

Once these services were organized, we felt it was vitally important to concentrate on changing attitudes. With this in mind, we organized prevention, education and awareness activities such as:

- an information and documentation service;
- conferences and seminars for adults, youths and concerned professionals in the community;
- self-defence workshops;
- research projects and recommendations to concerned officials.

The preventive approach taken by the support centres focuses on the real-life experiences of women.

In a society that treasures freedom, it is unacceptable to advocate prevention strategies that force women to trade in their freedom for the sake of their safety. Traditional prevention strategies are designed to control women by teaching them how to avoid sexual assaults. Far from reducing the threat of sexual assault, these strategies make women even more powerless, perpetuate their vulnerability and force them to avoid situations.

We believe that effective prevention must end the vulnerability women feel and focus on the elimination of conditions that make women "easy targets". Prevention strategies developed by the support centres are designed:

- to provide adequate information about sexual assault; to convey the seriousness of the problem;
- to bring about changes in the social, political, economic, emotional and other relations between men and women;
- to change the way in which men and women socialize;
- to encourage women to share their experiences with one another;
- to promote alternative responses to violent situations.

Our ultimate goal is to eradicate sexual assault. To achieve this aim, the focus must be on "help" and "education and prevention" and on the ongoing interaction between the two. Only then can we presume to respond adequately to the needs of women. Therein lies the strength of support centres.

WE MUST ACT TO ENSURE THAT ONE DAY, WOMEN WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO FEAR FOR THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY AND INTEGRITY.