

Evaluation Report

Project: **“Training on counseling skills against domestic violence for staff of Women Union”**

I. General introduction of the project:

I.1 Current situation on gender-based violence at Ta Xua

Ta Xua is a third- area commune of Bac Yen District, Son La Province. It is 14.5km from Bac Yen Town as Phiang Ban – Ta Xua way, and 7.5km as airway. Ta Xua commune lies at 1280m height from the ground. It has the natural area of 176.8km² with around 3,665 people (about 426 households). 100% of people in the commune are of H'Mong ethnic minority group. The economy of this commune is underdeveloped, mainly closed agriculture. The awareness of people here is very low.

Women union of the commune has 17 branches with 954 members as the total number. Participating in the management board of the union are 17 women. They are very enthusiastic and responsible in making lives of women here better.

In term of gender relation, women are discriminated heavily. The concept of **“girl is others’ daughter, giving birth to daughter is bringing up for others, just wasting rice and food of the family”** is inherited from one generation to others. Originating from that concept, parents discriminate between son and daughter right from the time children were born. Sons are given more care and consideration; daughters are left there to grow up themselves. By the age of school, boys go to school to learn but girls have to stay home to work hard to pay in return to parents’ care before going to get married. At present, among the total number of 342 pupils of primary and secondary school of TaXua commune, there are only 21 girl pupils (0.06%). It is resulted in the fact that most of women here do not know the compulsory language, even including women union staff of the commune.

Women here tolerate a slavery life. With an innocent belief of men’s power which is “men’s head is bigger so whatever they say, we have to follow. They tell us to go fast, we go fast; They ask us to stay home, we stay home. If we do not follow, they’ll hit”. According to the women’s words in the this commune, they have to work hard continuously 20 hours a day including 10 hours working on the terrace field. The rest time they do housework and embroider clothes until “their eyes so closed that they cannot open, they go to bed”. If the load of work is divided into 10 parts, then almost all of men do one part; the rest 9 parts are burdened on women. Husband who cover 3 parts are considered very excellent. However, the rate of such “excellent husbands” in Ta Xua is not high. Right from the time women were born, they were taught by their parents and grandparents that “follow what husband say, do what husband teach, if there’s any food, men will eat first; any part left by men, then women eat”. Women themselves beware that “it is very unequal and inferior that way, but we do not dare to speak out, then we have to suffer”. This suffering is also raised from the H'Mong’s viewpoint which is “women are stupid and

nonsense, so they have to tolerate, accept even if they are not consent with. Power belongs to men”.

It is clear that women in TaXua commune have to suffer from losses due to overloading work as well as under violence of men, but they are not confident enough to speak out their cases. This is one of signs of gender inequality. The consequences of gender inequality not only have impact on the security, economy and society but also seriously influence on women’s health and life. Only for the last 6 month of the year 2003, there is a total of 6 women committed suicide due to husbands’ violence in the commune. It can be said that the condition of violence against women in Ta Xua commune is of emergency and needed to deal with. It requires the concern and consideration of different governmental bodies, branches, union, social organizations as well as individuals.

I.2 Activities of the project:

Under the real condition of the above-mentioned violence in Ta Xua and under the sponsorship of the Ethnic Minority Working Group, CSAGA implemented the project of **“Training on counseling skills against domestic violence for women union staff” in Ta Xua commune, Bac yen District, Son La Province** from January 1 to April 30, 2004.

The goal of this project is to primarily improve women union staffs’ capacity in prevention of domestic violence.

In order to achieve the targeted goal, CSAGA carried out the 2 following activities:

1. 5-day training on counseling skills against domestic violence for 17 women union staff in Ta Xua commune (from 15 to 19 March, 2004).
2. Seminar to share experience of post-training applications at Ta Xua commune (26 April, 2004).

II. Activities:

1. **5-day training on counseling skills against domestic violence for 17 women union staff in Ta Xua commune (from 15 to 19 March, 2004)**

Results of this activity includes:

1. The training course drew the enthusiastic participation of trainees. The number of participants reached 21 people, 4 people more than expected. Although the course lasted 5 days, trainees were very busy; they all fully participated in the course.
2. Most of trainees mastered the basic knowledge on gender-based domestic violence. 100% of trainees had correct answers on the concept of domestic violence when they were questioned. When two trainers gave the exercise to define the circumstance of gender-based violence, most of trainees defined correctly circumstances of gender-based violence. Besides, trainees linked to the fact at the locality by giving specific examples and analyze them. More than that, they analyzed the causes and effects of those particular cases.
3. Basic counseling skills were provided during the training course were very useful for trainees in their social activities, especially in supporting victims of gender-based violence. Intensive listening skill helps trainees understand the importance of listening and how to listen effectively. Responsive skill

helps trainees grasp the role of using emotional response and information response in supporting victims of gender-based violence. Questioning skill in counseling sessions on violence helps trainees understand better about the case of victim. By that they can make better suggestions, solutions. In general, after the course, trainees can do better in supporting victims of gender-based violence by these counseling skills.

4. Trainees realized the real value of women. They used to always think that, only men are valuable. Women were born to serve men, to be men's shadow. When women get married, they will belong to husband's family and when they die, they will be the ghosts of husband's family. Right after the farewell party of the training course, they sat together with men officers of the commune. One more special thing is that they pour wine and cheer with men – an action rarely seen at women at this place.
5. Trainees together built a plan of action in countering violence. After the course they will hold meeting of women in the Hamlet and disseminate the content of course aiming to help women understand what violence is, its causes and results and especially the necessity to raise their voice against gender-based violence. At the same time, they will re-disseminate to their husbands and children so that they can improve the condition of violence right in their families. Besides, they will approach to victims of gender-based violence to help them gradually escape from violence. Especially, they will encourage relevant bodies, organs and union to join them in prevention of gender-based violence at locality.
6. Trainers grasped the real overview of violence at locality. During the course, trainees opened their mind to talk about their own cases as well as cases of women in their hamlet. When discussing about the causes and results of domestic violence, trainers were able to know that at a certain extent of violence, most of women in this commune are victims of violence. A surprising finding in the last 6 months of the year 2003, 6 victims of gender-based violence found the solution to their problems by committing suicide.

These above-mentioned results were achieved by the following reasons:

Firstly, the training course had the enthusiastic approval of the management board of Bac Yen District in general and in Ta Xua commune in particular. The management board of the District appointed Ms. Mua Thi May – Head of the District Women Union join with two trainers throughout the course. The management board of the commune appointed the communal secretary to make opening speech to encourage women's aspiration. And especially the Ministry of Labor has done very good work with husbands' mind. It created a favorable condition for trainees to fully participate into the course.

If the local management board highly supported, it was because:

- The management board understands clearly the effects of gender inequality in general and gender-based violence in particular via training courses on Gender at locality.
- The management board understands the real situation of gender-based violence at locality and always wishes to solve this problem.

- Content of the training course provided by CSAGA contributed along with them to cope with gender-based violence

Secondly, the content of the training course meet the concern of trainees. Most of trainees in the training course somehow are victims of gender-based violence. However, they do not know that they are suffering from violence. They do not know what rights they are entitled with. They do not know what rules and regulations are in the law against gender-based violence. They are wishing to escape from the current life, but they do not know to face their problems. Therefore, the training course seems to be the key to the problem that they are looking for.

The content of the training course was fitted with the demand of trainees mainly because of the report on the real situation of gender-based violence at locality of women union in Bac Yen District. In addition, exchanging talks via telephone between Women Union officer of Bac Yen and CSAGA's project officer on gender-based violence problem also brought about good suggestion to build the content of the training program.

The third reason was the assistance of the Head of Bac yen Women Union as an interpreter. 100% of trainees in the training class are of H'Mong ethnic minority group. They do not know Kinh and are illiterate. Two trainers of CSAGA are Kinh; they do not know H'Mong language. Therefore, trainees and trainers would not be able to work with each other without the assistance of the Head of Bac yen Women Union.

Last but not least, the methodology was chosen in appropriation with the content as well as the target group of the training course. Learning via practical experience method drew 100% participation of trainees because most of them once was victims of gender-based violence or witnessed cases of gender-based violence. Experiencing helps them re-imagine and think twice what they had done or witnessed in their lives. Basing on that, they analyze, draw out lesson learnt and think of ways to apply those lessons into life. Using the illustrating pictures and photographs, acting drama, and playing games also helped create an open, friendly, close and delightful atmosphere and especially, helped trainees understand most quickly what trainers want to impart. The flexible application of training skills created an atmosphere of discussion forum rather than a mere training.

Apart from above-mentioned results, the training course still remains several limits as followed:

1. Trainees didn't have chance to practice much on counseling against gender-based violence. The timeline of the training course was enough only for imparting basic contents and knowledge on counseling skills against violence. This was because trainers and trainees were not able to understand each other directly without the interpreter.
2. The training class did not have the participation of men, a very important object in addressing gender-based violence. It is not enough to solve the problem when only women understand about gender-based violence, its causes and effects along with the necessity to raise their voice against violence. Moreover, in term of domestic violence at locality, women and children are being direct victims of violence. It is very difficult for them to find the equality for themselves without the support of men.

2. Seminar to share experience of post-training applications at Ta Xua commune (26 April, 2004)

After the course in March 2004, trainees have applied knowledge learnt into local fact as followed:

1. Knowledge of the training course was publicized to other women in the commune. Women in the Women Union “shared the knowledge that the two teachers imparted, with other women. They all see that it is so true with their sorrows”. A woman when looking at an illustrating picture (husband hit wife) did not keep her tears. Trainees said that knowledge of the training course is very useful; because this was the first time in their life they’ve ever learnt so thoroughly, approached to so interesting knowledge. That was the first time these mountainous Ta Xua women were paid attention, were provided with knowledge on domestic violence. Therefore, they feel that they were shared, understood and together understood thoroughly the sorrows that they have to suffer.
2. When women beware of violence in general and its effects in particular, they share with each other more. In the past, whenever women here were hit or badly treated by their husbands, they just themselves went lonely to the forest to cry painfully and wanted to find Ngon leaves to end up their current stalemate life. At present, staffs of Women Union are more active in helping victims of violence. Women here start to feel more confident in raising their voice against violence by getting the assistance of women union officers.
3. Trainees start to apply knowledge learnt to help victims of violence.

Case 1: The husband is Lu A Pa Chu; Wife is Mua Thi Si. The husband was a heavy drinker. Whenever he drank, he spoke unconsciously, reprimanded and hit wife and children. When it was between-crop period, there was no rice or corn left in the house, he forced his wife to go to find. If she were not able to find out, he would hit her. Being hit by her husband, Mrs.Si just dared to run away but not against him. Sometime she was so scared that she ran into the wood. Her children went to find her for fear that she would eat Ngon leaves to commit suicide at muddle-headed time. The mother and children hold other crying; thinking of the children, she came back home. The chief of the Village, women union officers who came to help and advise him were also reprimanded and hit. How to help her escape from violence?

Women in Women Union came to help Mrs.Si. They listened to her, shared with her and encouraged her. They provided her with information relating to violence such as effects of violence, the rights of women etc. They initially helped her to speak out her case, eased her stressful and sorrowful mind. And the important thing was that she no longer went into the wood alone and thought of eating Ngon leaves to commit suicide whenever being hit by husband.

Case 2: The husband is Mua A Chua, the wife is Vang Thi Cu. The husband usually hit the wife. One day, the wife went to the field with her aunt and told her aunt about her hard and miserable life in the husband’s family. Unfortunately, the husband heard of that, he used the hoe to hit right at the field. The aunt was so scared that she went away. The wife was hit at the bottom, back until she collapsed. Mrs.Mua Thi May (Head of the branch of Women Union at Mong Vang Village) and her husband Mua A Thao (Head of the Village) also

worked near there. Knowing that there was scuffle, they came to restrain but the husband said: “It’s none of your business. She’s my wife. If I hit her, I am not imprisoned. Can you imprison me?”. Mrs.Du explained to him: “It’s illegal to hit women”. After that, Mr.Mua A Thao took the husband away, and Mrs.Du took the wife home, took care of her and consoled her, then help both of them to reconcile with each other. Last year, at the time when the Tet holiday was coming (Tet holiday of H’Mong people), the husband told the wife to go to work at the terrace field, yet the wife wanted to stay home to tailor a dress to the daughter so that she would be happy to go out with her friends. The husband did not need to listen to her explanation, and he reprimanded loudly “Don’t you follow what I said? Do you want to be hit?”. Then he grabbed her hair and hit her, slapped on her face, even took his paring knife was about to cut her. Fortunately, people restrained in time. Mrs.Cu came to get help of Women Union many times but by that way her husband also hit her. She was so miserable but she did not know how to face it. She felt a stalemate, living is so hard but committing suicide will make her children orphans.

Members of Women Union realized that this was a serious case of violence. The husband was so severe that he could hit the wife at any time he wanted. Members of women union also went to console Mrs.Cu. They discussed with Mrs.Cu that she would ask relatives’ opinions (a norm of H’Mong people), or took her case to communal level, or she would go to her mother’s home or otherwise. But when relatives dissuaded, the husband got rage and reprimanded his wife “Did they make love with you already so they helped you”. She was so resent that she went to the commune to ask for intervention. After explaining her case to the communal officers, the communal officers reconciled her family and invited the husband to the communal office to coach, and they told her that if he was not to change, they would let her go to her mother’s house with her children and all possession that she had made up.

After that time, she was no longer hit by her husband but her husband got married to another wife and forced her to agree. However, he was not able to afford the demand’s gift of 6 millions of the 2nd wife’s family, this wife lived only a period of time and went away. Mrs.Cu’s life was temporarily peaceful!!!

Via these 2 cases, CSAGA’s officers observed that trainees of the course initially bewared that “Violence is wrong and unacceptable. Hitting women is illegal and violates human rights. And it is necessary to raise the voice to counter violence”. Women here have raised their voice and fight against violence. However, by their support to cases of violence, it is easy to realize one thing that the application of knowledge and skills learnt from the course has not been effective. They have purely come to share, listen, console, and encourage victims. They have not been able to create an effective supporting network for the victims of violence.

The reasons for these remains are:

1. The new training course provided fundamental knowledge and skills relating to gender-based violence.
2. The level of awareness of trainees is low
3. In fact, the voice of women at locality is looked down
4. Most of violators are not aware of violence and its effects
5. There was not a cooperation among relevant bodies, organs, branches in addressing violence

6. Women Union officers did not have a close support from experts of violence during the process of applying knowledge into practice.

Through the seminar, trainees also said that the training course received an enthusiastic support of women and children in the commune. When trainees retold their children about what they had been trained, the children were very happy and delighted. They encouraged their mothers to join into more activities like that in order to enlarge knowledge. Besides, a number of husbands also supported them.

However, many husbands still expressed their unsupportive behavior, even threatened “You are good, and you are trained, then do you want to lead? Do you to be hit?”

In conclusion, the application of knowledge and skills of the training course into practice at locality still remains a difficulty to Women Union officers at Ta Xua Commune.

III. Conclusion and recommendation:

In general, the project achieved its targeted goal. Trainees’ capacity in addressing gender-based violence has been initially improved thanks to the fundamental knowledge and skills relating to countering gender-based violence. Trainees have a clearer view on the condition of gender-based violence at their locality and bring into full play their creativeness in the training course. However, this project was just a primary step in the fight against gender-based violence. The training course and post-training seminar alone were not enough to prove that after the training course Women Union staffs are competent enough to address gender-based violence.

In order to achieve better effectiveness of the project, CSAGA proposed the following recommendations:

- It is necessary to have the participation of men into the project (about 30% of the total number of the project’s objectives)
- Give more time to practice
- Provide more experts in violence to supervise and support trainees in applying knowledge into practice
- It is necessary to have the direct participation of leaders of commune
- Bring into full play good points such as: support of the Ministry of Labor, the appropriation between the content and demand as well as choice of training methodology.

In addition to these, to solve the problem of gender-based violence here, it is essential to have mass actions at the same time with this project such as:

1. Doing communication to increase awareness of gender equality in general and gender-based violence in particular;
2. Establishing counseling office to support victims of gender-based violence;
3. Building a supporting network to prevent violence;
4. And especially support of functional bodies, organizations, unions and associations concerning gender-based violence.

