

multiply through raising awareness...

kamer's methods for standing up against violence

We realized that unless we established equal relationships, overcame our feelings of competition, perceived the more subtle forms of violence, behaved openly, delivered positive and negative criticism, and were ready to listen to what others had to say, there was always the risk of reproducing sexism.





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Nebahat Akkoç has received the Amnesty International
Ginetta Sagan Human Rights Award in 2004.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of
Ginetta Sagan due the considerable work she has done
on human rights.

This publication was prepared with the contribution of SIDA.

“The methods women developed while struggling
to free themselves from violence made it
possible for us to imagine a new world.”

CONTENTS

PREFACE	105
1- WHY WAS THIS PUBLICATION PREPARED?	109
2- HOW WAS THIS PUBLICATION PREPARED?	113
3- WHAT ARE EMERGENCY SUPPORT CENTERS, WHAT ARE THEY NOT?	117
4- WHO CAN WORK AT EMERGENCY SUPPORT CENTERS?	121
5- HOW SHOULD OUR INTERVIEW ROOMS BE?	127
6- OUR PRINCIPLES WHILE WORKING WITH WOMEN WHO REQUEST SUPPORT	129
7- HOW SHOULD WE START THE CONVERSATION?	143
8- IN CASE OF MURDER RISKS...	153
9- METHODS FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARE OF DISABLED PEOPLE	161
10- OUR METHODS FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE WHOM WE ENCOUNTER DURING HOUSE VISITS	163
11- 'COLLABORATIONS' WHILE WORKING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	165
12- HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES?	169
13- KAMER'S FEMINISM	173
14- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	181
15- PUBLICATIONS	189
16- CONTACT INFORMATION	191

PREFACE

The first draft of this edition was published in 2007 on the 10th anniversary of KAMER. The draft was used, evaluated, criticized and suggestions were made by many women's organizations. We have prepared the publication again by putting on what we have gained during this process.

Since 1997, KAMER has been supporting thousands of women through the Emergency Support Line. We had decided to build an Emergency Help Line based on the needs identified before KAMER was established.

Based on the observations made before KAMER's establishment, our assessment on "violence against women" were as follows:

"We, women, regardless of where we live and our social, economic and educational characteristics, were subjected to violence. Some of us were aware of the violence we were subjected to, some of us weren't. Most of us accepted violence as a natural outcome of womanhood."

Two practices came out of this assessment.

The first practice:

Activities to question our traditional perceptions, to gain awareness on our secondary status in the society, to develop strength and methods to change it.

We found out that “Awareness Raising Group Workshops” are the best method for this progress. Awareness raising groups have been running since 1996, before KAMER was founded, and are still ongoing extensively.

Through these workshops we overcame the loneliness and the feeling of shame caused by being subjected to violence. We gained awareness that we had to be empowered in every aspect in order to stand up against violence.

Our second practice:

While struggling to free ourselves from violence, we felt the need for a women’s organization where women can get support.

To satisfy this need, we started operating the “Emergency Help Line”. After a while, we determined that what we were doing was not “helping” each other but providing “support.” The relation between one who is helping and one who is helped could have jeopardized the relationship we were dreaming of establishing between two equals. None of us were “saved.” As a result of this awareness, we changed the name “Emergency Help Line” to “Emergency Support Centers.”

Women who become aware and decide to free themselves from the violence in their lives can apply for this service for emergency support, which has been active since December 1997.

Actually when we established KAMER in August 1997, we had no knowledge and experience. To learn; we researched a lot, worked hard, and discussed a lot.

On December 1, 1997, the first woman knocked on KAMER’s door to get support to free herself from the violence she was experiencing. There were three more applications on that same day. Support applications have been increasing everyday ever since.

We started each dialogue knowing the limitations and importance of the work we are doing.

What we should be doing was “**sharing the awareness we had and building solidarity.**” We would be overcoming loneliness and shame; we would be empowered by sharing and solidarity.

While standing next to the women who needed our support, we also tried to formulate “KAMER’s methods for standing up against violence”.

We received important contributions from many organizations and individuals in developing these methods. We learned new things through our collaborations with each one of them. We built on this knowledge with our experiences, we shared, discussed and evaluated. We have learned and developed more with each sharing. We have developed a working method with which we got good results.

We never perceived ourselves as actors who can completely resolve the women’s issue.

This is how we perceived our role:

“On the way to gender equality, pointing out women’s issues from different aspects, putting them on the agenda, developing methods for their resolution, and sharing the methods we developed.”

We know how prevalent violence is.

We know that unless the feelings of shame and despair associated with the violence we are subjected to are shared, there cannot be a further step.

We know that we will be multiplied in numbers by sharing our awareness.

We shared our experience of awareness groups with everyone who requested. This sharing resulted in the establishment of 23 KAMER Women’s Centers in 23 different provinces. In addition, gender equality movement gained momentum in ten other provinces in different regions of Turkey through the sharing of this method.

With this publication we again want to share the methods we have developed while struggling to free ourselves from violence.

With hopes that we will continue to multiply through sharing...

Nebahat Akkoç

1. WHY WAS THIS PUBLICATION PREPARED?

Here is a story of Hodja Nasreddin, told to us by a woman who visited KAMER to describe us. Since we think the story fits us well, we also repeat the story quite often.

“Hodja starts to fall down from a chimney. One of the onlookers starts screaming:

- *Hodja is falling down, call the doctor,* he says. Hodja hears the comment and starts yelling back.
- *Not a doctor, call someone who also fell down a chimney before.”*

Maybe there was a doctor to be called for the Hodja. However, there was nobody seeing us fall down or offering us to call a doctor.

Basically, I can tell you that we gathered together upon hearing each other when everybody was screaming in the midst of violence. We started doing what we are doing because of the violence we experienced, sometimes directly sometimes indirectly. Our aim was to question the violence, become aware and raise awareness among others, and do something for ourselves.

We started recognizing the relations between various types of violence and that domestic violence is the most normalized form of violence after we started our work.

We know that violence against women is experienced all over the world even if in different forms and prevalence.

And we also know that we are living in a region where the violence is experienced in such form and frequency that it violates women's bodies and their right to live.

Right at this point, the ones who "fell down a chimney" had to do something.

KAMER experience is very important in that women held onto each other to free themselves from violence.

This process has thought us a lot.

We know that we, the women in our region, the Middle East of the world, with the poverty, the lack of education opportunities, and violence experienced everyday and everywhere, can expect no support from anyone except each other for another couple of decades.

This is because:

Violence is still perceived as a legitimate method.

We live in a traditional system where violence against women is accepted as normal.

We are objects at home, in schools, on the streets, at the government agencies, everywhere and in every case. We are women and we are expected to accept whatever is deemed appropriate for us.

We had no hope to change and transform this traditional system. We were desperate, hopeless and full of fear, without realizing that this was a result of the violence we were subjected to.

KAMER became the light of hope in this pessimistic picture.

We listened to each other, leaned on each other, tried to empower each other. We described violence, discrimination, and hierarchy. We tried to develop communication methods that exclude them. We learned not to judge each other, not to feel ashamed because of the violence we were experiencing; we also learned openness and solidarity.

The Emergency Support Centers were built on the new communication methods we had learned. The methods developed supported thousands of women to realize violence and to make efforts to free themselves from it.

We became each other's doctors.

We built a system whereby the ones who gained awareness supported the others to also gain awareness. We became thousands of women with awareness and engaged in efforts to change the traditional society we live in. We saw that the methods developed worked well, so we wanted to share.

Hence, we prepared this publication.

We planned to have this publication as a resource for the 23 Women's Centers in the East and Southeast of Anatolia, and as a handbook for women all over the world.

2. HOW WAS THIS PUBLICATION PREPARED?

When we were setting up KAMER's Emergency Support Centers, we got the support of volunteers from Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation and Ankara Foundation for Women's Solidarity.

There were two women's organizations in Turkey working on the violence against women: one in Ankara, Foundation for Women's Solidarity, and one in Istanbul, Mor Çatı. We worked with Saadet, Birgül, Birsen from Mor Çatı and Nurhayat from Ankara Foundation for Women's Solidarity.

Before KAMER's Emergency Help Line was launched, psychologist Insa Wessendorf from Germany, who had worked on violence against women in her country, started living in Diyarbakır and working with KAMER.

KAMER, with extensive organization in the two regions today, received important contributions from Insa and all the women we name here, and perhaps others we have forgotten to name in this publication, in developing the methods employed by Emergency Support Centers.

We got support from psychologist Jülide Aral and psychologist Ufuk Sezgin on violence against women and methods to deal with violence. We have been with psychologist Jülide Aral since 1998 and have done a lot of work together. Most importantly, Jülide has been the facilitator of our work group. We needed someone out of the group facilitating

the communication to ensure openness, participation and transparency in our group. We implemented this with Jülide.

Şahika Yüksel and Fatmagül Berktaş have contributed to our strength since the beginning.

Ayşe Gül Altınay contributed to our strength by preparing a publication which showed us the positive effects of our work.

All these women nourished us with their significant support.

We have added our ten years of experience to what we learned from these women. We have learned something new from each woman who asked for our support. We discussed and described violence, the different forms it takes, and how it harms us based on our own experiences.

“We perceive any interference which objectifies us, prevents us from thinking, deciding, and living based on our decisions as violence.”

We know that violence is not only physical, but also emotional, psychological, economic, verbal and sexual.

Since murders committed in the name of “honor” cost women’s lives and physical violence causes physical harm, organ loss or disability, and because these forms of violence are typically accompanied by other forms of violence, they are more readily recognizable and can be intervened more quickly.

On the other hand, psychological violence is very difficult to diagnose and can continue for years. Because it can be experienced for years without being recognized, its damage is deeper and recovery can take years.

We have learned from each other that because the violence we experience forces us to engage our efforts and strength every day to escape violence and save the day, it strips us off our creativity, entrepreneurship, and productivity; it makes us into desperate, passive, fearful objects with no self-confidence.

This publication builds on these experiences.

Throughout this work, each one of us were at providing and receiving ends of support at different points. Hence, we started to recognize what types of relationship and communication promoted awareness and this is what we want to share.

Actually, at the core of it all are new forms of relationship and communication that are nondiscriminatory, nonviolent, transparent, and egalitarian. By replacing those that objectify us with these new forms, we can recognize the violence we experience, deal with it, and become the subjects of our own lives.

3. WHAT ARE EMERGENCY SUPPORT CENTERS, WHAT ARE THEY NOT?

¬ Emergency Support Centers are not charity centers.

According to KAMER's principles, the labeling of solidarity among women as "help" creates hierarchy (which destroys the relationship between equals and pushes us into roles as "victims" and "saviors"). Furthermore, no goods or no money is distributed at these centers.

What started as the Emergency Help Line at the foundation of KAMER continues today as Emergency Support Centers.

¬ Emergency Support Centers are centers where women experiencing violence apply for support.

Women feel safe at the centers and share their experiences.

They rid themselves of:

- The feeling of shame and guilt caused by the violence as they can share their experiences without being judged;
- The feeling of loneliness, as they recognize that violence against women is a universal problem;
- The feeling of helplessness, as they learn about the laws that can protect them and that there are many things they can do to free themselves from violence.

They are not left alone as they try to implement their own decisions about their lives. They have the support of the staff and volunteers of Emergency Support Centers.

¬ Emergency Support Centers are more than telephone lines.

Although telephones are sometimes used to ask for support, they are in fact tools for reaching KAMER and for making appointments to meet in-person. When women come to the centers, they give a significant sign that they have decided to do something for themselves. This is very important as the very first step to stand up against violence.

¬ These centers provide a space for women experiencing violence, where they feel safe and can cope with the shame, loneliness and helplessness caused by the violence, and where they meet face-to-face to get the psychological, legal and other emergency support they need.

¬ Emergency Support Centers are not therapy centers.

These centers are support and solidarity centers where women with awareness on different types of violence and ways of dealing violence cooperate with other women to raise their awareness.

These centers are open five days a week between 08:30 and 18:00.

It is possible to reach the Emergency Support Centers at nights and on the weekends by the phone line that operates 24/7.

¬ Emergency Support Centers are not offices where you can go at any time.

These centers were opened for us women to get the support we need from each other. They are not places to come to sit around and chat or places to spend spare time at. Alternative spaces should be created for these purposes.

¬ Except in cases where a woman's life is at risk or she is fleeing violence, these centers operate on appointment basis.

The appointment system is indispensable both for the psychological well-being of women working at these centers, to maintain some order at these centers, and to ensure the privacy of the women who go there

as they typically do not want to run into other women.

However, immediate support is provided to women who run away from violence or if they are under the threat of a possible murder.

→ **Even if we collaborate with men at Emergency Support Centers, they are not locations frequented by men.**

Women typically reach out to the Emergency Support Centers because they experience violence by men. It is very important that women feel safe at these centers. They should be confident that their fathers, husbands or any other men will not be allowed in the centers so they can feel safe. Therefore, it is very important that no man is present while a woman receives support at the Emergency Support Centers.

→ **Emergency Support Centers are places where only women applying for support or participating in awareness group workshops come after making appointments.**

4. WHO CAN WORK AT EMERGENCY SUPPORT CENTERS?

We believe that women who will work at Emergency Support Centers to give support to other women who become aware of the violence they experience and reach out to free themselves of this violence should be evaluated based on various criteria.

A woman who will be supporting other women who ask for support should first of all:

- Have attended awareness raising group workshops,
- Have become aware of sexism and her own experiences,
- Be working hard to transform her own traditional position,
- Be on the side of women,
- Be open to communication,
- Be on the side of sharing, solidarity and openness.

If they feel prepared to listen to violence, they should;

- Participate in knowledge and experience sharing activities with women who had done this work before,
- Go through a trial period with women who have experience on working with violence,
- Should decide after discussing with the group whether or not they can work with violence.

Only after completing this process should they start to work at Emergency Support Centers to support other women experiencing violence.

This is how some of the women who have completed awareness raising group workshops, questioned their traditional positions, gone through the necessary processes and started working at Emergency Support Centers shared their thoughts and feelings on this process:

A women working as a civil servant and an active member of a union:

I am amazed, I never knew to say “I” at all, I wasn’t even aware that there was an “I”. I had never thought of figuring out my own feelings and thoughts, formulating them in sentences, or expressing them at all. Maybe I thought there was no need for it. There was always someone doing the thinking and talking, perhaps I supposed there was no need for my efforts. I don’t know why I did it. It was always what the leader, the members or others said that was important. I had to work hard to get use to saying “I”, to internalize being “me”. Now I am working hard to support other women so they can also discover themselves...

Another woman:

*I am enjoying discovering myself. It is as if I am playing a game. I try to re-discover everything I know and figure out my own feelings and thoughts about them. **I care about “me”.** I care **about women.***

A woman who is member of a large, traditional family:

I try to express my thoughts on daily ordinary things and try to get them heard. People around look at me with a confused look. They will get used to it, they have no other choice. Now “I” also exist. I facilitate awareness group workshops and also support other women who are trying to deal with violence. As they also start saying “I”, we multiply in numbers.”

Here is another woman working at the Emergency Support Center and facilitating group workshops:

The language and behavior we have recently learned are direct alternatives to the traditional. We freed ourselves from being

controlled, which we were accustomed to, and started expressing our own preferences. It is important to become "I" with social consciousness. Not to overlook the difference between being "I" and being selfish.

The relation between "I" and the rest of the people around.

As women who were accustomed to live as directed by others, our process of "self-discovery," had started. We had become aware of "I". But what about the others?

What was going to happen to the society we were all living in and to the fathers, mothers, husbands, brothers, families and relatives who had authority on us?

During the same group workshops we discussed these and similar topics. Another thing we became aware of was that "the rest of the people around us also have assigned roles. They were also playing the roles shaped by patriarchy and traditions."

But now there was an important difference between us. We had the "awareness" but they still did not. This would be our duty.

While empowering the "I" on the one hand, we would be trying to raise the awareness of those around us on the other.

Before women with the aforementioned criteria start working with violence cases, they should:

- Get practical training at an experienced women's center,
- Receive their first experience in the company of someone more experienced,
- Share how they felt and what they observed during this training period in order to evaluate whether they are willing to work with violence cases.

After starting to work at Emergency Support Centers, they should:

- Share their feelings and thoughts after each interview with other women doing the same work,

- Share and evaluate the situation with the group in case they do not feel well during the interview and can not cope with it,
- If possible, come together with a psychologist once month to get support to relieve the psychological fatigue caused by listening to stories of violence.

WHO SHOULD NOT WORK AT EMERGENCY SUPPORT CENTERS?

- Women who had not attended awareness groups,
- Women who, even if they attended groups, who have not experienced self-awareness and continue live with their traditional relations,
- Women who are not yet aware of the violence they experience and/or have not started to deal with it yet,
- Women who remember the violence experienced and cannot differentiate between her experience and that of the women in front of her,
- And women who, even if they match all the other criteria, start to feel bad when working with violence cases should not be working at Emergency Support Centers.

Here is an experience regarding the challenges of this work:

We all have our standards of traditional womanhood based on our life experiences. Almost all of these standards were to maintain and strengthen the secondary status of woman. For sure, we would overcome them all one by one. We would change everything that had to be changed.

We had two options to realize this:

Be content within the bounds of our individual lives or to work to raise awareness of other women. Every woman who participated in group workshops had the chance to choose one of these two options.

If we chose to work with a “women’s human rights” organization, then we needed to take into account the challenges as well...

The work we were doing was considered differently by different groups:

- *The ones who claimed that they would also save women while saving the world;*
- *The ones who considered putting women’s issue on the agenda while the Kurdish issue is still unresolved to be a betrayal to the Kurdish movement;*
- *Those asking “What are they doing to our women? What are they making them do?”;*
- *Those who did not take our work seriously, made fun of it, talking sarcastically about our work each time they see us, and telling us they will establish a men’s organization very soon.*

The common point of these different perceptions was that they were defining us women simply working to develop a comfort zone for ourselves.

In short, “We were swimming against the stream and there was no going back.”

We had to see and hear every comment and continue anyway.

From the moment our existence was recognized, every move we made was followed with great curiosity. It was a milestone.

We understood that “the area where the work is done could not be the spaces of liberation for women doing the advocacy.” This was a difficult conclusion. Although we had gotten on the road in the name of liberation, we had to give up some of our own freedoms.

After years of work, as a women’s movement that succeeded in becoming a grassroots social movement, we believe that this stance protected us from being marginalized and extraordinary, and contributed to our acceptance and growth.

5. HOW SHOULD OUR INTERVIEW ROOMS BE?

One of the rooms away from the main entrance of Women's Centers should be prepared as the interview room.

We first need to ensure that the women who come to us for support feel safe. As we experience quite often, husbands, fathers or other relatives might follow women to our centers. Therefore, interview rooms should be away from the main entrance and we should never let anybody who asks for her in.

Interview rooms should be away from street noise.

Women who recognize the violence they experience and ask for support to deal with it come from noisy and fearful environments.

Therefore, it is very important to calm her down. It is also important to prevent any outside noise from interrupting the interview. Hence, it is important to ensure that interview rooms are free from street noise and any other interference from the women's centers.

The decoration of the interview rooms should be plain.

There should not be any furniture other than two comfortable chairs or armchairs, two cushions on the floor, a small table and a cabinet.

The table might be used to write on when necessary and to place any resource materials that might be needed during the interview.

There may be a computer on the table to record the application data; however the computer should not be on during the interview.

The cabinet should be locked; application forms, either filled or empty, should be in the locked cabinets.

There may be some relaxing posters or photos on the walls. There should not be any photos or posters with violent content in the room.

It should be decorated with soft colors.

There should not be any phones in the interview rooms; mobile phones should be left in another room or should be turned off.

Seating in the interview rooms:

KAMER's principles of being on the side of women's human rights, sharing, solidarity, and against violence, discrimination, and hierarchy, and thinking globally while working locally are all at the heart of all of our work. These principles should always be taken into account while doing any planning, programming, and logistical preparation.

In line with our principles;

- ¬ There should not be any chairs or armchairs behind the table in our interview rooms.
- ¬ We should make sure that the woman asking for support enters the interview room first and chooses the seating she prefers.
- ¬ We should take the seat facing the seat she chose.
- ¬ It is important the chairs and cushions are places such that the two women can build a mutual and balanced relationship.
- ¬ Sitting uncomfortably at the edge of the chair or other behavior that will make the woman think we are building a hierarchy would weaken her confidence in us.
- ¬ Without leaning forward towards her, our sitting position should convey that we are ready to listen to her.
- ¬ We should keep the door closed during the interview. This will minimize interference and build her confidence that whatever she tells will remain between us.

6. OUR PRINCIPLES WHILE WORKING WITH WOMEN WHO REQUEST SUPPORT

The principles we follow at Emergency Support Centers are reflections of KAMER's fundamental principles of independence, equality, non-discrimination and non-violence, sharing, solidarity, and thinking universally working locally.

Each of the following principles is indispensable:

- **Unconditional acceptance (unconditional respect)**
- **No judging**
- **Not giving prescriptions**
- **Establishing equal relationships**
- **Developing empathy**
- **Confidentiality**

¬ Unconditional Acceptance:

Accepting any women—dirty, poor, ill, belonging to a different identity or any other profile—who comes to our centers unconditionally shows that we have coped with our discrimination. Non-discrimination is one of our key principles. However, transforming all that has been taught to us for years and developing a new mentality is a difficult and long process.

If we realize that we cannot behave normally towards a woman who come to our center, sharing this with our colleagues and trying to find the reason will enable us to see our discriminatory side.

We have to know that:

We owe our existence in the women's movements to them. We exist with them.

Our awareness does not carry much meaning by itself. If our goal is social transformation, then the number of people with awareness on violence and dreams of a life free of violence needs to multiply.

For this reason:

- When a woman comes to our center, it is very important to welcome her and be caring. When women, who in most contexts are made to feel uncared for, come to our centers, they should be greeted at the door with a smile, shown a place to sit and asked what she would like to drink. Unconditional respect allows us to establish a natural and balanced relationship with a person we have just met. Lack of attention or exaggerated attention can lead to mistrust from the very start.
- While welcoming every woman who comes to our centers with great care, we also need to make sure that she soon feels at home there. For example, after her first visit we can take her to the kitchen and tell her that she can help herself.
- It is very important to build trust at the first meeting. Except under very difficult circumstances, women do not ask for support from someone they do not trust. Therefore, we should be very careful not to instill feelings of mistrust in women who do not know us yet. For instance, keeping in mind that she might not feel comfortable sitting in a crowd as she might not want to be identified, taking her to a room where she can sit by herself is a good step in building her trust. This is also necessary for our confidentiality principle.
- Since the woman might feel uncomfortable particularly at the first visit, it is very important to go to the interview room with her. We should let the woman walk in first and

choose the seating she would feel most comfortable with, and sit on the floor or the chair, depending on her choice; this will be an important step in creating an equal relationship.

- The woman might feel uncomfortable to start talking during the first visit. Therefore, we should start the conversation. We can introduce ourselves and tell her about the work we do.
- We should not get stuck on the details of her story and just accept whatever she tells us as the truth. It is not the details that are important; it is the situation she is in and her feelings. Our duty is to make the woman feel that she is not alone, she is in a comfortable and secure environment, that she should not feel ashamed because of the violence she was subjected to, and to support her in figuring out what she wants. Therefore, we do not need to inquire about the details of her story. Besides, feeling like we are questioning her might make it more difficult for her to trust us.

We should respect the feelings and opinions of women who come to our centers for support, regardless of how different they are from ours. Our aim is to come together with women at the common denominator of womanhood.

→ **Never Judge for any Reason:**

To judge a person is to accuse; the woman would defend herself as a reaction. As we discuss in our awareness groups, the communication style we are used to is generally judgmental. Besides, judging does not always happen openly or verbally. A suggestion or our manners might cause the woman to feel judged and interfere with open communication.

Women might come to the center several times to get support for the same issue. They may decide they are not ready and back out; then start all over again. We have no right to get angry with them. If we notice

that she comes several times just to talk and be relieved, with no willingness to take any steps, then we can warn her about this.

We thought that sharing the experiences of the women working at our centers might be helpful in this regard.

Example: Woman might have hit her child.

Behavior I: Saying “why did you hit?” will drive the woman to start defending herself and it will impede communication for mutual understanding.

Behavior II: It will be helpful to start a conversation on the negative effects of violence.

Example: To a woman who was beaten by her husband.

Behavior I: Asking questions like “What had happened? What did you do?” is judgmental. These questions suggest that violence might be justified in some circumstances; they normalize violence.

Behavior II: Starting the conversation by stating how universal the problem of violence is will be a useful way to start communication: “Although nobody has the right to use violence against anybody, unfortunately we all experience violence.”

Example: “My daughter wanted to bring her boyfriend home. She did not even consider if we were ready for this or not, she did not tell us. I said “how could you do this?” and we started arguing. We still have not made up.

Behavior I: Instead of statements like “Why were you angry with her?” or “You were right to get angry,” which reflect our own judgments,

Behavior II: Saying something like “Let’s find the reasons that made you angry, sharing these with your daughter might help you find a middle ground” will help the woman figure out her own thoughts, feelings, and reasons.

Example: A woman wearing a mini skirt was assaulted.

Behavior I: "Why didn't you wear something longer?" is a judgmental approach which suggests how we dress might legitimate assault.

Behavior II: It is important to explain to the woman that sexual assault is a form of violence, the responsibility lies with the abuser not with the survivor, and assault cannot be legitimized under any circumstances.

Example: The woman talks about her problems, also telling us how she approaches the issues.

Behavior I: "I guess you do this all the time" is judgmental.

Behavior II: Asking questions like "What made you act this way?" geared towards better understanding what she expects from us will be more helpful.

Example: A woman says "I live with my brother."

Behavior I: "Really? How can you live with your brother?" is judgmental.

Behavior II: Without being judgmental about her circumstances, try to understand what her problem is and how we can be of support.

Example: You think that the woman applying to the woman's center should get divorced.

Behavior I: "If I were you, I would have divorced him by now. How did you bear it this long?" is also a judgmental approach.

Behavior II: It would be helpful to start with a question like "What are you planning to do?" and follow with a conversation about her rights during and after a divorce process, in order to support her in figuring out what she wants to do.

Example: Woman tells us that she is a lesbian.

Behavior I: Any surprise or anger we show verbally or behaviorally will push the woman away from us. Therefore, we should

work at Emergency Support Centers with full awareness and being in control of our feelings on different sexual orientations.

Behavior II: We should respond in our usual manner such as by asking what brought her there.

¬ Do not Give Out Prescriptions:

The work done at Emergency Support Centers can be described in three phases.

First phase:

We should convince women applying to our centers that:

- They should not feel ashamed because of the violence inflicted on them;
- Violence against women is a universal problem, thousands of women face the same problem every day, so she should not feel alone;
- Violence cannot be justified under any circumstances;
- It is possible to free herself from violence;
- We should also inform her about her rights.

Second phase:

The woman will be making a decision about her life. She has every right to make that decision herself and we have no right to interfere her decision. If she asks, we can go over the possible positive and negative consequences of her decision together.

Third phase:

- Supporting the woman during the process of implementing her decisions,
- Not leaving her alone,
- If she wants to access her legal rights, directing her to a lawyer,

- If she wants medical therapy, supporting her with mental and physical care,
- If she wants to work, looking for various job opportunities and creating new ones.

We should not give prescriptions to a woman who comes to us for support, in other words, we should not give suggestions on how she should solve her problems and we should not push her to proceed according to our suggestions.

- The most negative effect of violence is giving up living according to our own choices. Therefore, even the small choices we make are important in making us the subjects of our own lives again. Going along with somebody else's suggestions sabotages this process. We should be content with empowering women to make their own decisions, to see the advantages and disadvantages of these decisions and supporting them in realizing these decisions.
- Interfering with the decisions of a woman who comes to us for support, giving prescriptions in other words, makes us responsible for any negative results. It is highly likely that she will hold us accountable if she is later disappointed with the decision. Consequently, we might be facing the anger of her and those around her.

Statements we should never use

- "If I were you I would file a claim," or any other sentence starting with "if I were you"
- "Are you going to try again?"
- "How did you take it so long?"
- "Won't they get angry if you file a claim?"

These are all statements that are judgmental and suggest prescriptions. Therefore, they should not be used.

Example: A woman we are closely acquainted with applied for support. If we know what she has been experiencing, can we comment while taking her application?

First of all, if it is possible we should not interview a woman we know closely. If we end up interviewing her, we should put everything we know aside and listen to her. Her own experience and feelings are fundamental; also things may not be as they appear to be from the outside.

By commenting, we might put ourselves in a position of deciding for her or influencing her decision.

They may only be looking for our approval for their decisions. Approving also constitutes giving a prescription. The most we can do is support them in listing the advantages and disadvantages of their decisions.

Example: Let's assume that the woman is planning to do something that will do harm to someone else and she does not realize the consequences. She is planning to report on her husband to get him fired.

Behavior I: "If your husband is fired then you will not be able to get alimony for your children." This is a judgmental approach.

Behavior II: "What might be the possible positive and negative outcomes if you do this?" By asking such questions we can support the woman to think about the different consequences herself.

Example: The woman might ask us to talk to her husband or family.

Behavior I: If we talk to the woman's husband or family, we would be interfering.

Behavior II: When we are taking her application for support it is important that,

- She feels that we are listening to her with attention and caring,

- She experiences awareness on what she has been going through,
- We support her in making her own decisions, and
- We support her in realizing decisions.

Women should face their own realities and launch their own struggles to free themselves from violence. Our role is to support them during this process.

→ Establishing an Equal Relationship:

A woman who comes to our center might have recently experienced violence and she might be going through negative feelings as a result.

The only difference between her and us is that we have started facing the violence we are exposed to and have already made an effort to free ourselves from it. Even though this is the only difference between us, we should try to build an equal relationship without forgetting that we are the ones providing support and she is the one requesting it. This is the accurate description of the situation and by internalizing this we can develop the proper manners.

If we cannot put all other differences aside and internalize this position, we would have difficulty developing proper communication.

Example: Can't I build an equal relationship if the woman sits on the cushion on the floor and I sit on a chair?

Seating is important. The woman applying for support should enter the interview room first and sit wherever she wants. We can sit opposite to her after she makes her choice. If we cannot sit on the floor because of any health reasons, we have to explain the situation to the woman and encourage the woman sit on the chair as well.

We cannot build an equal relationship if she sits on the floor and we sit higher.

If we cross our legs while she does not, this could also convey a message of superiority.

Example: I was dressed specially for a dinner I was going to that evening. I felt that women were treating me differently that day. Could this be because of my outfit?

We went through a process of awareness but the women coming to us for support have not gone through that process yet. Therefore, any outfits that fall outside the social norms might create distance between us and the women. So, we have to be careful about this issue. It is appropriate to dress comfortably, clean, and avoid revealing outfits.

If we had to wear something out of the ordinary, to which we think the woman will pay attention, we should try to explain to her our reasons.

Question: Does that mean that we are making concessions on our freedoms while trying to support the liberation of women coming to our centers?

Working for women's freedoms at a woman's center requires making that concession. Isn't this a matter of choice? We can choose not to work at these centers and live according to our wishes. However, if we choose to work at these centers and see them as areas of change and transformation, we should also know that everything we do is followed with scrutiny. This is one of the questions we get at meetings.

What do you want to achieve?

What are your new standards?

What do you recommend to women?

We tell them that "we are trying to ensure that every woman can live freely and equally, in accordance with her own choices." We are not imposing any particular life style on anybody.

As a result, "**The spaces we create for women's liberation cannot be the spaces of freedom for us."**

¬ Developing Empathy:

Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in someone else's shoes temporarily and as a conscious decision in order to understand her feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Sharing similar experiences makes it easier to put ourselves in someone else's position. Violence against women is our common problem and we all have experienced it in different ways. If we have not realized and accepted this, we should not be working at these centers.

If we do not respect a woman who comes to our center and cannot build an equal relationship with her, it would not be possible to develop empathy towards her.

To understand how the women think, how they feel, and what they might go through, it is also important to know the local norms and values on women. Our principle of thinking universally while acting locally is very important in this regard. Something which might not be important for a survivor of violence in one part of the world, may be vital for the survival of a woman elsewhere

Example: A gossip in some cases might cost a woman's life. In another region, it may just be a nuisance.

Example: When talking about cowife marriages or concubines (kuma) at a meeting abroad, someone from the audiences suggested that "the woman can take her revenge by cheating on her husband." It proved very difficult to explain that this would cost her life in Turkey.

Developing empathy helps us understand the woman who comes to us for support, but it has boundaries. To suffer, to get scared, and to feel desperate along with her has nothing to do with empathy. Feeling this way might indicate the presence of something in our own lives that we have not dealt with yet. If this happens, we should consult with our colleagues.

¬ Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is one the key principles that ensures women's trust in us and enables us to carry on with our work.

At the very beginning of each interview we should make clear that everything will be kept confidential. This will help build women's confidence in us as she will know that nothing she tells us will be leaked outside, to the media or elsewhere.

Women might also have boundaries in how much they want to share with us. They might want to keep some parts of their story to themselves. We should respect this. We should not ask questions to dig further. The one asking for support is the one who best knows what to do and how to do it.

If they request any legal or psychological support, then they will need to talk about the details with the lawyer or the psychologist.

Our primary responsibility is to support her in figuring out how she can free herself of violence and to support her during this process when necessary.

Example: When we first established KAMER we had to put a lot of effort into build women's confidence in us. We told them we did not even need to know their real names. There were several of them who did not reveal their names at the first visit. They started telling their real names and addresses when we established that trust after a couple visits.

Question: We sometimes run into women who had asked for our support outside. We do not know how to behave. What should we do?

Actually we have to solve this issue during our interviews with the women. We should act according to what the woman wants. Different women have stated what they want as follows:

- When there is someone with me act as if you do not know me at all.
- Act as if you do not know me; I will greet you if it is no problem.
- If you need to call me at home, do not talk unless I answer the phone.
- Call me around ... o'clock.
- It would not be a problem to talk to each other when we run into each other outside, I would be offended if you act as if you do not know me.

Question: If confidentiality is that important, why do we fill out forms?

Neither KAMER nor any other women's organization claims to be able to wipe out violence altogether. Our aim is to learn from women so we can develop the best policies for this. To develop a policy on violence, we need to find answers to questions such as the intensity of violence, where and how it is experienced.

The data we gather from women who come to us for support and its analysis both helps us in improving our support services and strengthens our lobbying and advocacy for better policies against violence. We also regularly fill out forms to follow up on the types of support a woman needs to deal with violence and whether she can receive that support.

Once we upload the data on the forms onto a computer, we dispose of the forms.

If women share their address and phone numbers with us, we use those to invite them to our activities or, if they consented to it, to call them once in a while to ask how they are doing.

7. HOW SHOULD WE START CONVERSATION WHEN WOMEN COME TO US FOR SUPPORT?

Even though it was stated before, it will be helpful to remind again here what we are trying to do at our Emergency Support Centers, where our role starts and ends. Not perceiving our role correctly may harm us as well as the women we are trying to support.

- What sets us apart from the women we are trying to support is that we happened to experience awareness on violence, received support, and started dealing with it before they did.
- Our experiences make it easier to empathize with the feelings of women who come to us for support.
- Along with the methods we have developed for dealing with violence, we also know how violence is internalized in every aspects of life, how difficult it is to gain awareness and how painful this process is, and how communication based on hierarchy and discrimination feed violence; however, the women who come to us for support may not be at this point yet.
- Since we are the first ones listening to them and giving emergency support, we have to keep in mind this awareness process.
- We are not therapists or healers.
- We are not judges.

- We cannot know the woman's life and feelings better than her.
- Our role is to raise her awareness on violence, the magnitude of the problem and how it is reflected in life; to make her feel more powerful and list her options by emphasizing the importance of her own strength and efforts, and to support her through this tough journey.
- We have all noticed the difference between the despair in women's eyes when they first come to us and the determination and assertiveness in later visits. To see this change is the biggest prize for us.

Starting the conversation:

Once we are clear about our role, we can adjust the way we start the conversation based on the woman's situation.

While we prefer to talk to women face-to-face, sometimes this is not possible since she cannot leave home or because she lives far away, hence asks for support on the phone.

Whether on the phone or face-to-face, the same principles of communication apply.

We prefer face-to-face meetings since:

- We can be more supportive that way,
- Feeling the energy at the women's center empowers the women,
- We can balance the conversation when a woman keeps quiet or talks too much and is incomprehensible due to what she is going through,
- Seeing her expressions helps us understand her feelings,
- Women feel secure at women's centers.

Example: The woman was physically injured when she came to the center.

She had experienced physical violence right before she came to our

center. I took her to the interview room and told her that she can make herself comfortable and feel secure here, she can stay here by herself for a while if she prefers, and we would never let anybody in even if she was being followed. I also asked her if she would like something to drink. She asked for water and tea. When I brought those to her, she was lying on the cushions on the floor.

I sat down next to her.

I asked her, "Does it hurt?" She started crying. She started telling me that they are a big family and she was beaten by her husband and her brother-in-law. She was longing for a house where she would be living only with her husband and children.

I told her that her injuries looked quite serious. I also told her that going to a doctor would be necessary for her health and the documentation of the violence. I explained that when we go to see the doctor the police on duty would interfere, ask her questions, and report it regardless of whether she wanted to press charges or not. (With the new Law for the Protection of Women and Family Members, doctors are no longer required to file a report.)

She said that she would press charges anyway. We took the necessary precautions so she would not be recognized and went to the doctor. She was examined, she testified to the police, and we went to the prosecutor to make her official complaint. We went to the notary afterwards to give a lawyer the power of attorney and came back to the center. She hid for a while. Afterwards some members of her family and that of her husband's wanted to support her.

After a while, she said that she wanted to go back home. Years have past and since then she has not experienced violence, she is living with her children and husband in a separate house and she is also working.

She said that she has never forgotten how I have asked her "Does it hurt?"

Example: A woman came in, she was completely worn out.

The doorbell rang, when I opened the door a woman who was totally exhausted came in. She was like a mass with no energy; she fell down as soon as she came in. I called out to my colleagues. We carried her to the interview room and laid her on the cushions.

We washed her face, rubbed her hands with some cologne and gave her water. My colleagues went out; I sat next to her for a while. She slept. When she woke up she told me that she had spent the night in the streets and she was very sleepy and hungry. I prepared some food for her. I left her alone to eat comfortably. She was better after a while. She had some energy to talk and to walk.

I tried to start a conversation by saying, “Do you know us? Who advised you to come here?”

The woman, who had no energy just a while ago, started talking without stopping and loudly.

Regardless of how hard I tried, it was not possible for me to understand what she wanted. I understood that she needed some therapy. I took her to a psychiatrist we had been working with. She received inpatient treatment. We were able to talk with her only after her treatment was over.

Example: She was already determined when she came in.

The woman at the door asked, “Is this KAMER?” Then she came in without waiting for my answer. Before we even entered the interview room she loudly said, “I want to get divorced. Find me a lawyer then I want a job.” She had not made an appointment. My colleague was interviewing another woman in the interview room. We generally do our best to ensure that the women do not run into each other.

I took her into an available room. I sat opposite to her. She was still listing her requests one after another.

I told her to calm down, that divorce requires some time and it does

not finalize that fast.

It was obvious that it had been quite difficult for her to make up her mind and she wanted to actualize her decisions as soon as possible. Since she was very clear about her requests we started talking about those.

I told her, "Fine, I can take you to a lawyer immediately; you can file your case today. Since you have made your mind up you should have thought about the process, know what you are going to do afterwards and I understand that you are ready."

She was still for a moment, and then started talking what might happen afterwards. She was very confused. I told her to consider the options together. She was relieved. We listed the advantages and disadvantages of the divorce. Then she went to the lawyer. At this first visit, she wanted to learn her rights and got the answers to her questions. She filed a divorce case after a while, however she was aware of the results of her each step...

Example: She was suicidal.

We wish we would never get suicidal applications. This is something far beyond us. However, sometimes there is a woman on the other side of the phone who is thinking about committing suicide.

During our first years we had a difficult time dealing with these cases. Then we got support on how to communicate with people with suicidal thoughts. Of course with the condition that we direct her to an expert after our first conversation.

Here is an experience we had with a woman considering suicide:

The phone rang, the woman calling was talking with a very low voice. I introduced myself to her. She did not want to tell her name. I asked her what we could do for her. She told me that she did not want anything, she had been experiencing physical violence for years, had been raped a couple of times, she had been trying to save herself but had no hope

left, she believed she had failed and that everybody was bad and she did not want to live anymore. I understood that she was thinking of suicide. My throat got dry all of a sudden. Even though I had learned what to do, I got nervous.

To calm down and to gain time, I started talking slowly.

I asked her questions. “What do you want to do? What is your request?”

“I don’t want anything, I just want you to know what I had been going through. I did not succeed the first time but I will kill myself this time.”

Trying not to show my anxiety, I said: “I understand you, suicide might also be a solution. However, since there is no going back afterwards, you should think it thoroughly first. If you tried everything and think that there is no any other way, it might be a possibility. I personally also failed to free myself from violence by struggling alone. However, I did succeed when I got support from other women. Maybe there are other ways you can find.”

She said “Nobody can do anything for me.” I said “Yes, you are right, but if you learn about the processes we had gone through, maybe you can do something for yourself.”

Finally, we agreed with her to postpone the suicide. I convinced her to visit KAMER. We did not talk about the suicide when she came back. I talked to her together with a colleague. There was an awareness group meeting at the center when she came. She saw many women. She asked us why they all were there. Then she decided to attend the awareness group as well. Each time she came, she looked more alive. After she was done with the group, she started to get psychological support and took steps to break her relations with the house she was living in.

Example: She had been experiencing violence for a long time.

She was calm and smiling when she came in. There was a five year

old girl with her. She had called the previous day for an appointment. I took her into the sitting room and spent some time with her and her daughter. I gave some toys, paper and crayons to the girl and told her that her mother and I would spend some time talking in the next room. Even though the woman told me that her daughter is well behaved and it would not be a problem, I tried to explain to her, without letting the daughter hear, that she should not be in the interview room. My colleague stayed with the girl and we went into the interview room.

I first asked her, "Are you familiar with KAMER?" She told me that she knew a little. I talked to her briefly about the work we do.

I told her, "Since you are here and already knew what we do, there must be something you want from us." Upon hearing this, she looked sad, her lips were trembling, and she was trying not to cry.

I said to her, "Why do you force yourself not to cry? You can talk and cry at the same time. If you like you can start with the reasons that brought you here."

She told me that she had been experiencing violence since her childhood, first at her father's house and then at her husband's. She accepted everything she was experiencing and believed that there was no any other choice for women. Then one of her neighbors came to KAMER recently and attended the awareness groups, after which, she noticed, her neighbor started to change, was empowered, and started to talk differently. She also wanted information on awareness group workshops.

She completed awareness raising group workshops. With the changes she made in her life, each time I see her, my eyes fill with tears.

Example: She came to ask for a job.

She had called the previous day and told that she needed a job immediately. I told her that even for a job we should meet first and gave her an appointment for the next day.

She showed up for the appointment. We went into the interview room. She told me that she came to the center for a job and she did not want anything else.

I asked her what she could do and what kind of a job she was looking for. I gave her the job application form to fill in and explained to her how the job application process goes. When the demands of an employee and a job seeker match, we introduce the two sides to each other and we step aside. However, we are always here for her support.

My aim was to encourage her to attend awareness groups.

I asked her, "Why do you need a job so immediately?"

Her husband had been unemployed for a long time, he had become increasingly angry and started to hurt her and the children. She was hoping that this would all be over once she got a job.

I asked her how her husband was behaving when he had a job.

She answered, "He was still angry but not this much."

"I cannot understand this; we are all starving but I and the children are beaten on top of that," she protested.

I talked to her about violence against women and awareness raising group workshops. She got a job soon after. Meanwhile, she attended awareness groups.

If it is difficult for us to start conversation, these questions might make help:

- How do you feel?
- What did you experience recently?
- What made you come here?
- How did you hear about us?
- Do you know what we do?

To clarify how we can support her,

We can ask questions like:

- Do you want me to list the types of support we can provide?
- What do you want from us at this point?
- What can we do for you?

To clarify the woman's requests and to make sure that we understand her correctly, we should give feedback to confirm that we understood correctly.

We take whatever she says as the truth.

We have to accept anything she describes about her life as it is, even if it does not sound convincing.

- We are not interrogating;
- We are not the ones following the legal process, hence needing correct information;
- We are not doing therapy;
- Our job is to boost their self-confidence so they can figure out what they want.
- We can make women feel self-confident by listening to them without judging or giving prescriptions, encouraging them not to feel ashamed because of the violence they experienced, and by sharing their feelings of loneliness. We do not need detailed information to achieve this.

We should make sure that women do not feel indebted to us.

We should not have any expectations from women in return for the work we do. If we are clear about this, it will be a lot easier for the women we are in contact with to understand this as well.

Women may be inclined to feel indebted as they feel valuable and receive the support they request. This might have undesired consequences for our relationship with the women.

Therefore, during our interviews we should emphasize:

- It is KAMER that is doing this work,

- We are not providing any support individually,
- We are doing our job and they should not feel indebted to us,
- We give the same support to thousands of other women,
- They can also become KAMER volunteers when they feel ready so they can support other women.

We should not accept any presents from the women we support. If they insist, we can suggest that they make donations to KAMER.

Talking through mediators does not help women who want the support.

There may be a woman calling or visiting us to get support for another woman. Unless it is an emergency and her life is in danger, we should not accept communication through mediators.

Because:

- The important point is to start making decisions for ourselves.
- The most important thing achieved during interviews is figuring out what we want, deciding and finding the strength to start implementing.
- If a woman is not ready to get support, she will again be acting according to someone else's directions and might even resent us later for interfering with her life.
- Or, she will not be mobilized to transform her life.

We see that the women trying to free themselves from violence in their lives are more comfortable during interviews in person. It is not possible to provide the same comfort when there are mediators in between.

Mediators may prevent the woman from making her own decisions and she may be forced to do things she does not want to do.

However, making her own decisions about her life is the first fundamental step of change.

8. IN CASE OF MURDER RISKS

Before starting to tell how we work with women whose lives are under threat, it will be useful to review our objectives in this work.

The objectives of our work on murders committed in the name of honor:

- Securing the lives of women living under murder threats,
- Building knowledge on the process of murders committed in the name of honor,
- Contributing to develop consciousness that murders committed in the name of honor are extrajudicial executions,
- Changing mentalities and developing sustainable methods on dealing with murders committed in the name of honor through the relations we build while supporting women,
- Influencing public policies with the knowledge we have accumulated and the methods we have developed.

To be successful in reaching these goals, we should pay special attention to record all available information on every case we deal with.

Our methods to reach women whose lives are at risk:

¬ If there is no murder risk

A survey we carried out before the establishment of KAMER showed that 90% of the women accepted violence against women as they be-

lieved it to be a “necessary component of womanhood”. Consequently, we planned to work on two main issues.

- First, raising awareness on violence, explaining that being woman does not necessitate being a target of violence; on the contrary, nobody has the right to use violence against anybody, violence cannot be justified and violence against women is a result of sexism.
- Second, supporting women who have become aware of the violence they experience and want to free themselves from it.

After raising awareness on violence, we waited for women to come to us. We did not interfere with their lives until they wanted our support since we knew that they would take the second step only if they take the first one. If we interfered with their lives, our relationship would turn into one between a victim and a savior, they would not be making their own decisions, in other words, they would continue to be the objects.

Without renegeing on our principles, we do everything we can to support the sustainability of her process when a woman takes the first step and comes to our center for support to free herself from violence. However, she has to come to us.

¬ If there is a murder risk

If a potential murder in the name of honor is at stake, we can take action on two issues without waiting for the woman to make a decision:

1. To reach the woman

If we hear that a woman has been tried by the family assembly and she has been sentenced to death, we should look for ways to reach her directly or indirectly, regardless of how we received the information.

She will still be making her life decisions. We can take the first step since she may not have knowledge of women’s centers, the support she

could receive or she may not be able to reach out. We can even call the nearest police or gendarmerie station so they can reach her if we are unable to do that ourselves.

We are still not saviors here. If the woman declines our offer of support, there is nothing we can do.

If she accepts, that should be seen as her taking the first step to save herself.

Below are some examples of our methods to reach women facing the threat of murder.

Example:

Her neighbor was calling us constantly. She was telling us how her neighbor's daughter had ran off and secretly married the man she loved, her brothers had found her after fifteen days, brought her back and locked her in. She was hearing loud noises from that house, relatives were going in and out, and the young woman was facing the danger of an "honor" murder.

We had an address and a phone number. We also knew the young woman's name. We called the house a couple times; if a woman answered, we would have asked for the young woman. However, only men were answering the phone. This made us more suspicious. It was obvious that it was forbidden for women to answer the phone.

We went to the nearest police station and explained the situation. Police went to the house. They brought the brother and the young woman to the police station. We talked with her in a separate room in private and told her about our worries. She was also worried when she was first brought back home, however, there was no murder threat anymore, she told. We told her that we would keep checking her. She was very pleased that we found her, took our telephone number and address, and left...

Example:

We got a report stating that a woman studying at the university was taken from school back to her village by her clan to marry a man from the same clan. She was experiencing violence because she was refusing to get married, she was locked in and was facing the risk of murder if she continued to refuse marriage.

We knew the name of the village, name of the woman, woman's father's name and woman's mobile phone number. We called her several times but did not get an answer.

We called the gendarmerie unit which had helped us in previous similar situations. They called us in the afternoon same day saying that they went to the village, to the house mentioned and they also got the promise that the marriage would not take place.

Example:

Two men who attended a family assembly came to see us. One of them believed that the woman should not be sentenced to death, while the other believed she should. The man who wanted to support the woman was trying to gain time by saying they should consult us as well, while also informing us about the situation. It was obvious that either he was not able to protect the woman at the family assembly or his efforts were not sufficient.

We learned where the woman was and went to talk to her. After visiting a couple of places, we talked with the woman. She is safe now...

2. Emergency procedures after reaching the woman

When there is no life threat, the woman who will need to decide what she wants to do with her life after coming to our centers is also the one who needs to reach out to us for support.

If there is a life threat, we can take the first steps to reach the woman and to initiate the emergency procedures that should be followed.

Women whose lives are at risk may:

- Think that the people they love the most (father, brother, husband) will pity them and will not execute the death sentence in the end;
- Not be aware of the severity of the danger as they are in emotional shock,
- Not be able to figure out what they should be doing amidst feelings of fear and despair,
- Not have any money with them and they may think that they would be a burden on us.

We can carefully take the first and emergent steps on the things to ensure the security of women whose lives are under threat.

- Whether the woman being with us is known or not is important. We should act on the assumption that the family might know she is with us and our lives might be at risk where we are, so we should inform the police.
- If we need to take the woman out of wherever she is, we should take the necessary precautions so she would not be identified.
- First of all, we should make sure that she has her identity documents with her; if she does not, we should take the necessary security measures and get her new documents.
- She should give power of attorney to a lawyer.
- We should encourage her to file a report about her case and press charges if possible.
- Because launching an official complaint will be considered as interfering with the family, we have to ask the woman what she wants to do act based on her decision.
- While all these procedures are followed up, on the other hand a safe place for the woman to stay should be prepared.

When aforementioned procedure is completed, the woman will need to make decisions about her life. We can categorize the things

women have requested from us so far under two headings:

- 1) If the woman believes that the sentence on her life can be withdrawn, she may ask us to talk to the family or members of the family who can support her. In such cases:
 - First of all, a safe place should be found for the woman to stay.
 - We should try to get to become familiar with the family and identify people or other actors who might be able to influence the family.
 - We should meet with these actors and get them to talk to the family.
 - We should inform the woman at every step and get her opinion. We should keep in mind that we should be very careful during this process.
 - The security of the woman and the center should be ensured, cooperating with security forces if necessary.
 - We should inform the woman of each development so she can assess and make decisions about her life.
 - We should try to provide her with all the necessary support, first of all for her security, to empower her to implement the choices she made.
- 2) If she thinks that her family would not withdraw the sentence on her life, she might ask for support to start a new life.

There are two things to be done in these cases:

- Send her to a shelter,
- Provide her with the opportunities to start a new life at a new destination.

We can utilize the support of our volunteers from all around Turkey to create these opportunities.

3. After securing her life

Once we secure a woman's life, we should forget that she ever came to us, received support and where she went until she asks for our support again.

Since we cooperate with the security forces and social services, we can exchange information when necessary.

We should not forget that people close to her will not give up trying to track her down. We have to be very careful. Secrecy is of utmost importance in such cases.

Some of the methods that families have pursued to find these women are listed as below.

Example: They tried to get information by threatening us.

We should not underestimate these threats, we should inform the police or the gendarmerie and file an official complaint if necessary.

Example: Another woman from the same family came as if she was asking for support and tried to get information.

Women who come to our centers can only talk about their own experiences. Whatever her motivation is, if any woman asks questions about other women visiting or things going on at the center, she should be warned about this and, sticking to our principle on confidentiality, we should not give out any information. Sticking to our principles will protect us in all circumstances.

Example: A woman who might herself be experiencing violence might apply to us to go to the shelter to contact the other woman.

Regardless of the precautions we take, close relatives of the woman might try various ways. The only way to protect ourselves and the woman in such cases is by cooperating with the Provincial Directorates of Social Services. This cooperation allows us to take various measures, such as sending women from the same province to different shelters.

There is nothing else we can do. Otherwise, we start receiving each woman with the suspicion of whether she is following another woman, and this state of mind might lead us to question and judge women.

9. METHODS FOR WORKING WITH WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARE OF DISABLED PEOPLE

We have been working for years to support women who become aware of the violence they experience and decide to free themselves from it. We were able to become aware of the particular obstacles faced by disabled women and women responsible for the care of disabled people only after implementing our project “Lifting the Obstacles.”

“Lifting the Obstacles” Project was planned upon the demands of disabled women and women with disabled relatives with whom we met at various meetings. We can summarize the obstacles they face and their demands as follows:

“Since we are disabled or are taking care of a disabled relative we cannot get out of the house any time we wish. Even though we experience violence and discrimination as much as any other women, if not more, we cannot get out of the house to attend workshops or to ask for support. You should develop a different method for us.”

It was at this time that Sabancı Foundation announced a suitable fund and it was a good opportunity to respond to this demand.

We planned a project, whereby we would reach out to women with disabilities and those taking care of disabled relatives, to learn about their challenges and to develop a method for working with these women on violence.

We created the opportunity to reach out to disabled women in their own environments and to observe their problems on location by visiting 15,000 houses in 5 provinces.

The method for support these women was devised based on the feedback we received from them:

- We normally expect women to visit Emergency Support Centers in person. However, if a disabled woman or a woman who cannot get out of the house since she is responsible for the care of a disabled family member calls us for support, we can visit her at her own house.
- The first request for support should still come from the women themselves.
- We should ensure that the meeting can take place in a comfortable environment and in private by telling women during the phone interview what a suitable meeting environment would be like.
- Once her demands are clear, we should cooperate with the Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Policies.
- Transportation and security should be provided for meetings she would need to hold outside the house (lawyer, psychologist, police station etc).
- Contact should be kept with the women with disabilities or disabled relatives. Every support required should be provided to enable their participation at neighborhood meetings.

10. OUR METHODS OF WORKING WITH WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE WHOM WE ENCOUNTER DURING HOUSE VISITS

In recent years we have started making house visits in neighborhoods populated mostly by migrants as we had realized that women living in these neighborhoods were not able to reach out to KAMER or any other support mechanisms in the city.

We have made about 300,000 house visits until now. These visits will be continue and expand into the districts and in villages.

The main objectives of house visits are to break the secluded life style in these neighborhoods, to introduce KAMER and other support mechanisms to women, to start a conversation on gender roles, gender-based violence and discrimination. However, as violence becomes unbearable, we also get women who start to talk about the violence they experience and ask for support.

Since neighborhood meeting held following house visits raise awareness, almost every woman attending these meetings share the violence they experience and ask for support.

Our experience shows that an average of 10% of women we visit appeal for support to deal with violence during these visits. This made it necessary to work on developing methods for dealing with violence cases encountered during house visits.

We came up with the following conclusions during these discussions:

- We should postpone our visit and inform the police if there we see or hear any indication that violence is ongoing at

the moment we are about to visit a residence. We are not required to reveal our identity as we report the incident. We can visit this house another day.

- If a woman talks about the violence she experienced years ago, we should kindly listen for a while but then ask questions like “Are you experiencing ongoing violence now?” or “Do you need any support to deal with the violence you experienced in the past” to get her to talk about the present.
- We can listen to her ongoing experiences of violence if the conditions at the house are suitable (if there is nobody at home, it is comfortable, and the woman is safe) and discuss how we can support her.
- If she is not yet clear on the type of support she wants, a couple of more interviews might be necessary. We can give the KAMER’s contact information and invite her to the center.
- Most of the houses we visit are inhabited by large, extended families, and sometimes one member of the family finds a way to whisper to us her request for support. There could be ongoing violence and she might not be able to speak comfortably at home. In these cases, we can give her our phone number so she can call us, visit the house again or invite her to a neighborhood meeting to create opportunity for a private meeting in person.
- Our priority is always the security of our colleagues conducting the visits. Therefore, we should try to arrange the visits to be during times when men are most likely to be out. If the men are at home, we should be extra careful and try to talk to the women in private.

During this work, various effective methods have been developed. Utilizing this exchange of experiences, everyone working in this field should develop methods that best fit their own local contexts.

11. ‘COLLABORATIONS’ WHILE WORKING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Why are Collaborations Important?

Violence against women, especially murders committed in the name of honor, are not problems that any woman's organization can solve alone. It is necessary to collaborate so we can provide women with the support they need to stand up against violence.

With a sexist approach, the issue of violence against women is as the responsibility women's organizations alone. It is also a common argument that gender-based discrimination is a problem specific to certain ethnic or religious groups. On the other hand, provisions for mitigating circumstances in sentencing for “honor” murders itself shows that even laws are discriminatory. Despite all the changes made on the Civil Code and the Turkish Penal Code, they still include the discriminatory provisions and there is resistance against changing these. To see and show problems with such provisions and problems with implementation we need to build collaborations.

Each collaboration would allow us to build various relations, which could help us raise gender awareness.

What Should be Our Position While Collaborating?

Our confidence in what we do determines our position.

If we have not come to terms with the violence in our own lives, have

not become aware of its sources and of how it is systematic and reproduced;

- We cannot succeed in our work,
- We can get angry and be judgmental towards the women we are trying to support,
- We can perceive the support we request and the collaborations we establish as humanistic favors or charity.

However,

Violence against women and its final point, murders committed in the name of honor, are results of the centuries old patriarchal mentality and sexism. The goal is to keep women in their secondary position through violence and to prevent equality and freedom. Gender-based discrimination is a social problem that should be on everybody's agenda.

No support or cooperation we request is for our self-interest. People providing this support are simply doing their jobs.

We can present a clear stance only if we internalize this attitude, while also recognizing that every support is important.

We must try to raise the same awareness we have on discrimination in those with whom we collaborate.

As with all our work, our fundamental principles should also guide our collaborations:

- Independence,
- No hierarchy,
- No discrimination,
- No violence,
- Sharing and solidarity.

How Can We Start Collaborations?

- Visits we make to introduce our women's centers and work.
- During our visits to public agencies and civil society organizations, we should request and ensure that women who

need our support are directed to us.

- Relationships we build while mobilizing the support women's request,
- Memberships in committees or unions we can take part in without compromising our independence (e.g. Local Agenda 21, city councils, provincial human rights committees, various platforms).
- Emergency Intervention Teams we have established to prevent murders in the name of honor, in which representatives of relevant public agencies and civil society organizations also take part.
- Project partnerships, supports given to various projects.
- The distribution of our monthly reports printed on violence against women and the support we provided.

Ensuring the sustainability of these relationships and adhering to our principles would guarantee our success in this regard.

Public Agencies and Civil Society Organizations We Can Cooperate With:

Requests of women applying to our centers determine which agencies and organizations we need to collaborate with.

These requests have led us to cooperate with the following agencies and organizations;

- Governors' Offices,
- Municipalities,
- The Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Policies,
- Security Directorates,
- Gendarmerie,
- Social Solidarity Foundation,
- Women's organizations,
- Bar Associations,
- Civil Registry Offices,
- Health Directorates,

- All hospitals,
- University departments such as psychiatry, psychological therapy, sociology, psychology.
- Mufidis,
- Human rights organizations,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- Chambers of Industry,
- Business people.

12. HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES?

We should not forget that we are under all kinds of risks while working on violence against women; we might experience mental exhaustion due to listening to stories of violence and we might also become targets of the reactions of women's relatives.

As we work for women's human rights, we are also under the risk of reactions of groups who find this work unnecessary and oppose it.

Whatever precautions we take, this work will involve risks.

A line of work that involves changing traditional norms, which requires touching all areas of life, will always bring big satisfaction as well as risks. Taking on this risk requires volunteerism.

Regardless, we have to take all the precautions we can against various risks we can foresee.

Against the possible reactions that might come from various segments of the society due to our work on women's human rights:

- The principle that protects us most in this regard is not forcing anyone. It is the women who come to us. They make their own decisions about their lives.
- We need to emphasize our principle of "thinking globally while acting locally" often. We have to be able to explain to every segment of the society that we are not trying to make

anybody imitate others and that each of us has the right to benefit from women's human rights.

- Independence is both our most difficult and most protective principle.
- Our understanding of feminism also protects us. We have to explain how feminism is for everyone and everybody's feminism binds herself/himself.

Against the reactions of the relatives of the women we work with:

All of the methods mentioned in this book also protect the women working at Emergency Support Centers. For examples, being nonjudgmental, not giving prescriptions and confidentiality both ensure that women would have the say on their lives and protect us at the same time.

Protecting ourselves as we listen to violence:

If we are working at an Emergency Support Center, we assume that we have faced our own violence and dealt with it to a great extent. Regardless, listening to violence might still affect us at times. We can list the reasons as follows:

- If we have started to deal with the violence in our own lives and are clear about our role at the Emergency Support Center, we try to empower the woman, instead of sharing her negative feelings and being influenced negatively.
- The way we sit may be exhausting. If we sit leaning towards the woman, then we start listening to her not from the outside but from the inside, feeling. We should prefer sitting in a normal position instead of as if we are in a hurry, resting, or leaning forward. When we say normal position, we mean our back resting slightly on the back of the chair and ready to listen to her.
- In case something she says saddens or starts to get us destructed, we should take some time to pay attention to our feelings and thoughts, and decide whether we can for

the moment put aside or lock up the memory it has incited. When we are done with the interview, we have to go back to the awareness we had just locked up. Unless we deal with it, we are likely to face it again later.

- We can have a picture, flower or other object in the interview room which we find comforting; we can try to relax when we feel depressed by looking at it.
- If we can still not focus, we can try a couple of other methods. For instance, we can ask her permission to get up, open the window or go out for a couple minutes. If it still does not work, we can stop the interview for the time being.
- Filling out the support application forms right after the interviews will help us relax by getting it off our chest and the data we record will be useful in developing women's policy.
- Talking to our colleagues after interviews is also relaxing. It would also be useful to decide together how we are going to gather the support women request.
- The interview duration should last a maximum of an hour. Longer interviews will not be helpful for the women and will also exhaust us.
- We should avoid talking about what we heard from women or the work we did or are planning to do during lunch or other breaks.
- We should avoid carrying what we experienced or heard at Emergency Support Centers during the day into our private lives.
- We should create spaces for our own relief; we should not limit our life to work and colleagues. We should spare time for activities like sports, movies, and theatre, and not neglect our friends outside of work.
- We should be alert against all kinds of danger. We should not forget that there might be people who are angry for what we do of for supporting a relative of theirs.

Example:

It was midnight when my phone rang. A woman was calling. She told me that she woke up with some noise. When she looked out the window, she saw a woman crying out loud and asking for help.

I asked her name and address, but she did not tell me.

I told her to call the police. However, she told me that she did not want to deal with the police as the police does not accept any anonymous calls.

I asked her what she wants me to do. She told me that I should go there immediately to get the woman.

I told her, “I cannot do that but I will call the police”. I asked her to give me the address. She gave an address and I called the police. They went to the address right away but could not find anybody.

Apparently it was a bait. During those days a couple of women under the threat of murder had gone missing. Relatives of one of those women might have been trying to reach us either to cause harm or to scare us into giving out information on the woman. Or, it was someone who did not like the work we do, who knows...

This example helped us better understand the importance of carefully calculating the risks of our work and ensuring our own security first and foremost.

There are many situations where we were scared and worried while doing this work. The principles we have developed through this work, which we adhere to strictly, protect us in these situations.

13. KAMER'S FEMINISM*

We have noticed that in order to explain more clearly the work conducted by KAMER for women's human rights, we need to use a different language from the usual. We believe that this is the only way for us to go beyond answering questions on "what we do, where we work, how many women are subject to violence, how many women we have supported, what we have done about honor killings," etc.

All of the said work is important, of course, but it should not be considered as stand-alone work. Every project is important in that it is part of the process which lets us learn from each other and helps us form our policy for working with women.

We believe that in order to explain what KAMER is about, it is important to answer questions about "how we got started, what we learned from each other, what we discovered, what we changed, where we are going," and to emphasize the process of reciprocal learning.

KAMER was officially founded in 1997. But work conducted before that date was also important. The idea of KAMER first developed in 1993-95, when regional violence was at its peak. In 1997, KAMER gained legal status. In the following years it developed new areas of work and new projects were realized.

* This article was published in the Amargi.

KAMER operates in 23 provinces, but we are endeavoring to expand into the districts of these provinces as well.

“We” women now number in the thousands. There are significant differences between how we were when we started and how we are. We were feminists then, and we are feminists now. But there is a difference between who we were then and who we are now, a difference due to experience—the experience of ten years of work.

Most importantly, we used to whisper that we were feminists, but now we can shout it. Hundreds of us are now able to say, “We are feminists.”

We believe that feminism is a process of discovery and of change. In this article, we would like to tell you about the journey we have taken with feminism.

Initially, our first awareness was that regarding “violence.” Each one of us was subject to violence, directly or indirectly. Violence under custody, on the streets, in offices, even at home...

What kind of violence was this? Since it was so painful, why were people inflicting it upon each other in such a natural way?

We were continuously reminded that we were women. Were we the only ones who failed to notice, failed to remember this?

These questions helped us to become aware of the private sphere called home, and of our position within the home. The least talked about and the most common, the most habitual type of violence happened within homes. Talking about this aspect of violence was either frowned upon or considered unimportant. Other types of violence, such as the violence occurring under custody, or on the streets, were considered more important.

Our starting point was a difficult one. We were aware that we might be isolated, be marginalized and demeaned. Many of us had started to consider the question of violence by looking at instances of it under custody or on the streets. Later on we understood the link between

the different types of violence and we realized that what happened at home was the starting point of all other types of violence. When we first began discussing the idea of working on women's issues, people around us started advising us on what to do, how to do it, and who to work with.

Everybody acted innocent. No one even wanted to think that they themselves might have been influenced by the male-dominated society.

We thus realized to what degree sexism had become internalized, and how we needed to look at ourselves, at our acquaintances, at all organizations, and all people. And that is how we came to realize that we needed to organize ourselves independently.

Although we declared that we supported women's human rights, we knew that it would not be easy to understand the difference between independence and neutrality. Yet, we chose to organize ourselves independently.

Although the majority of the women whom we would work with, or whom we planned to support, defined themselves as Kurdish, we did not wish to be a Center for Kurdish Women. We did not want to limit ourselves to a single identity; we believed in each and every woman and we wanted for KAMER to become a center also for women who are not Kurdish or who do not define themselves as Kurdish.

In order to question sexism, and to develop an area independent of other concerns, we started reflecting on our own conditions and our own experiences. We questioned our role within this environment of violence and discrimination and how we oppressed others, and how we were oppressed ourselves.

While undergoing this difficult period of "discovering sexism and embarking on feminism," we suffered an intense feeling of homelessness.

We learned through experience that the only ones to offer support in this transition period were women and women's organizations. We re-

alized that this individual awareness process was difficult and shocking for women and that support and solidarity were of critical importance.

We realized that violence was to be found everywhere and in different forms. We decided to concentrate on domestic violence, which we considered to be an issue of essential importance. There were non-governmental organizations dealing with violence occurring under custody and on the streets, but there were no organizations dealing with domestic violence. Even talking about it angered people, for everyone played a part in this large-scale, widespread form of violence.

While dealing with domestic violence, we encountered the most brutal as well as the most subtle forms of violence.

We discovered that all women, regardless of their language, religion, education, and social environment, suffer violence in various ways.

We realized that declaring support for human rights meant ignoring women's human rights and the inequality between sexes, and thus rendered service to sexism. We were distressed to discover that many people and organizations who declared that they opposed sexism, actually supported the system via their approach to women's work and to feminism, and that ultimately they defended rather than opposed sexism.

Although we underwent significant individual awareness processes, we realized that looking at the extent of the harm inflicted upon our personalities by the sexist system was not something we could deal with individually. We understood that behaviors such as hierarchy, competition, discrimination, and keeping "personal" problems private recurred over and over again and that no one was capable of suddenly becoming aware of such behavior and changing it.

We thus realized the importance of collective work, from the point of view of support and solidarity, as well as mutual learning.

We realized that unless we established equal relationships, overcame our feelings of competition, perceived the more subtle forms of vio-

lence, behaved openly, delivered positive and negative criticism, and were ready to listen to what others had to say, there was always the risk of reproducing sexism.

We realized that traditional values were values aiming to objectify us, and that we needed to question and transform each value completely.

We became aware that a new world could only be created if we recreated ourselves. We started to make an effort not to judge, not to despise, not to order, and not to prescribe solutions, but to develop a language and behavior based on empathy.

We were not ashamed to expose the thought and behavior patterns that had taken us captive. We were able to understand that these patterns resulted from roles in which we were cast, that we had accepted them unquestioningly, and that questioning would now be possible via feminism.

We realized that most traditional values caused resignation and submission to violence, prevented participation, transparency, and individual development, and reproduced inequality.

Feminism helped us develop curiosity during this long journey. Thanks to this curiosity, we recognized our different identities. We were freed from the parochialism of a single identity and started enjoying our multi-identities.

Fascinated by the enchantment of awareness and transformation, we increased in numbers, we developed. We understood that the more we gained in strength, the more violence would weaken, that the more we changed, the more the world would change.

We started sharing our discoveries and our knowledge with men. We told them of the different types of violence to which we were subjected. We talked about how they perceived and lived their masculinity.

The more we talk, the more we realize that sexism is a vast policy dominating the whole world. We are currently seeing how militarism and

sexism are intricately involved and how they feed on each other.

Sometimes we are afraid of our discoveries. Sometimes we think that what we are doing is not enough and that we should be doing more. Every time this happens we stagger and hesitate. But every time we accept that this is our only chance, we pick ourselves up and we start all over again.

We know that feminism is indispensable for a world free of hierarchies, discrimination, and violence, a world based on sharing and solidarity, on transparency, participation, on support for what is right and what is just.

From a few women, we have now become thousands of women. Our journey with feminism is continuing. And our numbers are increasing.

We know that this is going to be a long and arduous journey.

We understand that all issues throughout Turkey and throughout the world are our issues, too. We know that resolving these issues is only possible with our participation. We are therefore doing our utmost to see more, think more, change more, and grow in number.

05.02.2007

Nebahat Akkoç

KAMER

Women are Saying:

We want the right to think and act independently!

We want a world where people are not polarized, where everybody enjoys their various identities and make their own decisions.

We saw that the objectifying is not only the women's problem. We know that every non-participatory process objectifies somebody.

We want a world without hierarchy!

While asking for this, we are not after what others have; instead, we are proposing to start by sharing what we have. We can see that hierarchy is reproduced every day through behaviors that seem insignificant. We know that it is possible to develop a relationship without trivializing anybody or anybody's knowledge and experiences, and that this problem and its solution start with each one of us, we should not look for them from afar.

We do not want a world run by people in positions of power.

We want a world without discrimination!

We want everybody to be free to live their differences without being humiliated or excluded. We believe the antidote of discrimination to be getting acquainted, talking, and sharing of emotions. We are all different from each other; problematizing the judgmental adjectives we use in specifying these differences is the first step in resolving discrimination.

We want a world without violence!

We long for a world where violence is recognized in all its different forms and no form of violence is ever justified.

We want a world based on sharing and solidarity!

We want a world where we will be empowered by sharing our knowledge, successes, authorities and responsibilities.

We want to live in accordance with universal human rights without losing our local characteristics!

We long for a world where all the people with all their differences live in accordance with universal human rights standards, regardless of where we live, the language we speak, our economic status and level of education.

14. QUESTIONS-ANSWERS

We interviewed the woman who came to our center, talked to her about the types of support we can provide. She did not ask for anything. She sometimes comes to the center or we run into her outside. She keeps re-telling the same things. What should we do?

We experience similar situations quite often. A woman visits the center, we talk, we do our best to raise her awareness but she just tells her story, over and over and expects us to keep listening. However, we aim to have at least some progress with every interview. For example, she might start telling her story without feeling ashamed during the first interview and recognize that she is not the only one being subjected to violence during the second interview.

If we see no progress at all, it means we have a case in hand that we cannot handle.

If it is possible we should arrange an appointment with a psychologist.

If it is not possible to arrange for her to meet a psychologist in person, we can consult our colleagues or the psychologists we work with to develop new methods.

How many times shall we interview a woman?

What we do is not therapy. We meet women for a maximum of four times, each running for an hour at the most, to provide them support at Emergency Support Centers.

During these meetings, we support women to overcome feelings of shame and loneliness, and to make their own decisions about their future.

Following four meetings, if they have started to get psychological, legal or career counseling, they might have additional questions for us regarding this process. That is different from the first four meetings; it would typically be about the support they would need along this journey.

After the first interview, we should always limit the number and duration of meetings. If we do not limit, they might turn into a habit and a dependency relationship might develop; this is harmful for both sides. In time we grow tired and become saviors, while the women make no efforts to realize their own strengths.

Shall we keep contact with women who have received support from our centers?

Women's own preferences should determine this. Our goal is to forge sustainable relationships. That is why we record their names and numbers unless they object.

We do not build these relationships randomly. We need to discuss and decide beforehand how we should react in case we run into each other unexpectedly.

We may want to follow up on the impact of the support we provided, invite women to our activities, and engage their support if needed for other women. We want them to become KAMER volunteers. Therefore, it is important that we contact them in a planned and careful manner so we do not put them in an uncomfortable or difficult position.

However, if a woman does not want to be contacted after she receives our support, that is also understandable; we would abide by her wishes. Generally, however, women welcome being called up.

Why is it important to work by appointment?

Due to a couple of reasons working by appointments is important. We try not to work without appointments as much as possible. If a woman comes in without an appointment, we remind her that she should make an appointment in the future.

If it is a dangerous emergency case, the situation is of course different.

Working by appointments is important because;

- ¬ We try to avoid having women run into each other to preserve confidentiality.
- ¬ Listening to violence is difficult and we need some time to rest after each interview. Filling out the application form and taking some time to rest after each interview would be helpful.

Sometimes I get angry at women when they do not think the way we think or when they are too slow to take action. Then I wonder if they felt my anger. How will I stop this feeling?

To empathize is the best thing to do under these circumstances.

- What condition did we use to be in?
- Were we not confused?
- Did we not think for days before making a single decision?
- Were we able to actualize everything we planned?

Such questions would help us remember our past and understand the women.

If there is no progress, then we need to go over our communication methods.

On the other hand, if she just uses us as a garbage can, repeating her story over and over without developing a way out, we are likely to get angry. In these situations, we should explain the situation to her in an appropriate manner. "We met many times. I explained all forms of

support we can provide. You did not want any of them. I guess there is nothing else we can do for you. What do you think?..."

Women do not want to go to offices like the social services, bar association or hospital alone, they want us to accompany them. What shall we do?

If there is a life threat then we should not leave her alone under any circumstances.

If the woman getting support does not speak Turkish or is not literate, then we or a volunteer should accompany her.

Otherwise, we need to ensure that she takes care of her own responsibility. If any of these cases are not valid then we need to assure that she follows up the procedures. If she is very timid or has been living a secluded life, we can join her for the first visit. She needs to do rest of the work by herself. She would feel empowered with every step she takes for herself. If we explain this to her, she would understand why we need to leave her alone.

The mother came to the center with her 17 year-old son and 15 year-old daughter. We talked with the mother. Then she asked us to talk to her children as well.

We are not doing therapy. Fixing family relationships is not one of our goals. Our goal is to empower women to stand up against violence.

We only interview the women. We do not work with men or children.

There should be only one person being interviewed at a time. If the appointment was for the mother then we talk to the mother.

If the mother has such a request then we need to decline but explain our reasons and direct her to other places she can get that support.

Here are some reasons:

- We do not work with families. We are only trying to support women. You had an appointment so let's talk with you.

- ¬ We cannot talk with your son because that is not part of our expertise.
- ¬ We cannot talk with your daughter because she is your daughter; we can only talk to her if she herself requests support.
- ¬ If you think it is necessary, then we can get you in touch with relevant experts.

Are we self-sacrificing by working at a women's centers? Some people say so, we do not know how to respond.

The work we do is not an easy one. Even though we get paid for what we do, our preference to do this work instead of taking another job indicates our volunteerism. To see a woman saving herself from violence means that she and her surroundings, at least her children, will not have a more comfortable and peaceful life. We would not be getting this emotional satisfaction from another job.

However, if we start considering ourselves as self-sacrificing, that could lead us to serious mistakes.

To sacrifice something for someone harms the relationship. We become sacrificers and they become those benefiting from our sacrifice and this creates hierarchy.

We start to see ourselves as saviors and building an equal relationship becomes impossible.

However, if we do our work keeping in mind the satisfaction it gives us and that others have done the same for us before, this helps us to build the right form of communication.

Is it normal to be scared? Don't you get scared at all?

Sure, we get scared. Fear is a natural human emotion. Fear ensures that we are more careful while we work and take the necessary precautions. We are not ashamed of our fear and we do not hide it. We tell each other that we are scared.

We did not start this work because we were fearless! We can even say the opposite; KAMER was started because we were scared of violence and its results.

A man said, “I don’t want you to open a women’s center. You would provoke our women against us.”

We are not going to interfere with anybody’s life. Our aim is not to provoke spouses against each other. However, we will continue to support women who want our support to make and implement their own decisions about their lives.

We are against violence, not men.

Our struggle is not one between sexes; we are part of a struggle between different mentalities.

KAMER works as an “independent” women’s organization. What is the reason behind it? Fear?

Creating an independent space is the most important thing KAMER has done for women.

Women, at least us, did not have a space for ourselves where we can discuss our problems, diagnose them and develop solutions. We managed to create this space for the KAMER team and volunteers. There is no need to elaborate on the progress achieved in this space, we can see the results.

This empowerment would not have been possible in a political party or a union.

What is more, all existing organizations, whether they are unions, associations or political parties, are part of the sexist system. By coming together in an independent forum, we, the women, managed to look critically at all of these organizations.

This allowed us to recognize the hierarchy of the majority, which was disguised as “democratic centralism,” and to utilize methods of “reconciliation” where every minority can be represented and have a voice.

Our “independent” stance allowed us to recognize and criticize the way of doing politics and exercising power in this system.

With this stance, we also succeeded in not being the advocates, supporters or champions of anybody else’s pointless fights.

We recognized that violence does not always involve guns or sticks; in softened forms it seeps into our language and behaviors. Recognizing and working to transform this was possible only by organizing in an “independent” forum.

To organize in an independent forum is the most difficult since there are no parties you can lean on, no protectors or guardians.

Fear is a natural human emotion. KAMER might have been fearful at times of all the pressure coming from different sides due to its “independence.” However, this fear has served to make us work more carefully and with principles.

What is KAMER’s attitude towards ethnic, religious and other diversity?

Starting from the time it was established, KAMER has defined itself as a women’s organization where womanhood is the common denominator. That is why we called it the Women’s Center (KAdın MERkezi). Kurdish, Turkish, Alevi or other identities were never emphasized and KAMER never embraced some women while excluding others.

Even though most staff and beneficiaries happened to identify themselves as Kurdish, KAMER succeeded in becoming a diverse women’s organization.

KAMER has always been against the single identity policy that is based on Turkey's nation-state policy.

KAMER has always worked believing that every individual embodies multiple identities, people will be enriched by exploring these identities and this would bring real peace.

15. KAMER PUBLICATIONS

RELATED TO WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS:

Handbook on Awareness Groups - 2003

We Will Not Get Used To It!

Killings in the Name of Honor - 2003 Report

Prepared by: Killings in the Name of Honor Project- Project Team

No More "If Only's"

Killings in the Name of Honor - 2004 Report

Prepared by: Killings in the Name of Honor Project- Project Team

Who's to Blame?

Killings in the Name of Honor - 2005 Report

Prepared by: Killings in the Name of Honor Project- Project Team

We Can Stop This

Killings in the Name of Honor - 2006 Report

Prepared by: Killings in the Name of Honor Project- Project Team

Multiply through Raising Awareness – KAMER's Methods for Standing up Against violence

Nebahat Akkoç 2OO7

I Exist

Ayşe Gül Altınay –Fulya Kama- Nilgün Yıldırım / 2007

Lifting the Obstacles - 2010

We Can Stop This

Assembled evaluation on violence and killings in the name of honor
- 2011

RELATED TO CHILDREN'S PRACTICES:

Convention on Children's Rights with Photographs – 2002

Life for Children Program- Ayten Tekay

First Steps to Opening a Kindergarten – 2004

Life for Children Program- Ayten Tekay

Toilet Training – 2005

Life for Children Program- Ayten Tekay

Being a Girl, Being a Boy - Gender Roles – 2006

Life for Children Program- Ayten Tekay

Alternative Approaches to the Early Childhood Education -2012

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Siirt KAMER	0484 224 34 94
Tunceli KAMER	0428 212 44 31
Şırnak KAMER	0486 216 50 70
Iğdır KAMER	0476 227 19 94
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