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Excerpt from speech on gender-based violence presented by Rabila Attai, Family Service Toronto's Violence Against Women counsellor and also Healthy Families, Healthy Communities facilitator. The speech was delivered March 8, 2019 to Afghan men and women, in English and Afghan languages, at an International Women's Day culturally-specific event organized by the speaker and Daunesh Association.

Transcript:

“Violence against women is a social epidemic that is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women in any society, and therefore we cannot deny that it also exists in Canada. It is perpetuated in both public and private spheres, especially at home, known as domestic violence. It can affect anyone, in any community – men, women, children and families; it can have countless devastating consequences on women's health and wellbeing, as well as their children. Victims of domestic abuse could belong to any socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, or culture.

At a young age, children, especially boys, can be profoundly affected and severely traumatized by the violence against their mothers, against themselves, and their sisters. Statistics show that sometimes abused boys become abusers themselves when they grow up, jeopardizing their chances to have a normal life as adults.

Similarly, one of the direct impacts of violence against women, also include women exerting power and control over other women. In other words, when a woman becomes abusive toward another woman or a girl, it could be a manifestation of internalized oppression by a patriarchal system.

Domestic violence or abuse can be described as a patterns of behaviour, used by a person to gain power and control over another person, especially in intimate or family relationships, such as, towards a wife or partner, daughter, sister, children, or other family members. The behaviours may include physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, psychological intimidation, verbal abuse and stalking and many other forms. Abusers can also be from any socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. They can be young, old, educated, illiterate, rich or poor.

If anyone who consciously decides to ignore, turn away or remain quiet about abuse or misuse of power towards a woman, they become complicit in the violation and the crime committed against a woman, which is a crime against another human being.”