

Domestic Violence and NGO Initiatives

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The problem of domestic violence is one element of the violence that children are faced with on a daily basis. There is a global rise in concern for violence directly perpetrated on children by adults including parents and relatives; domestic child abuse; sexual abuse of girls; children traumatized by seeing their father DV against their mother; and the impact of such trauma as the child grows up.

China, on the other hand, is a society in which it is difficult to visualize domestic violence or DV. There is a proverb that says “it is difficult for even an impartial administrator to judge a domestic dispute.” In addition to the traditional wisdom of judiciaries not penetrating private space, it is said that “don’t spare the rod to deprive one of a useful tool.” It is customary to tolerate punishment for childrearing. After the one-child policy went into effect, the aspect of parents caring for children was quickly focused upon. Violence and love became equated with each other in the belief that “physical and verbal abuse were also forms of tough love.” Meanwhile, the mass media reports incidents of children running away from home because of violence each and every day. Approximately sixty percent of children in China have been physically beaten by their parents. And some have voiced concern that this may be closely connected with juvenile crime.

The Network (Research Center) for Combating Domestic Violence (DVRIP) is an NGO involved in combating DV in Chinese society. The NGO was formed in June 2000 to conduct research on ways to combat domestic violence on females in hope of having DV prevention legislation transformed into law. An office was established within the China Law Society in Beijing, and activities have been vigorously conducted by its membership. The membership is primarily comprised of researchers at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who are authorities on conjugal law and Professor Chen Min Xia. It also includes people involved with public security, prosecution, courts, medical institutions, university researchers, journalists, and female activists.

The members initially focused upon violence on women and human rights violations, and worked on arousing public opinion and raising awareness. However, letters from children claiming to be victims of domestic violence began pouring in. Female students also started to give personal accounts of domestic violence at university lectures. These courageous admissions were probably what prompted authorities to seriously consider the problem of domestic violence on children.

With volunteers from the base layer of society, the strength of the DVRIP comes from building a relationship with experts and the enlisting substantial community support for prevention of DV. Focusing on the impact of domestic violence on children, the Worker’s Committee of You An Men street, Fengtai District, Beijing and the You An

Men No.1 Primary School are working together on a project to discover whether elementary schools can serve as effective medium for preventing DV. After discovering through scrupulous survey and observation that parents' commonplace lack of understanding of DV, frequent beating of children, and the assumption that it is natural to consider their children to be their own personal property may actually abet antagonistic behavior in children, how to eliminate such behavior was studied. The problem has probably been significantly improved by promoting omnidirectional communication among schools, teachers and children; promoting advertisement activities and meetings with neighborhood associations, dramas written and enacted by children, and the enhancing awareness of laws.

The experiences have been imparted to society through the DVRIP's magazine and NGO websites. This is one step toward discovering and solving the problem of potential domestic violence against children which exists all over China.



▲ Three members of the resident staff answer questions at the office of the DVRIP