the girl without blaming much the man

Rape and blame [M]

<http://youtu.be/MkJpgVW9zH4>

Shortly after a case of rape, people will blame more the man than the woman. As time passes by, stigma remains with the girl. Rape is caused by her "bad behaviour". Whilst in the case of the man, it is "his bad habit".

Propensity to denounce

Respondents, in different areas, had different opinions about propensity and likelihood that a case of rape would be denounced and addressed through the legal system. Only in Kayah – only recently moved under the control of central government – the traditional justice is still assumed to be the default. Some would say that: *"Not all rape cases are denounced"*. In the same area, others would say: *"No rape case happened in the village. It is not acceptable. We are sure that if it happened here the issue would be raised to authorities"*. [R] Authorities, especially in Pyapon, are confident that rape is ultimately denounced to them. A police officer said: *"Most of the reports of rape cases came from village leaders who denounced them the police. Most of the rape cases are denounced, because they cannot be hidden. At the beginning maybe they can, but after some time, they will denounce them"*. [P] Another social work officer said: *"It is difficult to say if all cases are denounced. I only know a few. It is hard to think about reasons why cases might not be denounced. The situation is very open in the village. People are likely to denounce"*. [P] In Meikthila, however, government functionaries agreed that not all cases would be denounced. And, as pointed out below, many cases might not be denounced, for different reasons:

What could influence the likelihood of denouncing?

P K M R

Confidentiality

Denouncing through the legal system would put the case in the open. *"It is not possible to hide a case of rape from other people in the village, because they would need to get testimony"*. [P]

Fear of retaliation

"A drunken man attempted to rape a woman – a vegetable seller – on the road from the town to the village. He pulled the woman, attempting to rape her, and was prevented by a man passing by on a motorcycle. They all know the drunken man, but they did not raise the issue. Both the woman and the motorcyclist have to along that road everyday, for their livelihoods. And they are afraid that if they raise the issue, then that man can create trouble for them". [R] *"If there was a rape case, we would not want to get involved in denouncing it because we would be afraid of a revenge"*. [P]

Denunciation avoided as it reduces "value" and dignity

Despite and expressed propensity to denounce, not all cases are denounced. *"In the village, a man in his 60s started to visit the house of some relatives often. He was nice with this 16-year-old girl: he would give her some money, and some clothes. From time to time, he would call the girl to his house, to help him with cleaning, when the wife was not there. One day he raped her. She told her parents. The parents were concerned that her value would drop so they stayed silent. A neighbour suggested to raise the issue with the authorities. They said: 'If we raise the issue, the girl will lose her value'"*. [R]

The woman would not talk, and neighbours would not denounce

The reactions of neighbours and witness of rape had varied. In some cases, they have actively intervened in stopping the abuse and in denouncing it. In some cases, they chose not to intervene – especially when the woman herself would not denounce. Or as the rape was committed, they sometimes are unable to do anything “neighbours did nothing - to stop the rape case - because he was really bad and they were afraid”. [R]

“A drunken widowed man broke in the house of a widowed lady, insulting her. She answered back. He planned revenge, and one night he entered the house where she was living with her parents, naked, so that there would not be evidence for rape [clothing is taken as evidence] She screamed. Neighbours came to help. They tried to stop him but he escaped. On the next day, the woman kept quiet on the issue. The neighbours kept quiet because the woman was not raising the issue”. [R]

We should ask for justice

Several people strongly affirmed that in the case of rape “We should ask for justice”. i.e. “legal” rather than “traditional” one? [P]

“There was no case in this village, it is not acceptable. If it happened we would raise the issue with the authorities” [R]

Some interviewees are very confident that society would support girls and prevent rape: “they should not be silent about it, not scared. The people should talk to the parents. If there is rape, they should go to the police”. [P] Some believe that rape is always denounced and that “it will be punished”. [P]

The cost of justice

The legal path is hard to follow. It takes time and money: “If the police station transfers the case to Pyapon, the case is bigger. Both parties cannot pay the cost for court procedure. When it takes so long, the victim closes the case”. [P]

Knowledge of the law

“When rape happens women can make complaints with the MAAF. People in the community should know this, but the rape did not happen. So, people would not know exactly what steps to follow and where precisely to go”. [P]

The girl would not talk, but witnesses would

“In a nearby village, a man, in his twenties, tried to rape a woman from the same place in an isolated area. The survivor did not tell anything, but some people witnessed it, and they informed the family and other people. The issue was raised with the police, the case went to court and the man was put in jail”. [R]

A headmaster would denounce rape

“A grade 10 female student was coming home with a taxi. The driver was a close relation to the family and married. He tried to rape her. She screamed and people came and helped. She escaped. The family was ashamed and said nothing. The headmaster raised the case with the police”. [R]

Additional provisions might help

A volunteer for the Department of Social Welfare explained that she supported the survivors by writing reports on the case. Her report is not used as formal evidence, in the court. But it has still a role: it can help to avoid delays. Some cases are delayed and take a long time. If there is a report, delays can be reduced. When social welfare is not involved in the process, in some cases there could be some corruption / bribery – to avoid the trial, but if there is such report there is less chance of bribery”. [Volunteer DSW M]

Sound bites



We should ask for justice [P]

http://youtu.be/aqwGFOZ_rQU

If rape happens, it should be condemned. And justice will be given.

Rape of women with a mental disability

Fear of rape was very real for the mother of a girl with disability we visited, and a main concern for the mother, as described in previous sections.

We were informed of cases of rape involving women with disabilities, in Meikhtila and in Rakhine. The following stories were reported.

“In another village, a man and a woman became lovers. They met often. The woman had a mentally disabled sister. When the man wanted to meet his lover, he asked the mentally disabled sister to set the appointments. Then he ended raping the mentally disabled girl. He did not admit it, but she became pregnant. The man did not want to face the law and went away from the village”. [R]

“A neighbour visited the house of a mentally disabled teenager very often. He initially harassed her (e.g. touching, kisses). Finally he took her to a remote place and raped her. The girl told the parents. The parents asked him if it was true. He denied it. The parents believed him, so he could abuse the girl several times. The girl became pregnant. He denied again. The parents are poor and brought the girl to the TBA for abortion. They do not have knowledge about how to pursue the case. They are very poor and the village leader does not care much about them. The man never admitted that he committed the rape. He did not pay compensation or face any charge”. [R]

Some other cases shared:

The following is a partial list of the cases shared, in addition to those reported in the previous points. They are reported as told in the interviews, and they have not been verified. They are reported here to share what cases people might have in their mind when they discussed issues of rape. We also had some information on rape from local government officers. The number of cases reported was quite small (e.g. 4 child rapes and 2 adult ones in Pyapon). In some cases, the government officers were well aware that rape was underreported.

Rape by the uncle in Rakhine

This case happened near the village. An old couple had asked their grand daughter to live with them. She is 15 years old (and orphaned?). The uncle of the girl, a single man, often visited the house. One day he called the girl to his home and he raped her there. The girl told the grandparents about the rape. A neighbour helped them to raise the case with the village leader and to the police station. The man was arrested and is in jail.

Rape by the neighbour in Rakhine

Two couples (one in their 30s, one in their 50s) worked on farmland out of the village. The husband of the younger couple returned to the village to pick up some things. The neighbour raped the wife, in the night, and there was no one around to help her. The wife informed her husband, and he informed the village leader. The village leader called the police and the older man was put in jail.

A young girl raped by family friends in Rakhine

A little girl, 10 years old, was raped by a family friend that used to treat the girl as a daughter. But one day he brought her out the village, to pick plums. He raped her, and made her bleed. She was brought to the hospital. The village leader raised the issue to the police station. He was arrested and put in jail.

A girl raped in front of her mother in Rakhine

A 45 year old man raped a 15 yr old girl, in front of her mother (35). Mother and daughter have farmland out of the village, and the man was their neighbour there. To go to his land he would pass through their land, so they had known each other for a long time. The tellers insinuated that the man had been thinking for a long time to rape them. He went to their house, he hit the mother with a stick, and told the mother to stay on the floor or he would hit her again. And he raped the girl. Mother and daughter informed the village leader. The village leader informed the police and he was put in jail for 9 years.

A man raped his wife's niece

He hit his wife and threw her in the stream in the back of the house. He requested his mother-in-law to bring the niece to him. The mother-in-law, afraid, did so, and the girl was raped. The neighbours were afraid because he is really a bad man. The mother-in-law went to another village after a few days and informed her

relatives. They raised the issue with the police. He was arrested. Because he was not originally from the village, people would not know what had happened to him since. Now the girl got married with another man from another village. She lives there, and she had children. Her aunt went abroad.

An uncle raped his niece and killed her, in Pyapon

One man raped his niece (a 9th standard girl) in the same tract and he killed her. The rape happened in the forest, and he then threw the body in the septic tank of the monastery. He was punished and had to go to jail.

News of rape in Pyapon

In another village, a mentally disabled girl was raped. She was around 25, and this was settled through compensation. The case is quite recent, it happened less than 12 months ago. [P]

Raped by a young boy in Meikhtila

One night one 30 year old single woman was raped by a 14 year old boy. It was stressed that the woman "was *not virgin*" as she had already sex with her ex-boyfriend and had compensation. The boy had drunk alcohol. When the woman came back from a video shop the boy grabbed and raped her. The woman's family asked for compensation, the boy's grandmother sold her farm and gave compensation. The consequences: for both there is gossiping. There is no obvious effect of the gossiping. Both of them still live in this village. It happened last month. All the villagers know about this. The boy might have a problem when he wants to propose a girl. For the woman, it is hard to say what the consequences will be: "*She is 30 and she is an old lady*".

Rape by a soldier in Meikhtila

In a nearby village, the perpetrator was a soldier. He raped a woman who was feeding animals. He then killed her.

Rape of children in Meikhtila

A social worker volunteer – who did not work in the village visited, but nearby – is aware of – and followed up cases of rape in villages in the area. In one case, a child was raped by the father, in another case by an old neighbour. She suggested that such cases are likely to happen also in the villages we visited.

Rape by a teacher in Meikhtila

In one village in the district, a private teacher was raping children [he only has a primary school education but gives private classes]. He is bisexual. He raped both boys and girls and asked them to have also anal and oral sex. Some parents know about this situation but they would not denounce the situation because they believe that teachers have some magic powers. When a child become ill, and was bleeding from the anus, the mother discovered the case. And yet she did not inform the police. Other children parents then agreed to inform the police. The children did not want to talk about these problems to the police. She found out when some children were brought to the hospital, so the doctor called her. [social worker volunteer, M]

Forced sex within the marriage

Forced sex within the marriage is not considered inappropriate behaviour. *“Forced sex within the marriage does not mean rape. It is appropriate”*. [P] It is part of the marital contract: *“Because the man has paid to marry, he should have the right to have sex”*. Women would be blamed for refusing sex. *“We do not agree that forced sex (within marriage) is not appropriate. It is fine. There is a couple here, the woman was asked to marry the guy even though she did not like him, and then she did not want to have sex. So they divorced in the end. But the community thinks the girl is not good, because the guy is very good to her. It is her fault. She should have refused in the beginning to get married”*. [P]. Some women might occasionally *“turn their back”*. Some might fight back. But women are mostly aware that they need to give in before the issue escalates. So they would generally accept sex even if they are not willing to have it *“to maintain / keep the household together”*. They might deny a few times, but then they give in: *“I do not want to have sex so often because I am getting old, so it is not so good. I refused sometimes, but I finally give in.”* [P] In the end, women must accept. *“If women do not accept, they are accused of having an affair”*.

Only a very small minority of people – including both man and women – would associate forced sex within marriage with rape. *“I think that forced sex within marriage is rape. I never discuss this issue with others. I do not know how other villagers see this. All of this happens in the house.”* [man P]

	P	K	M	R
<p>A woman should never deny sex to her husband</p> <p>The large majority of respondents do not consider forced sex within the marriage as violence. This applied to almost all the people interviewed: the people in the villages, as well as key informants in the townships. <i>“In a workshop there was discussion about this. But in my personal view, it is “husband and wife”. When there was a discussion at the workshop about this, I laughed”</i>. [MwAF P] <i>“There is no rape within a couple. If a woman denies, the husband will think she has some extramarital affairs. We cannot guess because we cannot even think that this would ever happen. Wives would never refuse. We never want to refuse. Because we love our husbands”</i>. [M]</p>				
<p>... unless the husband is drunk</p> <p>The only exception mentioned was drunkenness. <i>“If the man is drunk, maybe a woman should not accept. And people think that forcing sex when the man is drunk is wrong”</i>. [P] <i>“When my husband is drunk, I would deny sex to him”</i>. [R]</p>				
<p>Accepting sex is part of the marital contract</p> <p>Sex is part of the marital contract. A wife refusing sex should be blamed, because they are married. A woman for example explained: <i>“I married my husband when I was 17 and he worked for me for such a long time: I have a responsibility to fulfil his desire”</i>. [R] Young girls, not yet married, also believe that sex cannot be refused. <i>“The man gives money for the wedding, it is because he wants sex. The women should know that. There are some women who kick when he approaches her. There was a case, the couple were always fighting. I went to the woman in the afternoon. I asked ‘Why do you always argue?’ ‘Because I am not interested in sex’. I told her that she should just accept it, and there was no more fighting. So I told other women: ‘See, I solved the problem. The man gave money for the wedding, so I advised her to have sex, and now there is no more fighting. You cannot do what you want if you are married, just accept and tolerate”</i>. [P]</p>				
<p>Fighting back</p> <p>If a woman is not interested in sex, the woman might fight. <i>“Once a couple was having such an argument, and in the end she kicked the husband and the husband went through the wall! There are so many cases of this fighting in the night, I can hear them”</i>. [P]</p>				
<p>Women would not know how to refuse</p> <p>Most women would not know how to refuse sex. <i>“Women cannot tell men in the appropriate way that they do not want to have sex”</i>. [Active woman in P] A young unmarried woman worried: <i>“We can hear a neighbour, and the fighting she does because she wants to refuse. We can also hear women talking about that amongst themselves saying: ‘I do not want to have sex with my husband’. I feel pity for the women. But I worry about how to overcome the situation when I am married. I know that if I cannot negotiate the situation, I will also have to accept”</i>. [R]</p>				
<p>The neighbours shall not know...</p>				

Because houses are so close, and walls are so thin, it is hard to hide when a wife tries to resist having sex with her husband. *“The woman cannot say no, because her husband will beat. And the neighbours will know. And they will not want to put this in the open.”* [K] When the couple fight in the night-time the neighbours would say: *“See, they are fighting about sex, and she should accept”*. [P]

... (and the issue should not be discussed with them)

If women are forced to have sex within marriage, they could not talk about this with others. And, anyway, most people would say: *“If you do not want to have sexual relations, why did you marry?”* [R] A woman said: *“A woman should not accept. I discussed once with some other women, they said that they also do not like forced sex, but we must accept. Only a few women discussed about this. Most women would not even discuss the issue”*. [P]

The worry of adultery

Women worry that *“if they do not satisfy him, he will go to another girl”*. [R]

Forced sex and beating

Some recognized that the refusal of sex might result in beating. A religious leader in K said: *“The wife has to be blamed because they are married. But the husband should not beat her. They are both wrong. The woman should not deny and the man should not beat. Who could solve this situation? I would beat both... but I would also be wrong!”*

The village leader in K – asked about what he could do if a woman was beaten for refusing sex – said that he would do something only if the couple came to inform him, not the neighbours. *“But the couple would be too ashamed to tell this to me”*.

Sound bites



“She is my wife she must accept sex” is bullying [P]

http://youtu.be/cZFq_Vt1JuQ

An active woman shares that that a relationship where a man says “She is my wife, she must accept sex” should not exist. It is bullying.



He paid to marry you, you must accept sex [P]

<http://youtu.be/acHmYLVPMHQ>

A widowed woman recalls how she brought peace in a couple that was arguing every night because the wife did not want to have sex.



“We do not talk about rape within the family, here” [P]

<http://youtu.be/j76IACgVuWo>

There are many instances of violence against women in the village, but women tend not to talk about them. The only one is discussed (amongst close friends) is teasing.



And she kicked her husband through the wall [P]

http://youtu.be/iXeI-K_CQPA

In the interview, this widowed woman said that when couples argue in the night because of sex, all the neighbours can hear them. And sometimes, the quarrel can be even more visible. She recalled a case when a wife kicked her husband through the wall!



Because they are married,
and she cannot make complaints anywhere

Women must accept sex with their husbands [P]

<http://youtu.be/8m6LLkcsI9E>

A young (still unmarried girl) says that women must always accept sex with their husbands, because they are married.

Trafficking

Trafficking was a concern in Rakhine and, above all in Mekhtila, where two young women had recently experienced an attempted trafficking (which was fortunately solved with the intervention of the police). *“A woman from another village contacted us. We went to the north Shan state, and then to a township in the border area. The broker had told us: ‘You will work at the department store’. We were brought to the beauty salon. A Chinese lady told ‘You will wash hair’ but they were actually doing massage for the men there. We did not want to touch the men. We talked to the owner, who told us: you must work here for two years. We could not accept. I told the owner I wanted to go back home, and I tried to negotiate working for 4 months only. The owner did not agree. I ran away to the nearby village. And I met a villager from my area. But the shop owner caught me and took me back to the salon, I was not allowed to run away. The villager friend called my family. The owner requested to pay 3 lakhs² and I could go back home. I called my family. My brother called the police station, and they discussed what to do. They decided to transfer 100,00 only. When the shop owner went to collect the money, the special trafficking force arrested her. She is in prison. We were sent back to the village.” [M]*

P K M R

Awareness of the issue

People in M were aware of trafficking because of the recent attempt to traffic the two girls from the village. Despite this, there was denial of the issue. *“There is no trafficking in this village, but I am concerned about trafficking. To prevent it, I could tell parents and relatives not to allow the girls to work in very far places. But now I have no plan to do such speeches”.* (leader M) The leader in a neighbouring village said: *“I heard about trafficking in the west village. Before that, I had no idea of trafficking. However, even now I do not know much. I know that people with daughters should worry and I cannot exclude for sure that trafficking could also happen here”.* [M]

Trafficking was mentioned only as a cursory concern in other areas. But, overall it did not come out as an urgent concern. In Kayah a village elder mentioned that *“Sometimes employers persuade young women with a good salary and then women have to face trafficking”.*

One respondent in Rakhine is worrying about her daughter. *“My husband is not good with her, he drinks all the time. So I sent my daughter to Yangon, and now I worry for her because I am afraid of trafficking. She works in a clothes factory.”*

People easily trust others

“Most of the brokers are not strangers, they might have some relation with the trafficked woman. In most of the trafficking cases there are 2 brokers. One is from the local area. One is on the border. They are in touch. The one at the border sells the girl to the owner. People easily trust others. And many do not think there could be trafficking, they have a limited knowledge of it. And they are happy to get a good salary”. [police M]

Worrying about trafficking

People know about trafficking and worry about it, but this concern is not often accompanied by protection measures. These who worry about trafficking do not have much information about how it could be prevented or stopped. So they do worry, but they are only equipped with protective norms, as discussed before, that say: *“Do not go out alone”.* They might be aware and worry, but they are powerless, they do not know what to do. *“We are worried about trafficking. I only worry, I do not know anything about it”.* [M]

And yet opportunities for work and a good salary outside make opportunities outside the village a desirable option.

We interviewed young women both in P and in M who had worked outside the village, but no one mentioned if and how they were helped to become “street smart”, or if they were informed about specific dangers and related strategies for protective action. It was striking that young women who had worked outside the city were still talking of potential harassment in terms of “men giving candies to girls” rather than of the more real challenge of harassment in cities or in the workplace.

Even when young women travel, worry might not lead to prompt action: *“Usually parents would start worrying 2 or 3 months later, when they do not get news from the daughter. Most of the parents think that they are working and they have no time to call. Parents of girls/young women trafficked might not know about this for a long time.”* [police M]

Active protection from trafficking

² 3 lacks = 300,000 Myanmar Khyat

The knowledge about trafficking is increasing, and television has a role in this. The information given, however, still leans towards passive protection (= “do not go”).

“I heard about the case of trafficking in the other village, and I hear about trafficking from television and radio. When trafficking happened in the other village, the elder told us not to go far away and not to follow the strangers, even if they propose high salary. This information was shared in the women’s group discussion”. [fellow M]

At the village level there is little awareness of active protection measures, consenting to women to travel and work safely. Education was mentioned: *“They should solve trafficking by the law if this happens. We know about the law from television. To prevent trafficking we should not go when a stranger calls, we should not go with a stranger far away. These who travel need education. Education can help a woman to go alone. For example, she could read the address where to go”.* [M]

Initiatives against trafficking have been set by the government and the police in conjunction with international organizations. *“‘Community based watch’ systems are being established in village tracts. The village tract leader is the president and the police representative is the secretary. Fire brigade and Red Cross and MMCHA are also members. They offer training to communities with UNICEF. It is a 5-year project. Some village tract leaders already got the training. The community watch will check on the strangers and companies offering work”.*

[Police M]. It seems, however, that the buy-in from the leaders is still limited: *“Almost all village leaders should know about trafficking because they conducted training with village leaders, at their monthly meeting. But I think that most of the village leaders will not tell the villagers about the anti trafficking”.* [Police M]

A village leader mentioned that he knows that village leaders should have a more active role in checking job offers *“When a young woman comes to me to ask for referral for the work (the leader needs to make a referral to the village tract leader and to the police station) authorities should make checks. If they will work nearby, I would make fewer checks”.* [leader M]

Support and attitudes towards trafficked women

Measures for supporting trafficked women have been put in place. *“When we rescue a girl, we will bring her to Mandalay and refer her to a psychiatrist. If there are medical problems we would refer her also to the hospital. We will only question her when she releases stress and tension, only then we might question. We would provide psychosocial support. The woman would be asked what she wants to do. She could also receive some money to support her livelihood. If the trafficked girl is still a child, the child commission will support”.* [police M] A representative from MMCHA also confirmed the concern for trafficked women and that *“we usually help them with livelihood support (e.g. to open shop, offering training on tailoring...)”.* [MMCHA]

When the women go back to a village there will be gossiping, and this had happened also in the case we encountered. *“We cannot treat trafficked women as virgins because they might have worked in beauty salons or in massage rooms in private houses, we cannot be sure about what they did”.* [M] However the gossiping does not seem to impede to women to move on: *“People say: ‘These two women did not investigate the job opportunity very well. They were careless, they should have investigated’. But the villagers gossip only a little because they did not have sex with others. This type of gossip will not have consequences for the women. Some parents might think that they are not suited to marry, but one of the women will marry this year and I am involved in the negotiation. The in-laws are a bit concerned about the trafficking. I am involved in the negotiation because I am a friend of the couple”.* [M]

When trafficking happens, the *“consequences will depend on the community. The MWAF will provide support. The support of the village leader is important. Some community members do not have a positive attitude to the woman. They do not want to speak to them. The woman might become very isolated and removed from the community. They will behave badly and they will ignore the community. They might even become dealers themselves, and persuade other women to work on the China border”.* [Police M]

Sound bites



A story of trafficking [M]

<http://youtu.be/tEI5HuqCVlg>

A young woman tells how she managed to escape from working in a massage parlour after being trafficked to the China Border.



I do not know how to prevent trafficking [M]

<http://youtu.be/1KysVDRIS8A>

The mother of an adolescent girl worries about trafficking. But she does not know much about how to prevent it.



Trafficking [M]

<http://youtu.be/Udn57FHC6BM>

The village leader denies that trafficking had ever happened in the village, but he admits that it could happen.

Neglect

Especially in Kayah, women discussed that they felt neglected by their husband, and that they regarded this as inappropriate behaviour.

Neglect has **emotional consequences**: *“Women can fall in love very easily, and, when proposed, then they get married in a short time. And then the husband brings the wife to his house and he never stays at home. Even if he does not beat the wife, he neglects her, and this creates emotional trauma to the wife”*.

Neglect can also have **practical implications**, such as husbands disregarding health issues. *“A woman in the village visited cannot see very clearly at night. She can only walk accompanied by her children and this happened after losing a baby in the womb. The husband and the in-laws do not care about her. She mentioned the problem to the fellow, and to relatives and neighbours, but no one helps her. The fellow thinks that she has more problems because she is a woman: ‘If a man had this problem, the wife would have supported him”*.

P K M R

A neglected woman cannot talk about the issue.

A woman who is neglected would not talk about this because it is shameful. *“This is about the personal life, other people should not get involved. There is no solution or prevention for this”*.
(w K)

Some women would want to spend more time with husbands

Most people would not consider “neglecting the wife to spend time with friends” as “inappropriate behaviour”: most husbands do not take the family outside. However a group of women regretted that *“our husbands are always happy to offer food and meals to their friends, but they would not do this to the family. They think it is fine, but women do not want to accept this. We wish that they were more careful with money, and that they spend more time at home, so that the family could be together”*.

Sound bites



Eating and drinking outside without the wife [K]

<http://youtu.be/L5cf8aQBFts>

Some men spend a lot of time outside the house, eating and drinking with their friends. They do not consider the family or their financial problems. As they are a couple, the wife would like to spend more time together and eat together with them.

Being forced to do hard work

(mentioned in Kayah)

Being forced to do hard work – and being beaten if they do not do so – was frequently mentioned in Kayah. *“When a couple work all day in the farm, there is still an expectation that the wife will do homework. Back home, a husband might scold a tired wife: ‘Why don’t you cook for me?’. And he might beat her for this”*. (women in K)

Some men, when they come back [from foreign countries] say to their wives: *‘I worked hard abroad, so now I do not need to work’ and they make their wife to do all the work, also the heavy one. Wives also want to go to foreign countries with their husband (and they would leave the children with grandparents). If they worked together, they could save more*. [R]

P K M R

Women forced to do hard work during the pregnancy

Some of the people interviewed mentioned that women might have to do hard work (e.g. farming in the paddy, cutting the wood, feeding cows and pigs) also during pregnancy. *“This can be harmful to the woman and the baby, but women could be forced to do it because the husbands are lazy, or because they have financial problems”*. Respondents said this could lead to abnormal child position, premature delivery, women taking drugs, spontaneous abortion, negative impact on the child’s development. [The awareness of the issue was particularly high in K, and we discovered that another NGO had recently conducted an awareness campaign on the topic].

“Asking a pregnant woman to do hard labour can be harmful for the baby. This is what I think and I also discussed this in an awareness raising session with ActionAid. It could happen because the husband believes that he is the boss and he can order his wife to do what he wants. The woman married her husband because she loved him and she does not want to divorce, so even though she wouldn’t want to accept it, she would have to do so. The community will blame the husband and will have bad impression of him. Some women might tell the wife to talk to her husband. Others will say nothing to them, because it is a family business”. [M]

Communal labour does not get discounted, women do not get supported

Communal work takes place in the village. A member for each family must participate or pay a fine. *“If a husband is lazy, the women who cannot afford to pay a fee will have to participate, even if they are pregnant. The village leader would not take action. Other people might say: ‘Oh, why do you work, your husband is so lazy...’ but no one goes and talks to the husband”*. [m K]

Negotiating the workload with the husband

A suitable workload division is not negotiated within the family. Women have no say. *“My husband never negotiates with me what workload is appropriate. He tells me to carry stones (for lime production). He should not ask me, especially when I was pregnant. Once I told him I could not work because I was pregnant, but he ignored the request. I only asked once. I did not ask again, I would just get the same answer”*. In the same group of participants, one woman said instead: *“I would like to help my husband also on heavy work, carrying stones, for example, but he would not allow me to do so, because ‘it is not a work for women”*. They agree that there are more men that ask women to carry stones in the village than men that do it themselves. [K]

Sound bites



A pregnant woman should not be asked to do hard work [K]

<http://youtu.be/fSB3TT7N6jU>

A pregnant woman should not be asked to do hard work. It can have consequences for the baby. When villagers are required to do community work, lazy husbands might send their wife even if they are pregnant. And the wife will go to avoid paying a fine.

Inappropriate behaviour towards women with disabilities

The programme supporting this KAP has a strong emphasis on disabilities. However we only managed to interview a family living with disabilities, in Pyapon. Our criteria for the choice of villages included presence of women with disability, but we were told that women with disability did not live in the programme area (or, when identified, they would not want to be interviewed).

Failure to identify people with disability is a cause for concern. It could be linked to “disguising disability” or to lack of support for people living with disability.³

³ It is suggested that the programme check the current understanding of disability. Tools such the WHO-Disability Assessment Schedule, might help moving from a prevalent focus on disability towards “limitation of activity”. The programme should also monitor if people with disability exist but are not recognized – and, more importantly, supported as such.

Emerging
issues

Emerging issues

Overarching considerations emerged in the course of our interviews. They are “unspoken assumptions”, driving current ideas and behaviour around violence against women. They are presented here, and include:

- The perceived linkages amongst “drinking alcohol” and violence;
- the need to impose tight norms of social behaviour on relationships amongst men and women (i.e. to avoid escalations of “bad” behaviour);
- the linked issue of “overprotection” of women, limiting their freedom of choice
- the lack of relationship/sexual education

Drinking alcohol

The study of course recognizes that drinking is not – per se – an act of violence against women. But throughout the study drinking was equated largely to violence, and mentioned as the first instance of inadequate behaviour against women by both women and men of all age groups. It is mostly men who drink. Only in Kayah it was mentioned that women might drink the traditional alcohol (*toddy*). Drinking is a fact of life in the villages. Women and girls have to accept drinking, even if they do not like it. *“Our friends, cousins start to drink young, at 16. We then have to deal with drinking and accept to be teased”*. [K] Some single girls [K] mentioned that they would not want to marry a man who drinks. However they also said that *“Most of the girls can accept alcohol and they do not consider drinking alcohol as a factor for choosing a husband”*. Another woman in the same village commented on this, jokingly saying: *“If women do not accept a man who drinks, they will not find anyone to marry”*.

Note that also other “vices” had been mentioned when asking about “inappropriate behaviours”, such as **gambling**. But their implications for violence against women are minor compared to drinking. Gambling was mentioned with regard to economic damage to the family: *“He came back with a small boat, carrying the harvest. He went directly to the football match to do gambling. He did not pass by home or said that he was back. In the meantime, the boat sunk in the water, and he lost the harvest. And he complained to his wife: ‘Why you did not take care of it?’ - ‘You did not even tell us, you did not even come home’”*. [R]

Consequences of drinking

	P	K	M	R
<p>Expenses for alcohol impact on other woman and family needs</p> <p>Drinking deprives a family of money. In theory, the household expenses are managed by the wife, who gets money from the husband. In practice, men can use money as they wish. Husbands manage to drink even if they have no cash in their hands. Sometimes they do not pay, their friends would pay for them. <i>“Sometimes they leave debts in the shop, and then when they get money, they lie to their wife. They do not give her all the earnings and they pay the debt”</i>. [K]</p> <p><i>“Many men drink here. They drink all the money they earn, and they do not leave money to the women. When a man has a debt, then all the family members try to pay the debt back. The main responsibility is with the wife. Drinking can also affect the education of the children. When they go in town to work, they come back and only give very little money to the wife. I would say that at least 30% of the men in the village have a serious drinking problem. Not only when they earn money they do not give it to the family, but they miss earning opportunities – the few in the village – because they prefer drinking”</i>. [P]</p> <p><i>“I would like to tell the parents of my students that they should buy books for children rather than spending money on alcohol. But I cannot do it, people does not want teachers to get involved in family affairs”</i>. [K]</p>				
<p>Threats</p> <p><i>“When the husband drinks or goes gambling, and the money lender reclaims the money he will tell him ‘ask the money to my wife’. And it is then the wife who is threatened”</i>. [P]</p>				
<p>Teasing</p> <p><i>“Teasing is worse when men are drunk. When they are not drunk it is easier for us to accept it. If men drink it can be more dangerous, and worse things could happen”</i>. [K]</p>				

Inappropriate touching

Many cases of grabbing (or attempted rape) had been linked to drunkenness. For example: *"A single man got drunk and, as he wanted to cook chicken curry, he went to buy the chicken in the house of a single woman. She went to get one, at the back of the house. He followed her and tried to abuse her."* [R]
"Sometimes men behave like this because they are encouraged by friends, as they drink". [M]

Fighting in the house

Scolding and cursing happen above all when people drink. Many experiences were shared, for example: *"My husband is a casual labourer. He drinks in the evening. When he comes back late (at 8 or 9 in the evening) he would start cursing me for no reason. I became depressed and I am uncomfortable. I asked him to go back to the in-laws, but he would not go back".* [M]

Beating

"A drunken husband can beat family members. Some cases were bad and the wife was brought to hospital. It happened in the village. Men can hit the children, so the children would run away from the house, when they see that the father is drunk". [R]
"There is beating after drinking. Because of poverty the man drinks, to try and enjoy himself, and when he gets home he hits his wife". [P]

Breaking valuables things

"When drunk, a man might destroy valuable things in the house". [R]
"When my husband gets drunk, he might create problems for us. So we go away and leave him alone. And when he is alone, he damages the house. Our house is all damaged because of this". [R]
"Breaking things in the house when men are drunk should be considered violence against women: usually they break women's possessions, or things that they use. And they (the women) will have the responsibility to buy these again". [P]

Rape

"Most of the rape cases happen when men are drunk, so this is why women do not like alcohol". [w R] *"Most rape cases – 8 out of 10 – happen after drinking".* [police in R]
"Rape could happen for example when a man is drunk. Or when he has a very strong sexual desire. The drunken man is out of control". [P]
"We do not accept rape. It does not happen in the village. But it could happen when a woman looks for firewood, alone. In the village most of the people take a bath in the stream. The stream is far away from the village. When a girl takes a bath in the stream alone, there is an opportunity for rape. But of course not every man would take it. When a man drinks and sees the girl alone, there are more chances to rape the woman". [M]

Drinking further reduces the movements of women

Women try to avoid passing by men who drink alcohol. They will walk a different road, or will avoid going out when is late. *"In the evening, most of the men drink and get drunk. If a girl goes outside she could face a problem."* (w R)

Drinking – and the consequences – make women feel ashamed

Women – wives or daughters of drunken men – will feel ashamed and are discriminated against. *"If a man drinks, the neighbours will gossip. The wife will be ashamed and she will avoid going out and seeing other people. She will feel discriminated".* (w R)
"When there are festivals in the village, men get drunk. My son and daughter were with a group of young people and they saw my husband drunk. The girl was ashamed, she ran back home crying. I told her: 'When you are 18 years old you will be able to go whenever you want to go. I have faced and I will have to face this all my life. The girl went to Yangon to work". [R]
Women who try to prevent men from drinking might also face humiliating situations. *"A married woman went to the alcohol shop to get her husband to come back home. The husband refused and the woman argued with him. One of his friends held her hand saying: 'Why did you come here and treat us like animals, if you want to say bad things to your husband say it at home, do not come here'. This behaviour made her ashamed, and was not good".* [m R]
"After they drink, men might fight and end up at the police station. The women will have to go there and solve the problem. Women do not like to be involved in this. When they have to go to the police they are ashamed. It is a place dominated by men. It is bad for their dignity. It is a place where they should not go. The police scold women as well. They look down on them: they are from the village. If money is needed to solve the case, or for food and travel, it is the woman who must find ways to borrow the money."[P]

Sound bites



Tolerate your father when he drinks [R]

<http://youtu.be/KkQQ6dfudgQ>

A mother shares that her daughter got ashamed when she saw her father drunk at a festival. "If you do not want to see your father drunk, you should go away". And, indeed the daughter went away, to work in Yangon.



Women feel ashamed to go to the police station [P]

<http://youtu.be/s1E3ROIOAlo>

It is shameful for a village woman to go to the police station. It is a place full of men. They scold her, and their voice is so loud. Women feel bad and their dignity is affected. This is one of the consequences of drinking.



Women work, men make debts [P]

<http://youtu.be/LBWeNwaAupw>

Men drink, and make debts. It is then up to the women to repay them. They tell the men not to drink, and they work, to earn the money. When they talk amongst themselves about the issue, it is mainly to find jobs to keep the family going.

Factors aggravating drinking

	P	K	M	R
<p>Festivals can aggravate the drinking issue</p> <p>Several people mentioned that at festivals, men drink more and are also more likely to harass girls and women. In many cases, in all areas festivals were indeed referred as the occasion when violence against women – especially touching and grabbing – would increase.</p>				
<p>Unemployment and fatigue are seen to increase drinking</p> <p>Some linked drinking with poverty, frustration, lack of work. <i>"If men do not find casual work they stay at home, they drink and they make problems for their wives. All men drink alcohol. After they came back from the sea they are really tired, this is why they want to rest and spend some time at the alcohol shop. And if they get drunk, then they behave badly with the family". (R)</i></p>				
<p>Inadequacy of women</p> <p>Some (men) justified drinking as a way to cope with the unsatisfactory behaviour of their wife. <i>"Some men must drink because their wives are not good: they do not take care of the children. But some drink even if they do not have problems like these: they drink because they like alcohol". [an active man in K]</i></p>				
<p>Women talk talk talk...</p> <p>When the husband is drunk, the wife "talks talks talks", and this can lead to arguments and also beating. <i>"First he is drunk and does not do anything. The wife starts talking. She says that the children are embarrassed to see the father in such a state. So this is why she talks. They just make an argument and do not fight physically". [P]</i></p>				
<p>Young age</p> <p><i>"Drinking might happen in young couples. It happens because they are not mature. Then they have to separate for a while and get back together. It is not a problem affecting older couples. The young women can divorce, because there will be no consequences for them. The solution is that both man and women have to be responsible for their duties (the man earns money, the woman will do house chores)". [leader m]</i></p>				

Discussing with the husband

Some women explained that by discussing with their husband, they managed to improve the situation: *"I go to call him at the alcohol shop. Sometimes he comes back home; sometimes he does not. At the beginning, I would just wait for my husband to get back home drunk, and we would quarrel. But I did not care about the neighbours and I continued with my strategy. My husband has changed a bit. He has reduced the fighting after drinking, and now he drinks less".* [R]

"My husband came home drunk, broke the rice pot, and quarrelled with the children. When he came back drunk again, I did not cook (and I sent the children to my mother to eat). I did not cook and we did not have food. The day after my husband recognized his mistake, and he made fewer problems the following time. He is still drinking but he creates less problems." [R]

The influence of daughters and children

Men might reduce drinking for the sake of their daughters. The wife of a heavy drinker feels that she cannot change her husband. *"But I now tell him: 'Our daughter is growing up. If other people behaved with her like you do with me, would you like it? People look down on your behaviour, and our daughter is affected. If you do not value our daughter other people also will not'. Now he still gets drunk, but he can control himself more when he is in the neighbourhood".* [R]

"When a daughter sees her father drunk, she also feels bad, and she asks him to stop drinking. When it is the girl saying this, the reaction is different. The father says: 'Do not talk to me. I do not depend on your salary'. But there is no arguing and beating". [P]

"Some people had serious health problems and stopped drinking. They knew before that drinking was bad, but this would not prevent them from drinking. Some stop drinking when they have children, not to give bad example". [P]

Drinking must be stopped by closing shops

Several women said that drinking should be limited to prevent violence against women. And some of them had already acted on the issue. [See the example of Rakhine in the box, where a group of women managed to close the local alcohol shop, but only to discover that this did not limit alcohol consumption].

Other women are thinking of doing the same: *"Women do not discuss this issue. Because they have not knowledge. But 4 or 5 women once, including myself, discussed this: if there was no licensed shop, things would be good. We want to speak up to close the shop. We want to send the men who drink in prison for one week. This is our own idea; no one suggested it to us. But we do not know if closing the alcohol shop is feasible, and how this could be done".* [P]

Protecting young brides

"Parents would want to prevent daughters from marrying a bad guy (e.g. who drinks). But a mother cannot stop a girl in love. So they are asked to live close by (or in the parents' home), to check on them and teach them how to behave. In the village they do not allow couples younger than 18 or 19 to live separate from the family, because they are too young. Only later they can control themselves. We must keep an eye on the woman, because she will suffer the most". [R]

Pressure from family

"When the husband is drunk, she calls her sister-in-law. She comes and tries to negotiate". [P]

Pressure by village authorities

"If a man drinks, the wife can complain with an elder person. The elder would go to their house and ask the man to stop. After that, the man would be peaceful for 5 or 6 months... but then he starts again". [P]

"If a leader threatens a man ('If you keep doing this, I will send you to the police station') the man will be fine for some months, than he starts again. They cannot stop drinking but they are scared and can limit themselves for sometime. [P]

"When they fight (after drinking) the village leader might intervene. The village leader might denounce at the police station. The police could even put someone in prison for one night, but he would not change their behaviour after that". [P]

Government and police should prevent drunkenness

"I saw many cases of people drinking. Boys 15 / 16 start drinking. I know that this can be a problem. Our Department has done awareness raising with police and legal people. They mentioned that emotional and physical violence could be denounced. And the state increased

the taxes and not every shop can get a license. [MWAF P]

“Stop selling the alcohol! When the state started selling alcohol, things got worse. Traditional alcohol was better. This year however there is a bit less: because the police station is doing something. There is some reduction, instead of getting drunk 3 times, they got drunk one. But if there are more job opportunities, things would be better”. [P]

Issues not much discussed / denial

Even if it is often quoted as one of the main causes of violence, the drinking issue is not much discussed. In several instances women mentioned that discussing it would mean to talk badly about family, which should not be done. Women only talk occasionally together about this problem.. *“he is drinking again’... We do not discuss the issue broadly. But we talk to each other. The main topic is where to find the money to pay the loan back”.* [w in P]
We never discussed about drunkenness. There are not big cases here. Only a few men get drunk, so it is not an issue worth discussing. [note: the same group had mentioned drinking as the first unacceptable behaviour] [W in P]

Closing the alcohol shops

“The village has 3 alcohol shops. It is the only village in the area with alcohol shops. So it also attracted men from the surrounding areas to come. The place was open 24/7 and was a big nuisance. Drunken people would sing loudly. This annoys the villagers. Drunken people might drop their lungi and walk in the villages. The leader and the monk could not close the shop, even if they do not like it. So the women got organized. They collected money from each HH and they went to the township. Some strong and confident women raised the issue, explained the situation. The township administrator came to the village and closed the shop. Now the people who cannot drink in the village go elsewhere to get the alcohol. Every house is like an alcohol shop, people get the alcohol and keep it at home. So there are not less drunken people now”.

(In discussion with the local staff, other details about the story emerged. The women involved had participated in rights awareness sessions, this is why they knew they could go to the higher authorities. The local village leader, who actually lives in a different village, had taken the side of the alcohol shop owner, there was some corruption involved. The alcohol shop owner had tried to kill a boy with a knife. At this time there was a fight in the village and the male shop owner was injured. His wife raised the issue with the leader and the police: *“The people in the village steal my money and make trouble in my house”*. The female shop owner corrupted the police, so the police would take their side. The women’s leader thought: *“We should involve many villagers in the process, this is the only way to make our way heard”*. The police station still took sides with the shop. So they thought they had to go to the next level. And this is when they went to the township administration. [R]

Sound bites



We should tell our friends not to drink too much [K]

<http://youtu.be/4TCZGU3XTCs>

Beating, insulting women are not acceptable, but they still exist. Such behaviours should be eradicated. When men see friends and villagers drinking too much, they should tell them “go home now, you might insult women if you drink too much”. This would help to limit abuse.



To make men stop drinking women must threaten them [P]

<http://youtu.be/jKaxiwrhE80>

To make men stop drinking women must threaten them. They should inform the village elders, or the police. And when men are referred to the police, they will feel ashamed. When this had happened, men felt bad, and reduced their bad behaviour. Women should also threaten them with divorce, to make them stop drinking and work.



We want to stop alcohol licenses but we do not know how

<http://youtu.be/kMAhZesMFjI>

A locally active woman says that she would like to stop licenses for selling alcohol. All women would agree with her! But they do not know how to do this: where to go, where to complain. This is their weakness.



Closing the alcohol shop

<http://youtu.be/1PeFSLkCSOw>

A woman explains how a group of women persuaded the township authorities to close the alcohol shop, by meeting them and raising the issue. However, in the rest of the interview, she explains that men continue to drink: they now buy alcohol, and keep it at home.

Uncontrolled escalation.

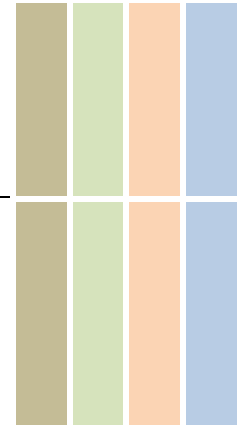
In all areas an – often unspoken – assumption seems to apply: inappropriate behaviours will escalate. Prevention being better than the cure, relationship amongst man and women outside of marriage – even when consensual – should be avoided. A relationship would not be bad “per se”, but “it will lead to forced sex” – or to rape. The gravity of an act is therefore judged also assuming that it can lead to a bigger evil. Also, the assumption that “teasing **might lead** to sex/rape” translates to “teasing/touching = to sex/rape”. So teasing and touching might reduce disproportionately the dignity of a woman.

Teasing leads to sex

In most places, teasing is seen as the precursor of sex, and therefore as something to be controlled, especially by women. *“Teasing and touching can lead to have sex. It is very important to maintain our culture. If a problem happens the woman will have more disadvantages than the man. So the women should control themselves very properly.” [elder in K].*

Touching leads to rape

Touching is seen as the first act of a dangerous escalation that can easily lead to rape *“Touching is not appropriate because the daughters are virgins and adolescent. The daughters are very young and do not know everything and cannot decide by themselves. Some men can take the opportunity to rape them.” [w K]*
“You should not sit together with boys because after you sit together, they will touch you and take the opportunity for rape. So if you are raped, what would you do?”. [mothers in K]



Prevention and defence: passive, “overprotecting” approach.

The idea of “uncontrolled escalation” – presented above – implies that it is important to control women, to help them to avoid trouble. Control is tantamount to a form of protection. For example: since women will face trouble if they have sex, they should be protected by making sure that they are not even exposed to teasing: they better stay at home to avoid any escalation of trouble.

So, the need to protect women justifies social norms – as discussed in the “good woman’s behaviour” section - reducing the freedom of women. Many prevention measures are passive and involve women: they say what women should not do (e.g. do not walk out, do not wear certain clothes...) rather than saying what could be done to alleviate the threats. They ask women to *adapt* rather than *mitigate* the threat. These norms are accepted by most people in communities and internalized by women themselves. But some women resist them, and consider “protection” as an imposition of protective norms and even as a form of violence.

When overprotection is established, it is difficult to uproot. Some respondents even acknowledged that they are “overprotecting” women and girls, when in fact there are not so many threats in the village, and “not all the men are bad”.

Overprotection is a pernicious attitude, that stems from a negative view of masculinity (all men are potential threats to women) and that see women as passive: they cannot defend themselves, they need to be protected.

Awareness of “overprotection”

“We might be over-worrying, but we hear news about rape on television”. [P]

“We worry about insulting (=rape) and the fact that when men are drunk they can grab. Everybody worries... but this does not happen much”. [P]

Fighting back

There have been limited examples of “fighting back” as an active protective/defensive measure. Fighting back seemed to be allowed, but not promoted (no mother mentioned telling a girl to be vocal about a bad behaviour or anything on the lines of “slap him back”). It is accepted that the women should fight back against a drunken husband. This would however run the risk of breaking another implicit rule of “good girl behaviour”: turning attention – and therefore undesired gossiping – on herself.

Mitigating risk

In only a few cases did we find evidence of “active behaviours” – to reduce undesirable behaviour by men. This included, for example, a suggestion by some young men that: “We should tell our friends not to drink too much”. [K]

... fear of men.

Some women confessed that they are afraid of men. “I did not marry because I was afraid of men. All the men in this village and in my family are bad. My sister’s husband makes problems for his wife. So, I am afraid. When I was young, I experienced the drunkenness of my father (we had to hide to escape from him!). Because of this, I did not want to marry”. (single woman in R)

“Most men are good”...

Most people interviewed acknowledged that men are usually good. We often heard comments on the lines of: “Not all the men would like to do the touching. Amongst the men who want to touch, not all the men would also want to rape. Most of the men are good”. [w K]. Young women in Rakhine said: “Most of the boys of the village are good with us. They protect us. If men from other villages fall in love with us, our male friends might enquire about them (for example to see if they have another girlfriend in the village).

Yet, even if “most men are good”, restrictions are imposed to women, to the detriment of men-women relations. To be on the safe side women need to behave as if all men are potentially rapists and abusers.

To worry or not to worry?

The mother of a child with disability worries when she goes out far to get water for the house. “I worry that someone could abuse my daughter. When my son-in-law is at home, should I trust him or not? He is fine, he is a good man, so she should not worry. And still, I worry... I worry that some stranger might ‘offer candies’ to

my girl". She has always to worry about everything: her daughter, her family, her livelihoods. And sometimes she thinks she worries too much. *"Even if I believe that there is no man who could rape my girl in this village. Even if my daughter has no desire for sex. I still worry, because I am a mother"*. [w P]

Sound bites



To worry or not to worry [P]

<http://youtu.be/L3wHgvSMCRw>

The mother of a girl with a mental disability wonders if she should worry about her – as she does – or not. She knows that there is really no reason to worry about her: the village is safe. And yet, she cannot help worrying.

Talking about relationships between females and males, sexual education, reproductive health

Very little information is given to a girl or a boy about sexuality.

Girls do not know, and cannot decide for themselves

“Touching is not appropriate because the daughters are virgins and adolescent. The daughters are very young, they do not know everything and cannot decide by themselves”. (mothers in K)

Aversion to discuss relationships / sex by mothers (and amongst women)

Mothers of adolescent girls confessed their aversion and embarrassment in discussing relationships and sexual education with their daughters. Many mothers said things like: *“My girl is too young and she cannot understand these things”.* [K]

“My daughter should not go alone. She should be accompanied by her brothers because she can be abused. But I did not explain to my daughter what ‘to be abused’ means. The word ‘rape’ or ‘abuse’ or ‘sex’ cannot really be understood by our daughters. So we ask our daughters to ‘live safely’. ‘Safely’ means they should control themselves. To be safe, girls should not go alone in the dark and not pass by the boys”. [M]

All but one participant in a focus group of mothers in K said that they never discussed relationships/sex with their girls. Only one had discussed it by saying: *“The most valuable parts in the girl body are breast and vagina. Rape can damage them. So, you should be careful of boys. If you are raped your life can be destroyed. This is why you should not accept the touching”.*

Sex, sexual health, relationships are equally not discussed with other women: *“We do not discuss with other women. Probably other women might have the same experiences, but this is something we would not discuss together”.* [P]

Girls do not discuss relationships with mothers

“We do not discuss much about the boys we love with our mothers, we discuss this with our friends”. [R]

Girls will find out... somehow

Mothers do not discuss with girls (about relationship and sexual education) and they are aware that they will get this information somewhere. But they do not really monitor the channels they will use: *“Children would know from each other. They are educated, there are videos. So they would know somehow, but from someone outside. Why do not you discuss about these things? Because it is so shameful. We would never discuss this”.*

“Girls heard about pregnancy, they see it in the news, they know that it can happen... so this is why they worry so much. My daughter said that a schoolmate became pregnant, and she was then abandoned by the boyfriend, so she knows that could also happen to her”. [P]

Sound bites



What a mother says to her girl [M]

<http://youtu.be/acWsTuBywNU>

The mother of an adolescent tells her to be safe. This means not to go out in the dark, and avoid places where the boys are.

Myths - Violence Against Women

AA had used in its training some “myths” on Violence Against Women. These myths are now known by staff and partners and circulated, do they really correspond to what people spontaneously said in the KAP? We did not ask directly their opinion on the myths, but we checked if, in the course of the interviews, views reinforcing (or disproving) the myths were expressed

Myths		Responses in the KAP
Men are violent by nature.	-	<i>This view was never mentioned in the KAP.</i>
A woman should put up with violence in order to keep her family together	***	The main concern is “for the children” rather than on keeping the family together. Cases of divorce when there are no children are accepted.
Boys who witness their father’s violence towards their mother are more likely to be violent when they grow up.	-	This myth was not mentioned. But it was said that the “children of those who divorce, might be as bad as their fathers”.
Violence against women exists in every society in the world.	-	Not mentioned
Violence is usually due to alcohol and drugs.	*****	Yes (it is associated to alcohol)
Sometimes violence (beating) is a way of showing affection to his wife.	-	<i>This view was never mentioned in the KAP.</i>
Some women like to be beaten.	-	It was not mentioned. It was mentioned that some women – because they do not want to leave their husbands and/or they love him - accept high levels of violence.
Men have a right to beat their wife.	*****	If there are good reasons for it (e.g. a wife that does not behave well) a man has the right to beat her.
Sexual harassment is acceptable.	*	Sexual harassment is stigmatized and publicly not accepted. However there are traditions that might lead to sexual harassment (e.g. meetings between young women and men in Rakhine) which are accepted.
Violence is the affair of the family.	***	There are different attitudes around this, by different people within villages.
If a woman gets raped it is her fault. Because of the way she dresses or acts.	****	Some respondents mentioned that if a woman is harassed she is at fault. Many stated that proper dressing and behaviour is considered as a “preventive measure”. A formulation resonating more with local perceptions might be “girls behaving properly will not be raped”

Some final remarks

This report does not present “conclusions”.

It rather seeks to be a “starting point” for the work to be done in the four geographical areas selected. The assumption underlying this report is that analysis of violence against women is a continuous process. As the project unfolds, both ActionAid / its partners and the people involved in the village (citizens, government, civil society representatives) will evolve their analysis.

This report started the conversation. It captured a snapshot of concerns - as they emerged at the inception of the project - and of the thinking – by different actors - around them.

What other issues will appear? To what depth they will be discussed? How will perceptions around them change? And, ultimately, will attitudes and behaviours around violence against women start to change? Changes due to the project will have to be measured on these questions, rather than on simplistic data like “what percentage of women / men consider rape as violence against women?”

The analysis done so far shows that such questions are shortcuts. In the example above, the very understanding of what is rape is controversial (for example: does it include forced marital sex?). And when it comes to other instances of violence (e.g. grabbing and teasing, beating) understandings and attitudes are even more nuanced. In fact, the analysis indicates, much violence against women is not even seen and perceived as such. Powerful, hidden social norms around behaviours shape the perception of what is violence and what is accepted. Starting to look into these issues had required in depth conversation with many actors. It had required active listening, embracing contradictions, being sensitive to the fear and worries of these who shared their views with us.

This report captures fragments of conversations with different actors, and, in doing so, it should offer a “baseline” of where conversations are now. The report also systematizes issues, in the hope that what emerges can be the start of further conversations: stimulating debate, new understanding and – ultimately change.

The report also captured some local customs and traditions, believing that society should evolve by becoming conscious of the implications of their own traditions and by transforming them – cross fertilizing them with external input - rather than by imposing external and ready-made structures. We could only scratch the surface, and yet we discovered fascinating traditions, intertwining for example spiritual cleansing with secular power. Spaces for actions are already evident. In Rakhine people are already questioning the “matchmaking” tradition – and this debate might be brought in the open. In several places active women are pushing the boundaries of their role, from diverse angles, asking for more voice in decision making on issues that concern them, including violence.

It is hoped that this report (as well as the process leading to that) is just the start of a long process of thinking deeply about violence, and contextualizing it. Of becoming conscious of the forces at play, and able to leverage positive ones. Capturing how the conversation had evolved, what new issues had emerged, what contradictions have been revealed... recalling when views diverged, when people converged around ideas... highlighting what have been the point of contention, the resistances... all this will show what change the project contributed to.

Ultimately power matters. This report had put upfront an analysis of perceptions around different forms of power. In many cases, however, power was never consciously mentioned by people. The extent to which women and men will become aware of it, and about how it can shape violence against women, will also be an important indicator of change.

What matters is not only what people will say about violence against women at the end of the project, but how they will have challenged their current views. Women and men who participated in shaping a society more free from violence against woman shall own their struggle, and shall be enabled to narrate it.

Appendixes

Training for the KAP

The workshop took place in the AAM office in Yangon, and included:

- AA and partner staff, from Yangon and from the project areas
- The Advisor - Women's Rights & Policy Research (Moira O' Leary)
- The international consultant (Silva Ferretti)

The purpose was to train staff to work on the KAP, and to present the framework for enquiry as well as an overview of what the KAP is. The training was also an opportunity to devise, together with the participants, and to build on their experience and knowledge of the context, the best tools to use in the villages.

The training was run in two days.

The activities are detailed below

Day 1 - Activity 1 – Revising schedule

The planned schedule for the KAP was revised, to check:

- What was possible to do in each area (e.g. were villages accessible to the international consultant)
- That both women and men researchers could be available to be in the field
- That all logistical arrangements were in place
-

Activity 2 – Presentation of the programme

The programme and its expected results were briefly presented to all staff, as a recap by Moira.

(Note: the most important information about the programme had already been translated in Myanmar, and staff had received a copy of it).

Activity 3 – What are KAPs

Why do we need a KAP baseline for the programme?

- Because we need to be able to understand what progress was made by the programme (baseline)
- Because the programme does not focus on “hard changes” but on changing people mindsets (KAP)

What are K – A – P?

- The meaning of K – A – P was explained
- The example of cigarette smoking was given (participants invited to give examples of KAP related to it, to have a small discussion and clarify the concepts)

It was stressed that:

- there is no coherence amongst K -> A -> P (e.g. our attitude might be dissonant from our knowledge. And we can also have practices that do not correspond to our attitudes and desires, for example when social pressure limits us from smoking).
- Attitudes are often the most interesting thing to study. It might be relatively easy to know what knowledge people have, but the attitudes will depend on many different factors, and are often personal.
- It is useful to work backwards: first we will look at Practices, then we will look at what Attitudes can lead to them.

Activity 4 – Practices: brainstorming

When we talk about Violence Against Women, what practices are we referring to?


We brainstormed on this, and we discussed / clarified practices as they emerged.

- Some practices were not directly linked to sexual violence, but about economic exclusion and exclusion from decision making
- Different “intensity” and “modalities” of physical violence emerged (e.g. slapping, punching, hitting with a stick, burning with iron, raping)
- In some cases the violence was physical, elsewhere linked to blame and stigma



Activity 5 – Practices: which ones can be disclosed?

Which practices are likely to be disclosed? Which ones are not?
 We arranged practices in 5 groups

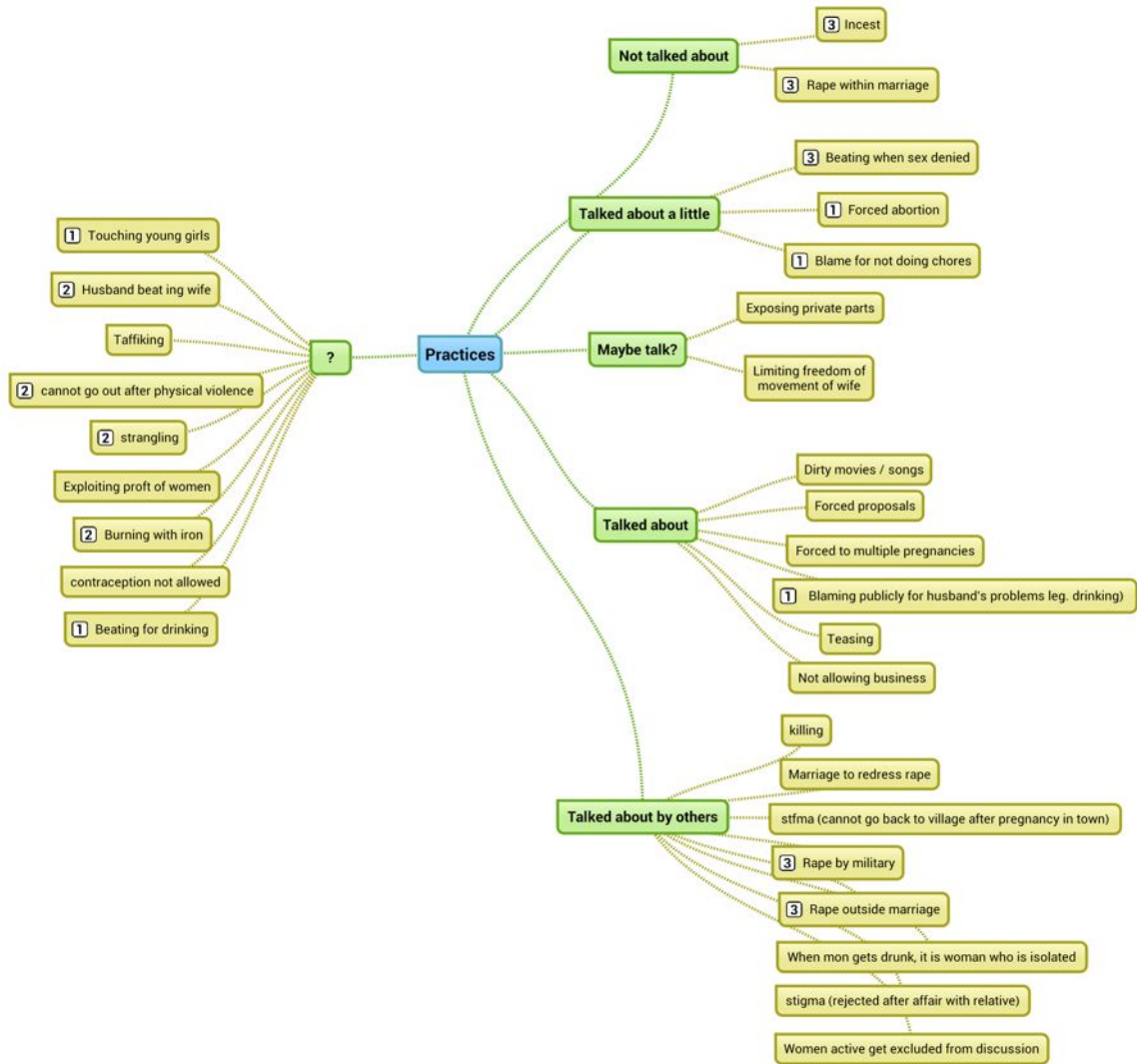
				
Practices that are not likely to be openly talked about	Practices that are likely to be mentioned, but with few details	Practices people are willing to talk about (even when they are involved themselves)	Practices people are willing to talk about (when they involve others)	Not sure

Activity 6 – Practices: which ones are risky to mention?

What practices are risky to discuss?
 Which ones we should avoid discussing?

We then looked at what practices could be discussed openly, which ones are better avoided (or for which ones we should take extra care).

Which practices could be discussed?



Activity 7 – Practices: which are more accepted?

Which of the practices mentioned are likely to be accepted, at least by some groups in the community? Which ones are not?

Practices were arranged, according to their social acceptability (less accepted on the top, most accepted at the bottom)

Not Talked About	Somehow talked		Likely to talk (themselves)	Others likely to talk	Not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beating, when sex denied Blame for not doing chores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposing private parts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rape outside the family Killing Rape by military 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strangling Trafficking Touching young girls Burn with iron Women forced to stay in after physical violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rape within marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Man forcing woman to have abortion 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forced to multiple pregnancies Forced proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma if man rejects woman after an affair (without marrying) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stick Fist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blame for not doing chores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control dressing and movements of wife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not allowing business Excluding active women from participating Blaming publicly wife for husband's problems (drinking) Talking of dirty movies / songs Teasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men getting drunk leading to women being isolated insulting marriage to redress rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Husband beating wife Beating for drinking Exploit profit of woman Undesired touch Not allowing contraception

Activity 8 – Stakeholder analysis

Who could be key informants about Violence against Women?

Traditional birth assistance	Forced abortions / rape?
Traditional healers	Forced abortions / Sexual aids for men (resulting in undesired practices)
Professional health providers / Community health workers	Episodes of violence requiring medical care
Village leaders	Rape cases
Youth woman leader	Information about women
Active women in the village	
Village leader (appointed by the government)	
Village tract leader	
Elders / respected people	
Local mediators	Cases of violence that required negotiations
Teacher	
Police	
Women groups for social activities	
Religious women groups	
NGO /CBO staff	
Fellow	
<i>Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation</i>	<i>To check awareness of local situation and about findings of Violence Against Women (note: sometimes the women that are part of MWF do not even know they are representatives)</i>
<i>Myanmar Maternal and Child Health Association</i>	
<i>DSW Department of Social Welfare</i>	

What groups of women we should consider?

Young girls	If <18 we would not interview, but we could interview their mothers (focus on their concerns for safety of girls / making good and safe marriage)
Single girls (if marrying age)	
Single women (never married / not likely to)	
Married women with children	
Married women without children	
Widows	
Divorced	
Girls/women with disability (mental / physical)	Interview them directly or interview their carers

Note: we discussed if class or education could be factors leading to differences in violence against women.

What groups of men should we consider?

Married / mature	
Not married / young	

Activity 9 – How to introduce our visit with people?

Role-play on how to introduce the interview topic. One person is the interviewee, one the interviewer. The interviewer introduced her/himself and the purpose of the visit.

Keywords about what s/he says are put on flipcharts.

We then discussed which of these were appropriate and should be used / can be improved / not appropriate. We recognize the challenge to introduce the "violence against women" topic. We start discussing other options, and we left it as homework for participants to think about how to introduce the concept.

Day 2 - Activity 1 – Summary

We started from where we left off: how to talk about violence against women?

More ideas were provided on how to introduce the interview.

We will focus on “unacceptable behaviour” / “unwanted behaviour”. This will allow us not to describe what such behaviour is and get input from people in a more open way.

Activity 2 – What is behind violence against women?

For each occurrence of violence against women we need to think “what is behind”?

Rather than thinking about generic attitudes we will use the WAV “flower framework” (see methodology)

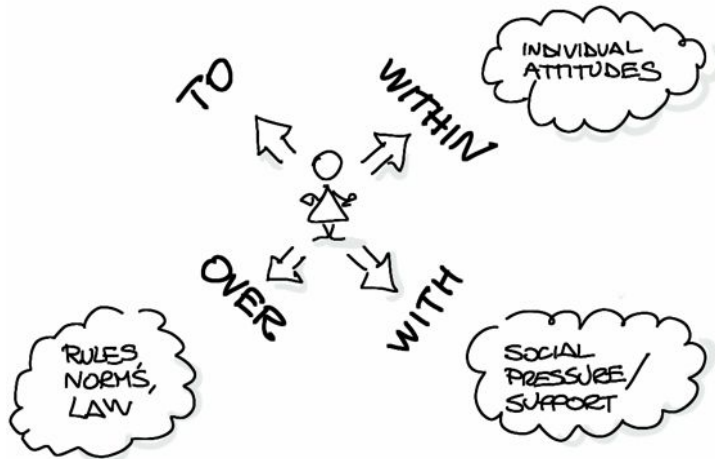
We can then link VAW to empowerment and power shifts

- What power women at risk have / do not have to resist and prevent violence?
- What power have men (or women abusers!) to exert / stop violence?
- What about other key institutional stakeholders?

The “flower framework” (summarized below) will be used to understand change.

Using a framework is important in qualitative interviews:

- It show us what we should ask, and in what order!



Having the flower in mind will be essential to explore occurrences of violence against women, or the likelihood of them happening.

Activity 3 – What questions to ask? (women)

Stress that:

We do not want to collect cases of VAW, we are here to understand attitudes.

Now we know:

- What events are interesting to look at (the practices)
- Who is likely to have something to say about it (the stakeholders)
- How we can explore the attitudes behind a practice (the flower)

The main questions

We want to discuss with you about relationships between men and women.

Which behaviours and practices are NOT acceptable and respectful of women (within the family and within the community).

Interviewing women

STARTING QUESTION

We want to discuss with you about relationships between men and women. Which behaviours and practices are NOT acceptable and respectful of women (within the family and within the community).

Can you tell me more about this?

Expand on the example given

Can you give me an example?

Give a practical example of unacceptable behaviour, to put it in context. Note: we do not want to know personal cases (e.g. names of people involved in violence). We want to have a generic illustration that make the behaviour clear to understand.

Is it happening?

Is it happening in the village?
A little? A lot?
(CAREFUL: we are not looking for cases or examples. We do not want to harm)

Did it happen to you?

Record this only if appropriate + the respondent(s) volunteer the information.
We are not looking for case studies.
If women volunteer information and are open, then maybe it is ok to discuss how an episode of violence affected them. But we can only do so for mild cases. If we encounter major cases, we should refrain from interviewing, and refer them to specialized support throughout the programme.
Do not tackle personal issues in the group if any member is uncomfortable about this.

Why can this happen?

Asking "why" can be challenging.
If needed, you can get information for specific areas of the flower with the following questions.

Is this acceptable?

How do you feel about this

Is there anything you can do about this?

Help to check "power within", individual feelings

Who could do something about this?

Who could prevent this from happening?

Help to check "power over"

What others think about this?

How others behave?

Can you have support on this?

Help to check "power with"

How does it leads in changes in your conditions?

Help to check "power to"

• *What else?*

• *Anything more you wish to share/add?*

To reveal more issues, to probe further

• *I understood from you that... is this correct?*

Probe!

Role-play:

Two groups simulate interviewing a women about beating.

Each group has a monitor, checking what questions are used.

Debriefing:

- Note taking. The note taker should record the interview verbatim, without trying to fit it in the framework, but keeping track of what is said
- The interviewer should have the framework in mind
- What matters is to focus on the attitudes behind a practice, not on the practice alone
- We quickly discussed interviews with key informants. From them we will need some general information about the situation in the area but also information about their own personal attitudes and power and willingness to engage in reducing violence against women

Activity 4 – What questions to ask? (men)

We did different simulations with men, to work out the best sequence for working.

The result is:

<p>Ask the main question <i>We want to discuss with you about relationships between men and women. Which behaviours and practices of the men are NOT acceptable and respectful of women (within the family and within the community).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Write issues, as they are mentioned, on cards ➔ Clarify the issues mentioned before writing them on card (be clear about what people really mean): “Can you clarify? Can you give us an example, to understand what you mean? (we are NOT asking for real cases, but for some examples) ➔ Check if they all agree that it is not acceptable
<p>If only a few issues are mentioned, propose other behaviours that you want to check [look back at the list of unacceptable practices we made]: “And what about this behaviour? Do you consider it acceptable?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Do not be afraid of silence... before proposing new issues, let the participants think ➔ Make a note of what behaviours had to be prompted ➔ Try to understand why the issue was not mentioned (was it hidden or forgotten?)
<p>Check if the issues mentioned happen the community or not (make a line near each card. Give a stone or a piece of paper to participants. Placing it on one side means “little”. On the other side means “a lot” (and of course, people can chose to place it in any position)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Keep track of the discussion: what reasons people are mentioning for placing the mark where they put it, as they discuss ➔ Is there easy agreement? Is there discussion? (make a note of which issues were easy to mark and which were not) ➔ If people have different opinions, do not make them argue too long! They can place two marks. Then you will ask one by one: “Why did you place it here”? So you will understand differences ➔ Always check if people are in agreement ➔ When all marks are placed, check if some should be probed. For example, if participants said that practices of violence that are generally in use are not happening Is there anything surprising? (for example, a practice you expect to be not common happens more often than other more common ones: check why) ➔ Remember: we do not only want to discover where people put the marks. We want to understand why they put it there!!!
<p>“If it is happening, then it might be acceptable in some cases here... can you tell me more?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Try to find out <i>when, by whom, and why</i> some practices are accepted (for example: they might be accepted at home but not in public... or for certain types of behaviours) ➔ Have the flower in mind when checking why they are seen sometimes as acceptable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ individual behaviours? (“Some men are bad...? Some men drink...?”) ○ group behaviour? (“All men do this when they are together...”) ○ written / unwritten rules? (“It is the woman’s fault, she should not have done... or when x happen, a man must do this”)
<p>If it is not acceptable, why can it happen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Why some not acceptable behaviours can happen and cannot be stopped? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group behaviour (“People do not get involved in family affairs”) ○ Norms: “It is wrong, but the village leader cannot stop this” ○ There is no law or way to stop this
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Always probe: “You are saying that... is it correct?” ➔ Check for more: “You said that... is there something more to add?” ➔ Check for different views: “Does everyone agree?” “You did not comment on this one... do you have a different view?”
	<p>TAKE A PICTURE AT THE END!!</p>

- As participants mention behaviours and practices, note them down on cards.
- Keep our checklist as a reference. Make sure to capture practices that are NOT in the checklist.
- If some practices that are very relevant for you are not mentioned, you could ask men, after they finish the listing, if they would want to consider including it as a not acceptable practice (did they just forget about it? Did they wanted to “hide” it? Was it not important to them? Was it acceptable to them?)
- Never imply that violence against women is acceptable, but do not judge what people say, or discuss their opinions. Only record them.

	Does this happen In this village tract community? (rarely / sometimes / often)	Additional information When and where you might consider this acceptable (e.g. only amongst husband and wife? At home? In front of relatives? In public?)
• Blame for not being a “good woman”/“wife”		
• Insult		
• Prevent movement / action		
• Slapping (light)		
• Hitting with stick		
• Beating / Hitting hard /		
• Burning		
• Killing		
• Making sexual comments / joke		
• Touching women’s body (not wife)		
• Exposing private parts		
• Having sex with false promises		
• Sex with no contraception		
• Force sex / rape		
• Incest		

The final activity is to make a plan for the first field visit.

The villages of the study.

Ta Luu Byain and Ma Ywut Chain Taung Paw (Rambre Township)

Ma Ywut Chain Taung Paw has a population of 105 HH (904 population). Most of HH rely on farming, and they have their own land. People also rely on fisheries. When family members work on the fisheries, they stay away from home for half month. The village is located 5 ½ miles east of Rambre on a small island, and accessible by road when the bamboo bridge is working. Transport is challenging. There are 12 people with disability in the village [mainly physical cases of polio, deaf, strokes and paralysis, stiffness in the limbs]. There is an associated middle school (a primary school with a few grades of secondary school, and all the children join). There is also a local clinic, but they do not have health officers there. There are two monasteries in the villages.

Overall the village is an average one. Many people – men, often followed by their wives – migrated to Thailand or Malaysia for work, especially after Cyclone Giri (2010). They are now in the process to extend (by building dams and harvesting rainwater) to grow paddy and other seasonal produce.

Ta Luu Byain has a population of -- HH (--- population). It is located 4 miles in miles North of Rambre. It is connected by road to Rambre and the road is being rebuilt. Its main livelihoods are fisheries and farming. There are no cases of people with disability in the village. The village has a primary school and had no clinic (the closest one is 2 miles away). It has a monastery.

The village is an average one. Many youth migrate abroad, including women. The village was also affected by Cyclone Giri, but with less damage.

Ta Luu Byain has tradition of young men meeting women in a isolated house to propose.

Yai Ngan West and Yai Ngan East (Meikhtila Township)

The two villages are close to each other. They are located in Meikhtila Township, in a remote area not connected by tarmac road. They are isolated from other villages and hard to access in the rainy season. Water is scarce and it is hard to access drinking water.

Yai Ngan West has 711 people (173 HH) and Yai Ngan East has 1810 people (300 HH in 220 houses).

There are people with disability in the village: [exact number to be checked with social map]

Most of the people in the village are casual laborers. They earn their livelihood by breaking stones, which will be sold for road construction. Only few people rely on farming (e.g. cotton, beans, chilli, tomatoes, sesami). Mat making is also a source of income for some households in the village. Some people went to the Chinese and Thai border for work. A very small minority of people own a farm and have livestock. Some work as brokers for selling animals. There are a few small shops in the village. In terms of incomes, they are overall a very poor village compared with others in the area.

There are also limited services. There is a primary school in the East village, which is used by children of both villages. There is no secondary school, and most children do not continue education. There is a Mone Tine Rural Health Centre in the village. There are no decentralized authorities in the village: the Village Leader is solely responsible.

We became aware of several cases of rape in Yai Ngan West (all solved with compensation), and of one case of attempted trafficking of two young women.