



Introduction

Module 8 of Safe Childhood Programme series is based on sexual abuse in children. Sexual abuse in children is not only violation of basic human rights but also an unpardonable sin. Normally, it is not discussed publicly but it is important that this issue is talked about and such incidents are brought out.

Session Objectives

At the end of the session, participants will be able to tell:

- What is sexual abuse and how it affects children physically and emotionally
- What steps can be taken to stop or reduce incidence of sexual abuse in children
- What are different forms of sexual abuse
- How can village community and families be educated about issues related to sexual abuse

Session Process

Step 1

Begin the session by welcoming all the participants and thank them for participating in it. Introduce yourself and ask them to introduce themselves. Start the session with a motivational song.

Step 2

Discuss with participants steps to stop sexual abuse in children:

- ➔ Making community aware about issues related to sexual abuse and tell them about the act related to safety of children from sexual abuse - protection of children from sexual offense (POCSO).
- ➔ Contacting the child and family members immediately after knowing about incident of sexual abuse and motivate the child to share details without any fear.

- Taking measures to let children and their parents know about what is sexual abuse and what are its effects. While taking support of school teachers, ANM, ASHA, AWW
- Taking support of police in stopping further incidents of sexual abuse by lodging FIR and getting convict punished

Step 3

Share following details with the participants:

- You are aware that incidents of sexual abuse are common in our society. Families do not report such incidents owing to humiliation and insult. But you will be surprised to know that out of children who are sexually abused world wide, maximum cases are in India. As per sources, in every 155 minutes, one child below the age of 16 years is sexually abused.
- You can understand that in rural areas, cases of sexual abuse, rape and eve teasing in children are not brought out as village society and people are afraid to talk about them. Children with mental and physical disabilities, specially girls are easy targets of abuse.
- According to figures, 50% of the people who abuse children are known to them and have their trust. Many times such people include father, brothers, uncles or neighbours. Although this is a shocking information but it is a fact that such things happen.
- Sexual abuse in children does not only mean rape or sexual contact. It also includes other aspects such as child pornography, erotic literature, showing erotic pictures, touching bodies of children inappropriately, making wrong gestures while whistling, talking to children in erotic manner and touching their genitals without any reason.
- Girls are more at risk of sexual abuse as compared to boys but boys are also often abused sexually.
- Sexual abuse of children can also happen on social networking sites such as facebook, whatsapp etc and children need to remain cautious about the same.



Step 4

Ask participants to answer in 'Yes' or 'No' to following questions:

- Only girls and women face sexual abuse
- Only poor people experience sexual abuse
- A child can experience sexual abuse from within family or family members/relatives
- In case of sexual abuse of any child, no one should be informed as it brings bad name to the family. Such incidents should be resolved internally.
- Perpetuators of sexual abuse are often mentally sick. Why would any person with healthy mind do such an act?

- ➔ The girl should be married to the rapist in case of rape
- ➔ Abusing children sexually or raping them is fine as it prevents children from acquiring HIV/AIDS. Having sex with virgin girls helps in curing diseases
- ➔ Sexual abuse does not only mean sexual contact. Teasing and touching the body inappropriately is also sexual abuse



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When participants answer the questions, ask them for the reasons too. If the facilitator feels that a particular answer is incorrect, s/he can suggest the correct answer and also give reasons why the answer is incorrect.

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Step 5

Ask the participants to read the following case study or read it aloud to them

Action by family, panchayat and teacher on incident of sexual abuse

Amita was a class 5 student of the village school. Her teacher Devika madam noticed that Amita lacked interest in studies and always remained sad. She did not share anything on being asked. Devika madam visited her house and consulted her parents to know the matter. Why she is lacking interest in studies and why she remains sad all the time? Amita's parents also expressed similar concerns. They shared that she remains aloof all the time and avoids talking to anyone. Her smile has vanished and she has not even touched her books for some days.

Then Amita's mother and Devika madam took her to a separate room and lovingly and assuringly asked her the reason for her sadness. Amita was quiet initially but then she started crying and said, "one uncle in the neighbourhood bothers me, he talks dirty to me and touches me inappropriately." Devika madam immediately understood the whole matter. She took Amita's mother to panchayat member Sharda Devi's house and narrated the whole incident to her.

Sharda Devi spoke to village head and called for meeting of gram sabha. Sharda Devi shared the incident in the meeting and exposed the abuser. She asked the members – what should be done now?

The members of gram sabha said, 'leave it, such incidents keep on happening, why should we interfere? Its matter concerning a girl, her family will be humiliated.' Another member of the gram sabha said, 'this man

should be publicly exposed and reprimanded. If panchayat permits, we can beat him up. He will not make any such attempt again.”

Another member said, “ we should immediately inform the police. This matter is linked to sexual abuse. Such a person should be punished immediately.”

Sharda Devi and Sarpanch readily agreed to proposal from the third member. Police report was filed, and accused ‘uncle’ was arrested.



Ask the participants, whether suggestions of other members were right. Give reasons for your answers. Also ask them whether Sharda Devi and Sarpanch did the right thing by following suggestion of third member. Again ask them to give reasons for their answers. After all the participants have answered, summarise the discussion as below:

Had Devika madam not informed panchayat members about the incident, the accused would have been roaming freely and possibly continued with such activities. Sharda Devi and sarpanch took the right decision by listening to suggestion of the third member and got the accused arrested.

Step 6

Points to be kept in mind by participants. Write them on a chart and display them:

- Panchayat members should keep an eye on cases of sexual abuse of children in the village
- They should listen carefully and attentively to the information shared by the child who has been sexually abused and encourage the child to speak up and share details
- Motivate the members of bal panchayat to keep in touch with other children in the village and any incident of sexual abuse with any child in the village should be immediately reported.
- Any incident of sexual abuse of any child in the village should be immediately reported and complaint should be lodged at the nearest police station and accused should be arrested.
- The person doing such a condemnable act should be exposed publicly so that others know his actions
- The affected child and the family members should be assured and pacified that the name of the child would be kept confidential and the family will suffer no humiliation or insult owing to the incident
- School teachers, village level functionaries and prominent members of the community should be motivated to report any matter of sexual abuse in children and brought to the notice of village panchayat members
- Making arrangements to provide counselling and rebuild confidence of the victimised child

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Ask the participants to discuss the above points and whether they agree with them. Motivate them to add any left out points.
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Step 7

Monitoring mechanism and data collection

Share with participants that cases of sexual abuse of children in villages in India is fairly common but no specific government agency collects data related to these. However, Department of Women and Child Development and some NGOs who are working in the field of child protection and issues related to children can share figures related to such incidents. But if panchayat members desire, they can collect some figures and facts related to this at the village level also and can use them for monitoring cases of sexual abuse of children. Some indicators related to the issue can be as below:

- ⇒ Number of incidents where children have been sexually abused/number of children who have been sexually abused
- ⇒ Number of cases reported for child sexual abuse with police station associated with the village
- ⇒ Number of people arrested or punished for abusing children

Summarise the discussion as below:

These facts and figures can provide a monitoring mechanism to keep an eye on incidents of sexual abuse of children in the village and also help in protecting the children from abuse by making necessary plans

Repeat the key messages and end the session after thanking the participants.

