

UNITED KINGDOM



Gulina* is a young woman from Tajikistan. She was married young to Zafar* and lives with her extended family, as is tradition.

Her mother-in-law managed the household finances, controlling Gulina's movements and money. As a wife, Gulina was expected to be submissive and obedient. If she fell short of this ideal, she was disciplined.

It is estimated that up to half of all women in Tajikistan are regularly subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence from family members. Findings from the formative research phase of the Zindagii Shoista (Living with Dignity) project funded through the UK AID What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Programme, found high levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Around 60% of women participants had experienced domestic violence.

"Women have a low status in Tajik society," says Project Manager Shahribonu Shonasimova. "Practices such as early marriage, polygamy and weak protections for women in terms of divorce and property rights, continue to undermine women's rights".

The emotional stress, poor living-conditions, meagre diet, and extra workload that Gulina was subjected to by her extended family led her to consider divorce. Fortunately, Gulina, her husband and mother-in-law were invited to join Zindagii Shoista Dignity workshops. This intervention brings together families with their peers to discuss and improve relationships and empower themselves economically through income-generating activities.

"I am feeling improvements in my relationships with my mother-in-law and, of course, all this helped to improve my relationships with others," says Gulina.

Field research conducted in the four target villages of the project after implementation showed that:

- ▶ The number of women reporting intimate partner violence fell by one-half.
- ▶ The number of women reporting food insecurity fell by two-thirds.
- ▶ The proportion of women reporting earnings in past month increased fourfold.
- ▶ Rates of depression fell by one-half among women and by even more among men.

* Names changed



Ending gender violence, Tajikistan.

Credit: Giuseppe Bonatti, International Alert