



# INTIMATE PARTNERS LEARN ABOUT HEALTHY MASCULINITY

## INTERVENTION BRIEF

### SAMVEDANA PLUS: PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



I was feeling weak. The sessions made me aware that alcohol and tobacco were affecting my health. I got tested for HIV and the result was negative. But the fear encouraged me to use condoms with my partners. Sex is less satisfying but I continue to use it as I am afraid of getting sick.”

BASAVARAJ, 36-YEAR-OLD AGRICULTURAL LABOURER, BAGALKOT DISTRICT

Samvedana Plus provides individual and couple counselling and holds workshops for the intimate partners (IPs) of female sex workers (FSWs). It aims to make men more sensitive and responsible in their relationships and treat the sex workers with respect as equals.

## How are the intimate partners identified?

Sex workers enumerated through the baseline survey are asked to identify their intimate partners (IPs). The list of IPs is verified by the research team and finalised for intervention.

## How are the IPs reached?

Male outreach workers (ORWs) are recruited and trained in gender, preventing intimate partner violence and HIV/sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and working with community-based organisations (CBOs). A total of four ORWs manage a total of 400 IPs at a ratio of 1 ORW to 100 IPs. The ORWs also receive training in conducting counselling and group sessions with the IPs.

## In what ways does the programme engage IPs?

### 1. Outreach

ORWs collect contact information for IPs from their FSW partners. The programme team prioritise those IPs whose FSW partners report high levels of violence and alcohol use.

ORWs agree the location and time for meetings in discussion with the IPs. They usually meet in the market, a pan shop or a hotel chosen by the IP. It takes about three or four visits to build rapport. The ORW aims to meet each IP at least once a month.

At the initial visit, the ORW explains the project objectives and the ways in which project will help the man have a better, healthy relationship with his FSW partner. On subsequent visits, the IP generally begins to open up about his life and problems. ORWs use individual outreach to:

- identify the counselling needs of IPs
- recommend an integrated counselling and testing centre (ICTC) for those who need STI/HIV services



- discuss the importance of condom use and demonstrate how to use them
- agree a time for the IP to attend a group session

### 2. Individual counselling

To identify and prioritise IPs for counselling, ORWs judge by their own interactions with the IPs during individual outreach as well as reports from their FSW partners on levels of violence and alcoholism or difficulty in using condoms. Date and time for counselling is fixed in consultation with the IP during outreach.

Because they are also trained as counsellors, the ORWs provide counselling support to the men. Typical areas of discussion are:

- gender and equity
- condom use
- laws on violence against women and intimate partner violence as a punishable offence

### 3. Couple counselling

Couple counselling is offered on the basis of need basis, either as identified by the ORWs during outreach or as requested by the FSWs. The IPs of those FSWs who report violence, alcohol-related conflict and difficulty in condom use are invited for couple counselling along with their FSW partner. The key objective is to resolve the conflicts in the relationship. Male and female ORWs counsel the IP–FSW partners together, typically held at the FSW's house.

### 4. Group sessions

Only those IPs whose FSW partners have undergone six group sessions are chosen to attend the group sessions for IPs. The programme team along with external experts developed a manual for conducting the sessions. ORWs are trained in conducting the sessions and each ORW conducts sessions for four groups.

A group, with typically around 25 IPs, participates in a two-day non-residential workshop. In a total of six sessions, each of two to three hours in length and using participatory methods such as role play, the group discusses:

- building trust and communication in relationships
- loving and changing ourselves
- understanding violence
- reducing risks of violence and STI/HIV in intimate relationships

A total of 14 groups of IPs had been trained by mid-2016.

### 5. Links to services

During individual outreach and with reference to information from FSW partners, ORWs identify those IPs who may need STI/HIV services. They then encourage the IPs to visit the ICTC for testing and treatment services. ORWs follow up on the clinical visits of those IPs found to be infected. This reinforces individual outreach efforts to encourage and demonstrate condom use and to distribute condoms to IPs.

### 6. Couple events

These are organised to enable couples to interact with each other and enjoy leisure time with their partners. They are held at the block level at the office of the CBO.

During individual outreach, ORWs invite those FSW-IP couples who have completed the group sessions to attend the event. Games, role plays and expert speeches reinforce messages on healthy and violence free relationships, and ORWs give information on the Domestic Violence Act.

Two couple events were held in 2015 with 31 couples in attendance.

### How does the Samvedana Plus team track the work with female sex workers?

The team fills in a number of key tracking documents.

DOCUMENT	RECORDS
Outreach and counselling reports	date, time and points of discussion and resolution during these interactions
Individual IP files	history of violence, condom use, access to clinical services and any other engagement with the programme
Group session reports	date and time of the sessions, names of the facilitator and participants, and points of discussion

### Challenges

FSWs tend to have more than one IP, which makes it difficult to identify and choose an IP for the intervention.

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