

SAVE

SISTERS AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Project Report: *Mothers for Change!* Pilot

SAVE India

“Our Stories, Our Future”
“Swimming Into the Future”

April 26-30, 2010

Mumbai, India

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Mothers for Change!

Stability and security are the central social and political issues of our era. Mothers are the key to transmitting state-wide preventative measures to the individual level. The inclusion of women will help us to create a new vision, to hear new voices, and to open new avenues of action.

Mothers for Change! is a global initiative to empower mothers to sensitize and mobilize youth susceptible to or already trapped by ideologies of violent extremism. Situated at the critical nexus between family and society, women must be well equipped with the right to tools for debate to challenge extremist thinking. Mothers must be trained to advocate for alternatives to violent extremism.

This groundbreaking campaign has two objectives:

- **to make mothers around the world aware of their central role in the family for the fight against terrorism**
- **to provide mothers with the tools to steer children back on the right path**

Women will gain practical skills to prevent and intervene in youth radicalization as well as a platform to interact, compare experiences, and exchange best practice strategies. After the initial launch in Indonesia, Yemen, Kenya, Somalia, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, India, Israel, Palestine, and Bosnia, SAVE will expand the program to establish a needs-based presence around the world dedicated to directing the next generation toward nonviolent alternatives to violent extremism.

Mothers for Change! takes a proactive approach to countering terrorism. By giving women the tools to take on more authority in the patriarchal domestic and societal structures, they will be able to play a greater role in determining their children's future. With our first group of trainees also prepared to work as trainers, the impact of *Mothers for Change!* will spread from the individual to her immediate surroundings, creating a widespread ripple effect on the deradicalization of youth in the target areas. Rather than reacting to the effects of terrorism after attacks have taken place, *Mothers for Change!* preempts the radicalization of youth and undercuts the allure of terrorist groups.

Pilot Project

From April 26-30, 2010, SAVE India launched a *Mothers for Change!* pilot project to test how to reach out to families affected by the 26/11 attacks. These families can serve as important testimonials for the young generation, and their experiences are central to developing alternative narratives to extremist ideologies. Through storytelling and swimming workshops, the participants explored their own lived experiences of the terrorist attack and realized for the first time their own potential to make a difference in their lives.

“Our Stories, Our Future”: A week-long storytelling process designed to help participants explore what happened in their lives and to speak out about atrocities, leading to personal healing and community awareness.

“Swimming Into the Future”: Swimming relieves stress and is an important tool in increasing awareness of one’s physical capabilities, promoting teamwork, and overcoming inhibitions. This workshop served to boost self-esteem and create a bond among the participants.

Participants: The wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers of the police officers who courageously protected lives during the 26/11 attacks formed the main participant group. These women, who play a critical role in providing emotional support to the men that defended Mumbai on 26/11 and continue to risk their lives on a daily basis, have been completely neglected in the aftermath of the attacks. Several victims of the 26/11 attacks also attended the workshop, and had the opportunity for the first time to speak about the traumatizing events. The mothers and daughters attended separate storytelling and swimming sessions tailored to their age and experience requirements.

Trainers:

Anne Carr, an experienced dialogue practitioner from Northern Ireland, led the storytelling workshops with the women. Anne drew on the expertise of a range of organizations and programs, including “Towards Understanding and Healing,” “Healing Through Remembering,” and “Community Dialogue,” as well as on her own vast experience working with women and creating safe spaces. Anne designed a flexible, interactive, and culturally sensitive storytelling and dialogue process for the participants, many of whom had been severely injured and traumatized.

Elaine Hargrove, of SAVE Global, worked closely with Anne to adapt the storytelling process for the children’s group. Through the use of everyday materials, including arts and crafts, beads, and rangoli powders, Elaine facilitated the exploration of the children’s fears and hopes for the future as well as methods of promoting community safety.

Archana Kapoor, president of SAVE India, coordinated the project and worked with the children to facilitate the expression of their memories of the 26/11 attacks. Archana drew on the groundwork laid in the children’s workshops to discuss safety in Mumbai and their thoughts on how to prevent future terrorist attacks.

Our Stories, Our Future: *Hand in Hand, A Step Forward*



Since the 26/11 attacks, a great deal of media attention, and to some extent attendant government services, have been focused on the survivors of the attacks and their attitudes toward Ajmal Kasab's trial. The governmental relief system stopped short, however, of providing psychological counseling or facilitating the formation of a victims' lobby, such that those directly affected by the attacks do not have a voice to advocate for what they need most.



The families of the constables on duty during the attacks—the men who risked their lives to protect the city and who continue to do so on a daily basis—have further been completely neglected. The wives and children form the emotional support system that allows the men to carry out their duties, but their raw emotional wounds have been left untreated in the aftermath of the attacks. These women and their experiences will inform the next generation about the duty to serve and protect, and must thus be given a platform to work through their trauma and voice their concerns.



In order to create this platform, Anne Carr employed a variety of Storytelling approaches to allow the women to tell their personal stories. The women were initially very hesitant to speak, and Anne used a lively 'name game' to establish a safe space in which the women felt comfortable sharing with each other. This sense of security in the group encouraged the women to speak openly and freely, and they soon actively engaged with each other.



In a further exercise, each participant drew a picture representing their experience of the 26/11 attacks, the effect it had on their loved ones and themselves, and the pain, fear, and ongoing ways in which their lives have been changed by these events. They then shared the representations with the group, which gave them the opportunity to think through the need for change in society and particularly the need for personal changes to help create a society that does not foster the expression of violent extremism.



Anne conducted a 'beads workshop' to maintain a sense of continuity from day to day; the idea of "threading your life story" in beads became a central component of the overall workshop process. Each day participants were asked to think about their different life stages, important events (both positive and negative), special people, and hopes and dreams for the future. A selection of colored and textured beads was provided, and throughout the week the participants collected beads representing the stage that had been discussed that day. On the last day of the workshop, the beads were threaded as a bracelet that was theirs to take home. The bracelet serves as an important expression of their life story and encourages participants who have suffered tragedy and loss to see that they had a life before the tragedy and that they will have a life in the future. The beads workshop helped them to process their own experiences and feelings and to develop coping strategies in the face of devastation and tragedy.



After the completion of the storytelling process, the participants engaged in a



process of dialogue. They exchanged their views on what they, as women and as members of a community, could do to prevent future terrorist attacks. The women recognized the need for each individual to take on personal responsibility for instituting small changes that will have a ripple effect in families, communities, and societies.



Children are often ignored in the process of dealing with violent extremism. The children thus participated in a parallel 'Our Stories, Our Future' workshop and used arts and crafts to express their hopes, dreams, and fears. In one particularly effective exercise, the children were asked to create 'islands' that were hospitable to human inhabitants, with special emphasis placed on creating a safe environment. The children included naval and police forces, stone walls, fences, tribal men, and strategic roads in their plans to protect the inhabitants from 'neighboring warring tribes.' Interestingly, all the groups also included schools on their islands, for the children described education as being central to increasing quality of life and to promoting safety. After engaging in a discussion on the security components on the fictional islands, a connection was made to safety in Mumbai. The girls drew on their fathers' experiences in the Mumbai police force during the 26/11 attacks to identify areas in which they felt the police had protected the city well, and explored alternative safety measures that they believed should be implemented in the future. The children stressed the need to increase awareness of their surroundings and gain self-confidence, so that when they saw suspicious behavior they would know to report it.



Through a 'wishing tree,' the students further discussed their fears and hopes for the future. The after-effects of the 26/11 attacks are clear; many children feared the sound of guns/bombs and terror. At the same time, however, they have big plans for the future, and many hope to be scientists, physicians, and commercial airline pilots.



One of the most popular exercises, among both the children and the women, was the "Dance of Life." Rangoli colors, traditional colored powders used to make designs in front of most Indian homes, were mixed with water to create vibrant paints with which the participants coated their hands and feet. They then left their hand and footprints on a large white sheet, signifying the intertwined nature of their lives and actions.



Several distinguished guests visited the storytelling workshops. Vinita Kamte, whose husband, Ashok, wounded the only surviving terrorist before succumbing to his own injuries, came twice, including to hand out the certificates on the last day of the workshop. The participants idolize Vinita, who wrote the book *To The Last Bullet* to chronicle her efforts to find out what really happened the day her husband died. Vinita first joined SAVE at the second Global SAVE Conference, and was extremely helpful in securing the Mumbai Police Gymkhana to host the event and in identifying the participants. The Assistant Commissioner of Police also attended the workshop on the last day, signifying his and the Police Department's support of SAVE's work in Mumbai.





The participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. At the beginning of the series of workshops, the women first expressed their relief at finally being able to leave the house and focus on themselves. Many of the women had not had a day of rest since getting married years before, and some traveled three hours each way to participate in the workshops. By the end of the week, however, the women's feedback reflected the value of the workshops. Sabira Khan, whose leg was irreparably injured when the taxi she was standing next to on 26/11 exploded, said that she had not smiled since 26/11. After participating in the workshop, she felt a new sense of self as well as a responsibility to serve as a testimonial for the futility of terrorist activities. The women's commitment to attending the workshop was also astonishing; one woman traveled from Mumbai to Gujarat (550 km away) to see her sick son and returned the same day to ensure that she would only have to miss one session.



Swimming Into the Future



Each day, the women and the children took one and a half hours of swim lessons from three recognized swimmers who have competed for India at the national level. SAVE India made arrangements with a local sporting goods store and allowed the women to choose their own swimming costumes, swim caps, and goggles.



Many of the participants had never been in water before, and were thrilled to gain a new, potentially life-saving skill, with memories of the 2004 tsunami still relatively fresh. More importantly, however, the swimming served to create a strong group bond, reinforced the need to support others, and encouraged the women to recognize their own physical abilities.

Given the traditional constraints of the conservative culture, only two women entered the pool on the first day. By the end of the week, however, all thirty women had chosen swimsuits and were swimming. Some women were so eager to join the swim lessons that, rather than waiting to be taken to the sporting goods store the next day, they bought their own swim costumes and submitted the receipt for reimbursement. Their eagerness to engage with and support one another in the pool was reflected during the group storytelling sessions.



“My Story, My Future”

Participant Profile: Priya

My name is Priya, I'm 21 years old, and I study English Literature in Mumbai. My father is a police inspector, and he was on night duty on the evening of 26/11. He received a wireless call telling him that there had been an attack on CST railway station, and when he arrived, he saw that the situation was out of control. For each bullet the policemen fired, the terrorists returned 100.



Priya with her sister

Then, he received another call that the terrorists had entered Cama Albless Hospital, so he went there with a group of seven to eight men. The terrorists were on the sixth floor, and had opened fire on the nurses and patients.

My father went up to the sixth floor, and fought the terrorists for about fifty minutes. It was very hard. During the attack, the terrorists threw three or four hand grenades. One exploded right in front of my dad. His face and his leg were horribly injured. Six men died.

The next thing my dad knew, a few hours later, was that he was in Bombay Hospital in a very serious condition.

It was horrible for us. It was in all the news channels. At one o'clock in the morning, we found out that my father had been injured. We were crying so much, and my uncle and my auntie came over. It was horrible.

Now, my father is fine. He still can't run, and he doesn't have the enthusiasm he used to.

26/11 is still impacting us. My mother gets scared whenever he goes to the office, and worries whether he will come home properly. That's always there, deep within our hearts. Since the incident, my father has become very precious to us.

This workshop is a stress-relieving thing. We open our minds and our hearts. We don't care what others will think about our answers, whether we are right or wrong. So it is a very healing process here.

Mumbai is a place where now, we have to take such attacks for granted. Every few years, attacks take place. People must be more alert and aware, to know what's going on in society.

I think mothers can play a big role in combating extremism, because they are very close to the heart of the children. The impact that mothers have on their children is very high compared to any other. Mothers should tell them that harming another person is very bad.

I want to become an Indian Administrative Officer. It is a government service that helps the people. This is my wish in life.

Bollywood and Terror Roundtable



On May 1, SAVE India and Worldkids Foundation co-organized a roundtable discussion on “Bollywood and Terror” at Taj Landsend in Mumbai. The roundtable focused on how Bollywood can play a further role in fighting violent extremism. Bollywood, as a reflection of Indian society, serves a very powerful medium both in India and abroad to influence mindsets and raise critical questions with regard to terrorism.



The well-known panelists, including Mudhushree Dutta, Kamlesh Pandey, Kunal Kohli, Suhail Tartari, Vani Tripathi, Sudhir Mishra, Salim Arif, and Atul Tewari, addressed the role of Indian film and television in addressing violent extremism and fighting terrorism. The panelists described their own experiences in writing, producing, directing, and acting in films that portrayed the threat of violent extremism in Indian society, including a discussion of how audiences and critics reacted to these sensitive topics.



The panelists recognized the film industry’s responsibility toward spreading appropriate messages. At the same time, however, they underscored that Bollywood’s main purpose was to entertain, and thus appealed to audience members not to believe everything that they see in film.



The engaged audience, which consisted of school pupils, civil society stakeholders, activists, and the press, posed insightful questions on the role of education in fighting terrorism, why—if Bollywood is a reflection of society—films show irresponsible endings, and how to use cinema to reach impoverished and illiterate masses in rural areas. The fascinating discussion provided concrete ideas for constructive action and highlighted the importance of critically analyzing the messages—whether from Bollywood directors or terrorist groups—being spread in society at large.





Press

Both the workshop and the subsequent roundtable received a great deal of media coverage in both English-language and Marathi press. Reporters from the *Time India*, BBC News, *Navbharat Times*, *Sakal*, Asian News International/Reuters, Al-Jazeera, *Mid-Day*, *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express*, *DNA*, *NDTV*, *Free Press Journal*, and *HT Café* ensured national and international coverage.



"A group of women held discussions, laughed and had swimming sessions at the Police Gymkhana on Monday morning. Some of them said later that they had laughed heartily without fear, for the first time since 26/11. The workshop...held by NGO Women without Borders/Sisters Against Violent Extremism was aimed at helping women cope with post 26/11-trauma...The aim is to empower the women and make them aware of their role in conflict resolution. They will be taught to look out for signals in their children that may eventually led [sic] to extremist behavior and to correct the behavior in the nascent stage itself," said Anne Carr, a dialogue practitioner from Northern Ireland."

Express News Service, April 26, 2010

"Bollywood has played an entertainer, stressbuster, and even raised issues. For the first time perhaps it is being roped in to promote peace. Women without Borders, a Vienna-based non-governmental organization that was in the city recently to hold a series of workshops for their project "Mothers for Change" for the family members of victims of the 26/11 terror attacks. Along with SAVE (Sisters Against Violent Extremism), they organized a round-table conference to explore the role the Hindi film industry can play in making this a better world."

Asian Age, May 2, 2010



"The verdict against Qasab has brought closure to the victims of the attacks. Sarika Upadhyay, 33, a single mother, took two months to recover from the grenade projectiles that were embedded all over her body. She feels Qasab should have hanged the moment the verdict came down. (He is likely to receive the death penalty.) Still, says Archana Kapoor, president of the India Chapter of Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), 'people are angry. They want Qasab to be hanged. I can understand the sentiment, but hanging him will not solve anything. It will not make us safe, will it?'"

Time, May 3, 2010



26/11 का दुख समेट रही हैं ऑस्ट्रियन बहनें



विश्व निवारक बोर्ड: 'को किलो फूले कान, अर्धककावर, रॉडर प्रभाव' और प्रभाव प्रभाव...
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