

# Family Dynamics and Family Violence Conference “Spaces for Change”

10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2007

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Independent Human Rights Commission



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# Presentation Outline

- Overall aims of the research
- Methodology
- Key findings
  - Factors associated with violence in the family
  - Spaces for change
- Family stories
  - Masoma Family: *Direct control, indirect violence?*
  - Samandar Family: *Breaking the cycle of violence*
  - Sakina Family: *Finding support: health workers, natal family and community elders*
- Conclusions from family stories
  - Blame and responsibility
  - Breaking the cycle of violence
  - Violence to children
  - Spaces for support
- Questions
- Instructions for working groups

# Research Aims and Objectives

- To investigate the changing nature of family structure and dynamics in Afghanistan
- To discover what types and forms of family violence are seen as appropriate and legitimate
- To investigate how specific family dynamics affect violence in the family
- To identify underlying causes of family violence
- To understand the key stressors or individual characteristics most strongly related with violent behaviour and acceptance of this behaviour among family members

# Research Focus

## What the research is interested in:

- Opinions and attitudes toward violence in the family: what forms of violence and by whom are seen as acceptable?
- In-depth family case studies and individual's stories
- Where spaces for support can be found and where families co-operate
- "Everyday violence" in the family
- The family, not just the household

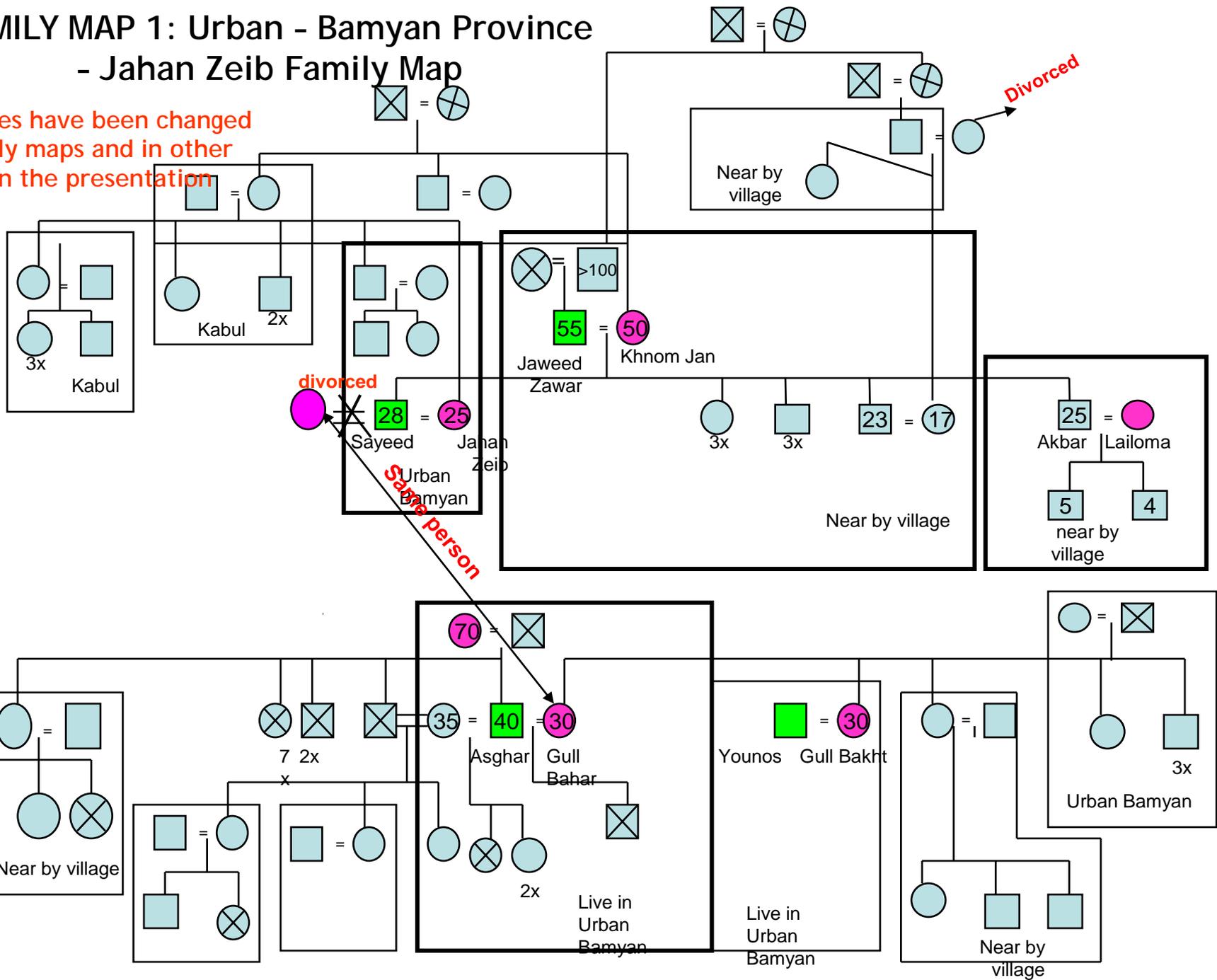
## What the research is not:

- A prevalence study that counts the number of incidents, or different types of violence in the family
- A collection of "sad stories"
- Only interested in conflict in families

# FAMILY MAP 1: Urban - Bamyán Province

## - Jahan Zeib Family Map

All names have been changed on family maps and in other places in the presentation



# Research Methodology

- Difficulties in comparing data across provinces
  - different teams in each province
  - varying cultures of interaction and communication in each province
- Qualitative (not quantitative)
  - not a prevalence study
  - aiming to get a deep understanding of changing dynamics within Afghan families and the reasons for violence and spaces for change related to struggles against violence in the family
- Multiple open-ended research methods to allow:
  - respondents to define what they see as important regarding gender and generational dynamics; and
  - to prevent inappropriate anticipation of the full range of experience of those being researched
- Flexible and responsive to the dynamics of the field and the data as revealed
- Focus on the necessity of understanding family dynamics in order to understand violence in the family

# Research Methods, Data Collection

## Research Methods

- 46 key informant interviews
- case study families
  - 319 semi-structured interviews across the 61 families
- focus group discussions
  - 28 with men
  - 28 with women
- informal conversations and observations

## Primary Purpose of method

- Gather generalised information about communities
- Identify case study families
- Understand the changing dynamics in individual families
- Identify reasons and causes for violence in individual families
- Understand the complex relationships between individual family members
- Gather generalised information regarding violence in the family
  - What types of violence are accepted and commonplace
  - What types of violence are acceptable
  - How do people talk about and discuss violence in the family?
- Build trust between respondents and researchers
- Give research teams the opportunity to report the things they see happening in the families and communities

# Context: Research Sites

- 4 provinces Bamiyan, Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar: 1 urban and 1 rural site in each province
- **Bamiyan**
  - **Urban:** new settlement of people displaced during Taliban attacks in the area, many previously lived in rural Bamiyan. Typical occupations include: casual labourers, small shopkeepers, drivers. Carpet weaving is common; usually undertaken by women and children. All residents are Hazara.
  - **Rural:** very badly effected by Taliban attacks; all villagers forced to leave. Most remained internally displaced and returned to village after ousting of Taliban. People make their livelihoods from animal husbandry, agriculture and carpet weaving. Wealth levels vary across villages. All residents are Hazara.
- **Kabul**
  - **Urban:** mountain side settlement, mixed economic status although majority working class. Typical occupations include; casual labourers, government employees, drivers, shopkeepers. Many residents are returnees from Pakistan and migrants from other areas of Afghanistan. Mixed ethnic area
  - **Rural:**.. Heavily bombed during the to. Substantial wealth differentials across village. Livelihoods: trade and agriculture. Majority of villagers are Arab..
- **Herat**
  - **Urban:** heavily bombed during; many people migrated out of the area. Poor area in general although some families are quite economically comfortable, for example, some own sizeable land in rural areas or own a shop. Poorer families reliant on men's casual labour work, hand cart pulling. Women economic activity primarily involves stitching quilts. Mixed ethnic area, but most residents TAJIK
  - **Rural:** most people are wealthier than their urban counterparts making their livelihoods from agriculture and livestock. During the Soviet-Mujahideen war the village was heavily bombed and most residents fled to a neighbouring province. Residents are all Tajik.
- **Nanagahar**
  - **Urban:** probably the poorest area. Many returnees from Pakistan and migrants from other provinces. Typical occupations: small shopkeepers, guards, drivers and casual labourers. Most residents are pashtoon, with a few Tajik families.
  - **Rural:** Large mixed economy village but wealthier families than those living in the urban area. Livelihoods include: agriculture, animal husbandry, causal labour work, trading and driving. Many villagers migrated to Pakistan during the Soviet-Mujahideenwar.

# Key Findings: factors influencing forms and levels of violence in the family

- Violence exists in varying degrees in all the different families where the research was conducted:
  - In wealthier, middle income and poor families
  - In families with members who have had a lot of formal education and those whose members received no formal education
- While some families who have suffered traumatic experiences during war and migration have high levels of violence, many others have relatively low levels of violence
- Members of the same families can have different attitudes to and practices regarding violence toward women and children

# Key Findings: factors influencing forms and levels of violence in the family

- The extent to which forms and levels of violence are seen as acceptable; seen as justified or a morally correct way of behaving
- The extent to which forms and levels of violence are accepted; common place; normalised and largely go unchallenged in the community
- Feelings of stress and frustration on the part of the perpetrator
- Individual personal experiences, in particular experiences around violence as a child
- Marriage practices and decision making processes around marriage
- A lack of knowledge regarding alternative methods for disciplining children

# Spaces for Change

- Violence is less acceptable than accepted
- People recognise the harm that violence causes (including both long and short term physical and psychological damage)
- Family violence is less private than often portrayed
- Support within the family exists
- Family violence is perceived to have decreased over the last generation or so (and this is considered a good thing)
- Cultural norms are in flux; constantly changing and evolving
- Individuals hold positive, constructive opinions that run counter to negative, destructive cultural norms and practices

# Spaces for Change: violence is less acceptable than it is accepted

*“Beating [children] is very common, but it isn’t the correct way. It is 100 percent wrong.” — older woman, Herat*

*“Beating is a custom in our community. But women shouldn’t be beaten. But stupid people like me beat their wives. I beat my wife when I bring a guest home and the door is closed and she is not at home... if she says to me there is nothing at home to cook for the guest... if she can’t bring anything from my neighbour’s house for the guest, I beat her.” — man in mid-30s, Bamiyan city*

The disjuncture between expressed personal opinions and action:

*“Now the people may beat but less than the past. Beating is just a barbarism against the women, nothing else. They should not be beaten.”*

*“I think beating can’t bring about any development or improvement in the family.”*

*“I myself beat my wife when I have a guest and the food is burned or she brings the food late. Definitely I beat my wife when she burns the food or she doesn’t behave with children or neighbours well. When women do these things, they are commonly beaten.” - older man during a focus group discussion, Bamiyan*

Family violence is perceived to have decreased over time.

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Almost all respondents reported that violence has decreased overtime due to:

- Migration: both internal and external
- Media
- Better living conditions
- Women learning about their rights  
(Bamiyan, principally because of the AIHRC)

# Violence to both women and children was discussed in many different ways in the community

- Conversations were had in focus group discussions with people from similar demographic and social backgrounds who strongly disagreed with each other about the acceptability of violence in the family
- Often people changed their minds during successive interviews and over the course of an FGD
- Cultural norms are always in flux; perpetually changing, developing and contested

# Recognition of the harm of violence in the family

- The harm caused by violence to children – both immediate physical injury and longer term physical disability – is well recognised
- The psychological damage caused by violence to children and the harm that violence in the family does to children is also recognised:  
*“If I beat her, her husband will beat her when she gets married so it is not good... If I beat her, her husband, sister-in-law, mother-in-law and her father-in-law will beat her in her house and she will become oppressed.”*  
– woman in her 30s in Bamiyan
- There is also recognition of the harm violence to women causes – although discussed more by female than male respondents

# Family violence is less private than often portrayed

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- Neighbours, at times, intervene in disputes
- Community elders and extended family mediate in disputes between family members
- Respondents were willing to talk publicly in focus group discussions about the violence happening in their own families

# Spaces for Change

## Differences in personal opinions and cultural norms

*“This is our tradition although I know the consequences are bad, but what can we do... Neither exchange with girls or money are good. It is totally unacceptable, but what can we do, this is our culture and custom... Everyone complains about exchanges using money and exchanging girls’ — older woman, Nangarhar province.*

*‘I didn’t want to marry my sister-in-law... Actually my mind couldn’t accept that my sister-in-law will be my wife. On the other hand we can’t tell a widow to leave the house and we don’t allow our widows to marry with someone else. I was obligated... what to do this is our culture and there was not any other alternative’ — man in his thirties, urban Nangarhar*

# Masoma Family

Direct Control — Indirect Violence?

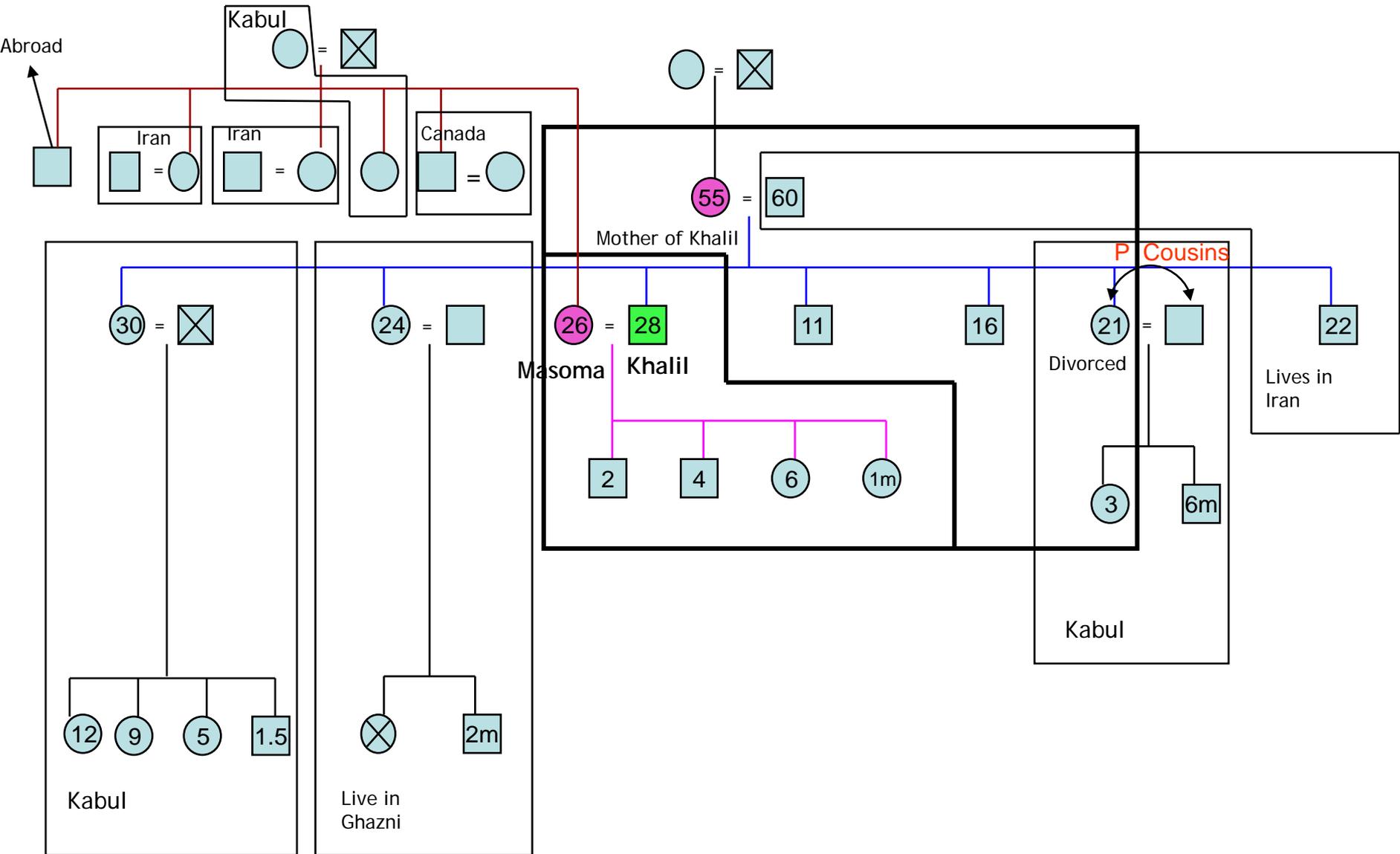
Urban Kabul

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Saghar  
Senior Research Assistant  
Kabul Research Team

All names have been changed on family maps and in other places in the presentation

# Urban - Kabul - Masoma's Family Map



# Family Characteristics

- Middle-income family
  - Masoma's household income: Masoma's earnings as a teacher and Khalil's from owning a shop;
  - Khalil's mother receives remittances from her husband in Iran
- Masoma is educated up to 12th grade; Khalil perhaps had some minimal education; Khalil's young brothers and Masoma's daughter are in school; both of Khalil's parents are illiterate.
- Khalil's family migrated to Iran in the early 1990s.

# Marriage Decisions: *motivations*

- **Masoma's reasons for wanting to marry:**
  - To give her more opportunities in life
  - Bored from doing all the house work for her family
  - Restrictions of the Taliban regime
  - Knew about Iran as she has sisters married and living there
  - Her father-in-law promised her that if she marries his sons she will be able to go to Iran and continue her studies in Iran. Wanted to move to Iran (Married sister in Iran)
- **Father-in-law's reasons for getting his sons married quickly:**
  - To prevent Khalil (Masoma's husband) from marrying a woman the family disapproves of
  - Khalil was already having some form of relationship with this woman
- **Khalil's mother not involved in decisions around Khalil's marriage**
- **Khalil being "forced" to marry Masoma when he wanted to marry someone else has been a major cause of the violence he inflicts upon Masoma**

## Masoma's Reasons for Marrying

*"I hadn't seen him before [we were married]... [But] I wanted to marry because I was bored with cooking bolani. And the other reason was that my three elder sisters were living in Iran and I wanted to leave Afghanistan. Also my father-in-law had promised me a lot of good things, if I marry his son, if I marry with his son he said he would take me to Iran and he would let me go to school and college there. Because of this I was very keen to marry my husband." – Masoma*

# Power Dynamics in the Family: mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

- Mother-in-law's control and influence
  - Key decision maker in the family; all household decisions have to be approved by her
  - Ability to manipulate and influence her son's behaviour
- Masoma resists her mother-in-law
  - She is educated and earns her own income
- Maintaining control, struggling for control: mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

*"My mother-in-law said to my husband, tell your wife to ask me whenever she wants to go somewhere. Actually my mother-in-law wants to keep everything in her control, like her husband and her sons are under her control and they can not say anything to her. My mother-in-law wants me to also be under her control and to not go out without her permission. Even she wants me to ask her permission when I want to eat something, that I can not do and because of this there is fighting and conflict between us." Masoma*

# Power Dynamics in the Family: women, husbands, mothers-in-law

- Masoma blames her mother-in-law for her brother-in-law's behavior
- Masoma blames her mother-in-law for her husband's violence *"I know my husband never want to beat me and my children but his mother and brother made him to beat me and my children."* -Masooma
- Masoma blames her mother-in-law for her father-in-law's violence *"My mother-in-law asked my father-in-law to slap me and my father-in-law he beat me because of my mother-in-law."* - Masooma

# Power Dynamics in the Family: taking responsibility

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- A man cannot resist the demands other members of the family put on him to be violent to his wife?
- Why are men relieved of responsibility for their violent actions?
- Why do women blame other women for men's violent behavior toward them?

# Violence between adults: violence to children

*“I feel some changes have come in me, because at the beginning of my married life when my mother-in-law said something to me I used to reply to her using the same words that she was using. But now when my mother-in-law starts fighting and using bad words I do not say anything... And before when [my in-laws] would beat my children I would fight with that person. But now I do not care about it. And sometimes when my brother-in-law or my mother-in-law beats my children I start beating my children as well because of them.” - Masoma*

# Samandar's family

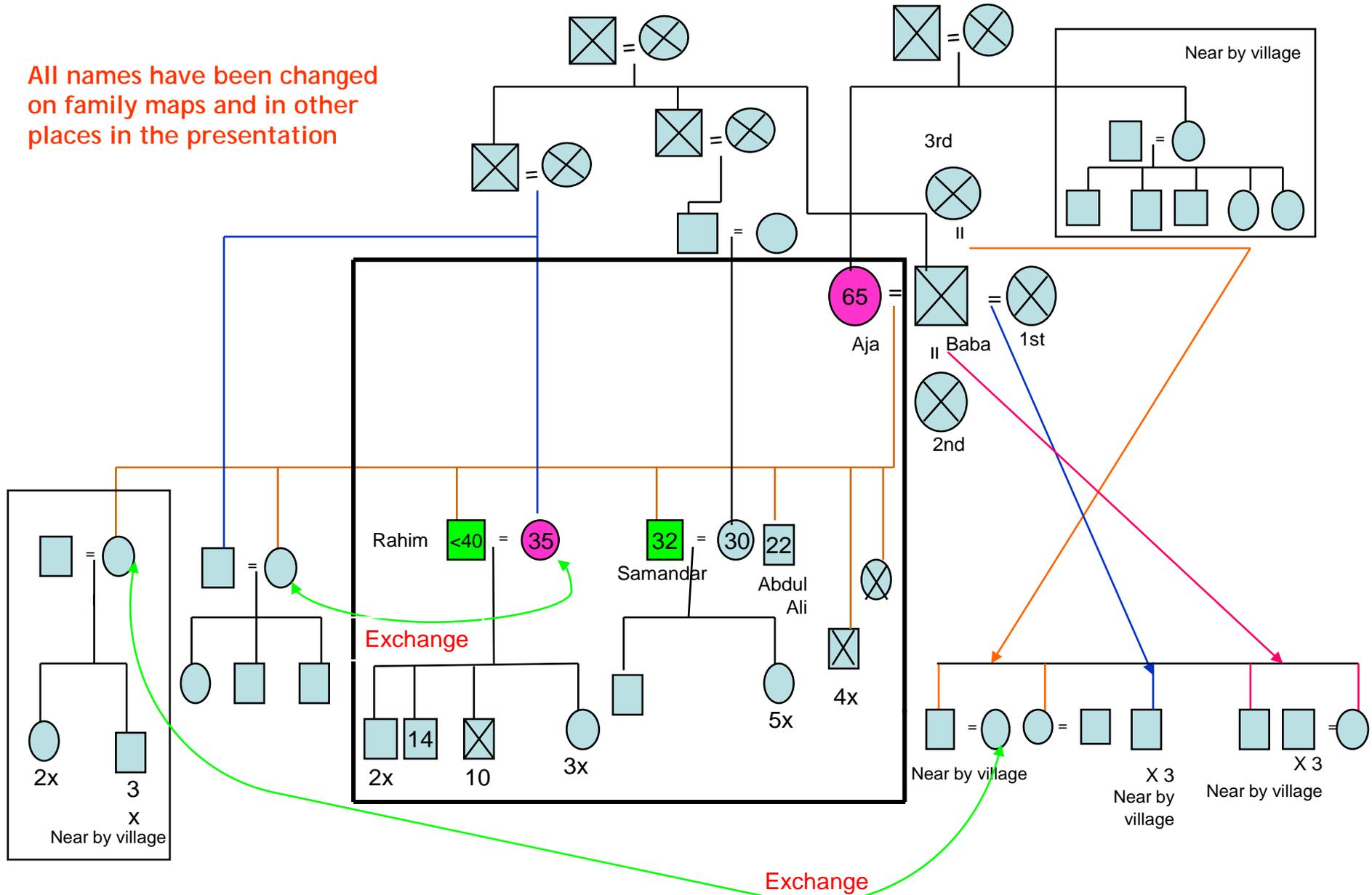
Breaking the Cycle of Violence  
Rural Bamiyan

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Wafaey  
Research Assistant  
Bamiyan Research Team

# Rural Bamyan - Samandar's Family Map

All names have been changed on family maps and in other places in the presentation



# Family Characteristics

- Relatively wealthy family
  - Owning land and livestock
- Influential family
  - Baba, was the Arbab of the village
- Limited education in the family
  - Aja is illiterate
  - One brother has had some education
  - All the children go to school
- The family live in Aja's natal home

## History of Violence in the Family

- Aja suffered terrible violence at the hands of her husband. Samandar told us his mother would be beaten quite severely three or four times a week
- Samandar and his brother Rahim were also beaten by their father

# Effects of Previous Violence in the Family

Samandar learned not to be violent to his wife because he witnessed his father being violent to his mother

*“Yes, many times. Once he [my father] was beating my mother and I tried to stop my father and my brother tried to stop him, but my father told us not to interfere otherwise he would beat us too.... My father used to beat my mother so much that he would get tired and then he would stop beating her.... Once my mother ... brought my father tea but he didn't take his tea and called my mother to come in. My mother came and asked my father 'yes Baba?' my father took his strap and started beating my mother. I started weeping but he didn't pay attention to me.” - Samandar*

*“I learned that beating is not good and this was my lesson from that beating.... I have never beaten her [my wife] even once. I haven't said a harsh word to her yet either. My wife is very patient and tolerant.” - Samandar*

# Effects of Previous Violence in the Family

## Resisting being violent to children

*“I always tell my children and the children of my brother to learn their lessons and go to school regularly... I don't frighten them by saying, 'Keep quiet otherwise the cat will come or the dog will come and eat you'. I don't make them afraid. I teach them good things.... I say, 'Learn your lesson and be a good child'.” - Samandar*

*“There is the village and sometimes things happen with people there that make me angry. When I come home in this mood, I get angry at home with the children's noise and then I call their mother and we have a problem or I beat the children.” - Samandar*

# Effects of Previous Violence in the Family

## Relationship between mother-in-law and daughters-in-law

*“No there was no one [there] except my mother and she stopped him [my brother] from beating his wife. I was also present but I didn’t interfere into this matter. When my mother stopped him from beating, he didn’t beat anymore... By the grace of Allah mother is alive and she doesn’t let them fight and she tells them about her own stories. My mother tells them that my father used to beat her two or three times in a day and she tolerated all this kind of situation.” - Samandar*

*“No he [father-in-law] wouldn’t beat us. He would say abusive words to us. Sometimes when he would get angry and try to beat us, my mother-in-law would intervene and stop him. Then he would beat her instead of us” - One of Aja’s daughter-in-laws*

*“My mother tells us that our wives and us should pass our lives in a good way, for our life is good and we don’t have any economical problem. She tells that she had gone hungry a lot in the past. She used to be beaten by my father a lot. She always advises us to behave well.” - Samandar*

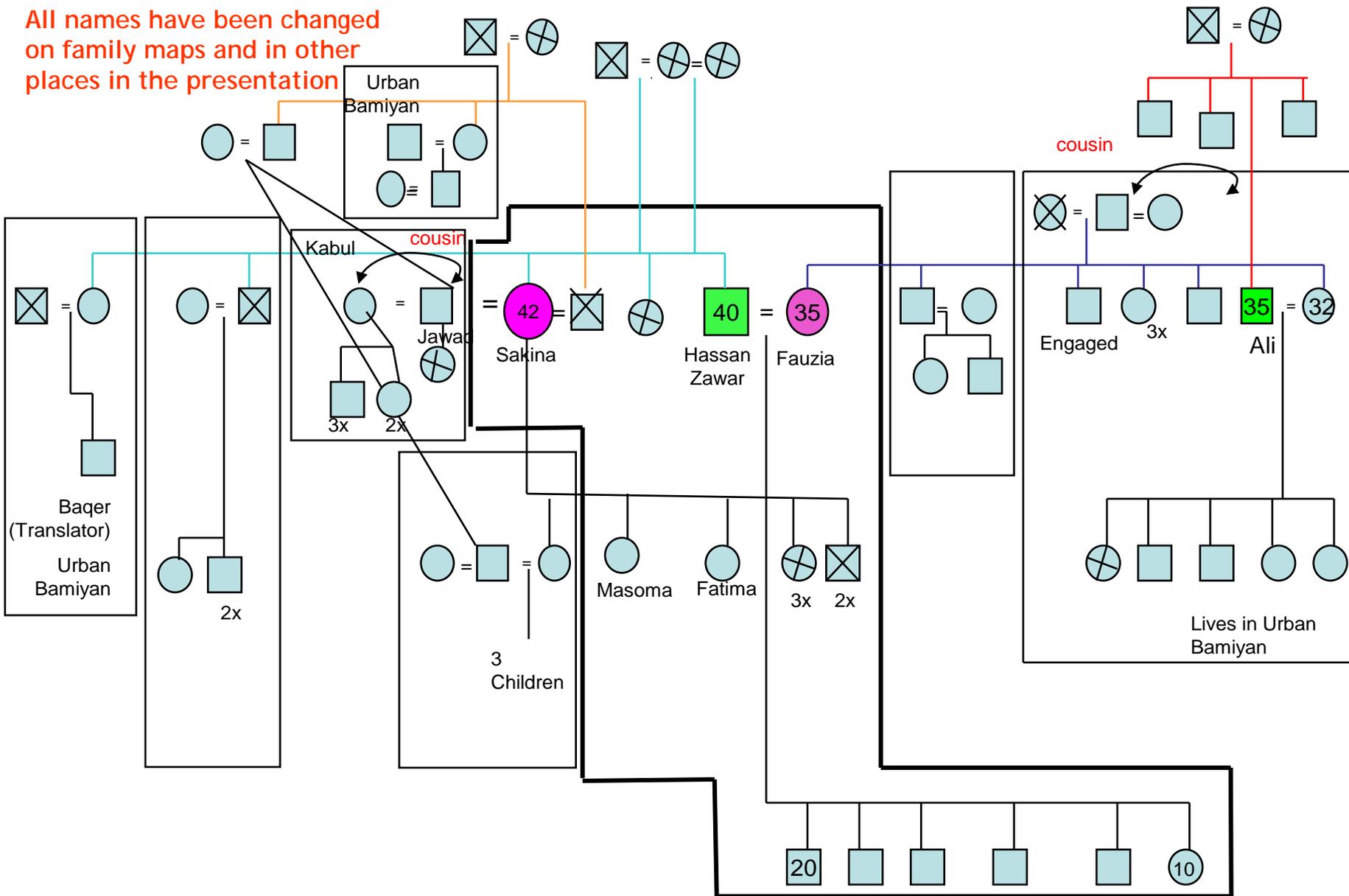
# Sakina's Family Finding Support: Health workers, natal family and community dispute resolution institutions Urban Bamiyan

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Fahimi  
Research Assistant  
Bamiyan Research Team

# Urban - Bamiyan - Sakina's Family Map

All names have been changed on family maps and in other places in the presentation



# Sakina's Family's Story

- Sakina becomes a widow and is pressured to marry her nephew, Jawad, when her first husband dies.
- The marriage is reported as being fine until Jawad decides he wants to marry his sons from his previous marriage to Sakina's daughters, Masoma and Fatima. Jawad's motivation for this is so his sons will be able to claim the girls' inheritance
- The daughters and the mother both resist these marriages and in response to their resistance Jawad beats them all severely and repeatedly
- At one point one of the daughters is beaten so badly they have to go to hospital
- The doctor who examines them offers his help
- Sakina and her daughters manage to get to her brother's house in Bamiyan
- Both Sakina's brother, Hassan and his wife, Fauzia are willing to take them in and protect them, although there are difficulties for them created by this situation
- A jalasa is held in the family's village to decide on what should happen to the property in Kabul which Jawad is now claiming. This violence to Sakina and her daughters is also discussed at this jalalsa

## Support From Family

*“My daughters were weaving carpet when I heard my younger daughter, and I saw that he [Jawad] was beating her. He had taken a lash and was beating her. One woman who is our relative came and stayed in our house to stop him beating the girls.... He beat her so much that the skin on her back was broken, and he beat her on her kidneys and she still suffers with pain.” - Sakina*

# Support from Health Care Providers

*“As she was being examined [by the doctor], one of Masoma’s friends came. She and the doctors understood what the problem was. They asked us if we have relative who can help. I said I have a brother and he is in Bamiyan. They said that Bamiyan was the best place for us. Then the doctor said that he would talk with my husband the next day on the pretence that Masoma should be admitted [to hospital], so my husband would let us leave the house.... So we found a good opportunity. Masoma’s friend came with us up to the Bamiyan station and asked a car if he was going to Bamiyan. We said to the driver that we would pay him in Bamiyan. We got in the car and left for Bamiyan. At night we reached there.” - Sakina*

# Support from Natal Family

*Q Doesn't your husband get angry when they [Sakina's daughters] don't weave carpet?*

*A No, he says that they have been oppressed a lot and they have come to ask me refuge so he doesn't oppress them.*

*Q How about you, don't you get angry?*

*A One man has beaten them when her husband died... Now they have come to my house for shelter, do I beat them as well? God would not be glad if I did.*

Conversation with Hassan's wife Fauzia

# Difficulties for the Family giving Support

*“Last night my brother’s wife got angry and it was because there was nothing at home. She was saying that there was nothing at home and we came and added to her house. We have brought this wood and coal for burning on credit. She [Fauzia] was saying to my brother that there is nothing at home when we have guests. What kind of man are you that you can't support your family in this situation? My brothers wife was getting angry at my brother and was saying to him that he doesn't work. But I think she fought with my brother because of me and my daughters... Then I thought to myself what can I do. They have the right and they are a big family and we have come and added to their house.” - Sakina*

# Support from outsiders

## AIHRC

*"[Jawad] came here, and said that he would take us all back with him, but my brother told him, you should solve your problem in human rights commission. So he went to the human rights office with my brother and Fatima. My elder daughter and I didn't go. [Jawad], he denied everything there. They [AIHRC] told him, if you tyrannize them, and don't give them their rights and property, we will arrest you... No, I don't want [to go back], I just want him to return our house, I don't need a divorce settlement. I just want to be allowed to live alone. I want anything, even alimony, if God helps us, we can to manage our lives." - Sakina*

# Support from community based dispute resolution mechanisms

*“He [a relative] said that the white beards said it is acceptable for him [Jawad] to go to them rather than going to AIHRC. Then the other cousin of my daughter’s mediated and we accepted as well. Then we went to Lalsanjangal and there the white beards solved our problem.” - Sakina*

## *Outcomes of the Jalasa*

- *Jawad doesn’t have the right to take girls inheritance from them*
- *Jawad doesn’t have the right to force the girls to marry his sons*
- *Jawad has to move out of the girls house in Kabul*
- *Jawad doesn’t have the right to force them to live with him*

# Spaces for Support

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- Natal family;
  - Limitations and difficulties
- Doctor - health services
- AIHRC
- Role of community dispute resolution mechanisms

# Concluding the family Stories

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Deborah  
Senior Research Manger, AREU

# Blaming Women: releasing men from responsibility

- In most examples of violence to women, the woman who is the victim is perceived as having done something wrong, or she is accused of not doing something to prevent the man from being violent to her
- Alternatively another woman is blamed for making the man beat the woman (usually a husband's mother or sister or a co-wife)

## Blaming Women who are Victims of Violence

*"It depends on the personality of the woman. If she is good she won't get beaten. If she is bad, she will be beaten."* - older man, Bamiyan city.

*"If a woman is arguing with her husband and goes out without her husband's permission. In that case her husband should beat her a lot. If a woman listens to her husband and does not go outside without permission, her husband will never beat her."* - older woman rural Kabul

*"People blame me that I am not a good wife, if I say anything in front of him he beats me more."* - young woman, rural Nangarhar

*"A man killed his wife one year ago and he put her dead body in a sack and it was buried in the land of his house. After sometime the police came. Maybe it was because of forced marriage or maybe it was because of some wrong thing from the woman."* young man, urban Kabul

## Blaming other women for men's violence

*"Mothers-in-law provoke their sons and say to them, when you were out your wife did so and so. She says to her son that while he wasn't at home his wife made some mistake. So that when the son comes home he beats his wife."* - older woman in Bamiyan

*"In fact her husband is [young] and he is silly too, whatever his mother says to him he accepts it and he beats his wife. One day Gulali's MIL made an argument with Gulali when her husband came home, at night his mother complained about Gulali then Gulali's husband took a stick and he beat her with the stick."* - young woman Nangarhar

# Violence to Children

*'I'm not happy to beat them but what can I do, they are naughty and when I beat them they stop whatever they are doing... When I beat them I become sad.'* - women, rural Nangarhar who has six small children.

- Violence to children is less acceptable than it is accepted
- Some people feel any form of violence to children is totally unacceptable
- Some feel violence to children is only acceptable if giving advice has failed
  
- People are extremely frightened that their children will not become morally good useful adults
- It is commonly believed that children will only behave if they are frightened of punishment
- Therefore, people resort to violence for fear of what will happen if their children aren't disciplined 'correctly'
  
- When people are stressed or frustrated they take out their anger on their children
- People take out their anger and frustrations with other members of the family on their children

# Violence to Children

*“Beating children also is not good. When I had my first daughter I beat her a lot when she was very small but now I know that we should not beat children because they do not understand. So parents should not beat their children. But when my husband fights with me and I’m angry I beat my children. And when I’m tired from doing housework I beat my children very hard if they do not listen to me. Once I had washed the clothes and it was three thirty and I was very tired. My husband had been doing construction work at home. When I finished the clothes and without giving me any break to drink tea, he asked me to cook food for dinner I said ok after having some tea I will cook. But he didn’t listen to me and asked me to cook food now. I became angry and did not say anything to him. At the same time my son came to me and I asked him to wash his face, I told him to take water and wash his face but he didn’t listen to me and asked me to do it. I was angry with my husband, but I couldn’t say anything to him so I took a big stone and I threw it at my son and shouted to him, do what I am telling you, I am not your servant. Unfortunately, the stone broke one of his teeth and his mouth started bleeding.” - young woman, Kabul city*

# Breaking the Cycle of Violence

- Men reported that due to the violence they had witnessed their mothers enduring they do not want to do the same to their wives
- Adults reported that because of the violence they had suffered as children they do not want to beat their children:

*'I have a nephew at home. He is a little boy and I never beat him, because it is a very bad habit to beat children. I have the experience that when I was a child my father was beating me and I will never repeat what my father did with me.'* - young man, Nangarhar

# Spaces for Support: natal family

- Some families are offering shelter and support to their daughters who have been abused by their in-laws
- Some families are allowing their daughters to come and live with them after they have been widowed
- Some families want to help their daughters more than they feel able to

## Spaces for Support: natal family

*“You see as I told you before, my son-in-law the things he does with my daughter are bad.... [My daughter’s] marriage was my mistake because when I decided to marry her some of our neighbours and some of our relations told me about them.. I talked with his [son-in-law’s] mother when she came to our home and I asked her how do you behave with your other daughters-in-law and she told me we are good with them. So according to this I decided to marry my daughter to her son, I am sinful because I trusted in them too easily.”* older man, urban Kabul

# Working group A: Preventing Violence to Children: alternative parenting skills

## Findings

- Violence to children is normalised and accepted, however it is far less acceptable.
- Some people feel any form of violence to children is totally unacceptable.
- Some feel violence to children is only acceptable if giving advice has failed.
- People are extremely frightened that their children will not become morally good, useful adults.
- It is commonly believed that children will only behave if they are frightened of punishment.
- Very few alternatives to violence were suggested, by those spoken to by the research teams, for disciplining children.
- Therefore, people resort to violence for fear of what will happen if their children aren't disciplined 'correctly'.
- When people are stressed or frustrated they take out their anger on their children.

# Working Group B: key people for instigating change in the community

## Findings

- Certain people in the community have influence and authority over others in the community.
- It can not be assumed that these individuals believe violence to women and children is unacceptable.
- Some individuals in the community believe violence toward women and/or children is unacceptable (these individuals may not have influence and authority).
- Violence to women, whether viewed as acceptable or not, is blamed on the woman who is the victim of the violence or another woman in the community.
- Men tend to not take responsibility for the violence they perpetrate.
- Men in focus group discussions were willing to talk about when they have been violent to women in their families.
- Likewise, women blame other women for the violence that they themselves, or women in their families are victims of.

# Working Group C: Using personal opinions to change cultural norms and practices

## Findings

- Frequently people expressed personal opinions which are contrary to norms of behaviour and practice in their communities.
- Individuals would state a personal opinion on the best way of conducting their family lives, and then go on to say that they cannot practice it because it is against their own culture or customs. This was particularly the case regarding marriage practices:
  - Exchange marriage is very common, but many expressed the opinion that it is not a good practice.
  - The opinion was expressed that bride price causes problems between and in families and yet all those spoken to use bride price if not exchange marriage.
  - People expressed the opinion that both boys and girls should have a say in their marriages or at least be consulted. However, it was also said that if we ask our daughters people will laugh at us.

# Working group C: Differences in Personal Opinions and Cultural norms

*"I understand your question and now I am going to make it all clear for you. In the past people didn't ask their children but in the future I will ask my children about their lives. As I said before it is not our custom to ask from the women but we hope it will change in the future. We now let our sons and daughters go to school to become intelligent and through this knowledge our children will make their own decisions in the future. You know I am very hopeful that our people will change their ideas. I wish that my children seek education after that we will let them plan their own futures, we will guide them but this is my wish. I am not sure that we can adopt it, because right now in our society it is not our custom. Although I am illiterate, I know if our people seek education I am sure their minds will change. Look my husband is educated just he is under the pressure of his culture - so lets see what happens - but we are very hopeful for the future and I hope my children have successful lives."* woman in her early thirties who lives in urban Nangarhar with her five young children

# Working Group D: using community based dispute resolution mechanisms to counter family violence?

## Findings

- Everyday violence in the family is too prevalent for state bodies and outside agencies alone to overcome or mediate.
- There is evidence that on occasion violent disputes between family members, including male to female and violence between women have been mediated on by elders in the community, through jirgas and jalasas.
- Elderly women and men in extended families also play a role in resolving disputes between husbands and wives, sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.