

Promising Practice Case Study: Rabta Police Training Programme (Pakistan)

“While we need to work with the survivors of violence against women, we must also work with the institutions that influence and impact their lives,”
Rozan Director¹

Summary

The [Rabta Police Training Programme](#) was established in 1999, and is run by the non-governmental organization [Rozan](#) - in partnership with the [National Police Academy](#), [National Police Bureau](#), [Islamabad Police](#) and Provincial Police Departments. It aims to improve the relationship between the police and communities in Pakistan by providing training to increase the self-awareness and life skills of police personnel, to improve their knowledge of gender issues, and to enhance their capacities to deal effectively and sensitively with cases of violence against women and girls.

Rozan has developed an “attitudinal change” training module which aims to explore how men themselves experience understandings of masculinity - in terms of societal expectations and norms about male behaviour. The module leverages this awareness to discuss the social roles and expectations of women. The training is implemented through a non-confrontational workshop, which aims to strengthen life skills before explicit discussion of gender issues, enabling participants (who might otherwise become defensive) to participate openly and in a manner conducive to change. The programme has developed incrementally over the last 11 years in response to changing gender relations and feedback from participants and partners. In its first two phases (2000-2004), and in partnership with Islamabad Police and the National Police Academy, the Rabta training programme trained over 4,000 male and female newly recruited and serving police officers of various ranks, including Constables through to Senior Superintendents. Key achievements of the Rabta programme include Rozan’s formal partnership with police leadership and the institutionalization of its training module into the official training curriculum for new recruits and serving officers.

Results

- **Integration of the Rabta training module into the mainstream police curriculum.** An “attitudinal change” training module for [constables](#) and [inspectors](#), which includes “sensitization” on violence against women, has been incorporated into the regular police training curricula for both new recruits and serving officers. In order to ensure the curriculum is implemented, the Rabta programme conducts [Training of Trainers](#) with instructors from police training colleges and schools across the country.
- **Systematic capacity development of police trainers across Punjab and Sindh provinces.** Through its province-focused approach since 2007, the Training of Trainers programme has been completed by over 40 police instructors, from all 7 police training institutions in Punjab province, and 20 instructors from the 7 schools and colleges in the Sindh province.
- **Increased commitment to gender issues.** Experience has shown indications of improvement in the Police Department’s understanding of and commitment to gender issues. For example, Rozan now receives requests from the National Police Academy for training on specific topics such as interviewing women and children survivors, rather than general training on gender.
- **Increased awareness about gender issues amongst trainees.** Analysis of self-reporting by trainees through pre- and post-workshop questionnaire results shows a significant difference in police officers’ knowledge of gender issues and violence against women before and after trainings. These assessments are employed given the limitations of measuring a single training’s impact on the interaction between police and survivors and are separate from the Rabta programme [independent evaluation](#).

Background

[Rozan](#) is a non-governmental organization founded in 1998 based in Islamabad, Pakistan. In addition to the Rabta programme, Rozan implements programmes focusing on child sexual abuse, violence against women, and the psychological and reproductive health of adolescents. Rozan provides advocacy, training, counselling and service delivery.

In 1999, Rozan was approached by a the Head of the Sihala Police Training College, who was responsible for introducing innovative community safety initiatives to help improve the interpersonal and communication skills of police personnel (e.g. Rescue 15 Emergency Response Service; neighbourhood Safe Homes Schemes and police Reconciliatory Committees), since most complaints against police related to inadequacies in these areas. The commitment of the senior official, who had heard of Rozan's work and was acquainted with its founding members, was instrumental in establishing the training programme.

In response to this request, Rozan developed a three day 'attitudinal change' module for trainee [constables](#) and [inspectors](#) at the Police Training College Sihala, which included a gender component. This training module forms the core of the Rabta programme. In 2006, the module, including its gender component was approved by the National Police Academy - the national training centre in Islamabad for senior officers of civilian police agencies - as a part of the main curriculum for new recruits and serving police officers.

The objectives of the training with respect to gender and violence against women include:

- To enhance gender awareness, including the concept of gender; gender stereotypes; ideas about the different roles of men and women; how these ideas impact men and women, how they affect society as a whole, and how they affect police work.
- To provide opportunities to reflect on attitudinal behaviours and biases, and discuss misperceptions around gender-based violence (e.g. women who report rape are lying; women who experience workplace sexual harassment are prostitutes; etc.)
- To understand different forms and dynamics of gender-based violence, as experienced by women, children and men.
- To understand how these types of violence are linked to disparities between women and men in society more widely.
- To understand the role of the police in addressing gender-based violence, including changes in verbal and body language; empathy with the victim; sensitivity in dealing with traumatized individuals; etc.

Methodology

The training module, developed by a team of psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists, aims to address the different factors that contribute to the negative attitudes and behaviours of the police toward women and girl survivors. The approach acknowledges men's experience with societal norms that dictate their behaviour. Facilitators explore childhood messages regarding gender roles; discuss norms and expectations of men and women's roles; encourage discussion about police work-related stress; and seek to change poorly-developed life skills and coping mechanisms for anger.

The module is also designed to be non-threatening. Rozan's approach tries to ensure that men do not become defensive when confronted with their behaviour and that of their peers towards women and girls. The trainers build trust and encourage openness carefully and gradually, before introducing more controversial topics. Through role-play, trainees are encouraged to think about the skills that are needed in their work – for example, how to articulate their needs assertively, express anger constructively and non-violently, manage stress, empathize with others, and handle relationships effectively. The training also explores issues around power and powerlessness in society, and enables police officers to understand how their behaviour can affect survivors of violence.

According to an Islamabad Police sub-inspector and former trainee, “We have learned that our behaviour and attitudes towards people who come to the police station are important. If we take the time to greet them, sit them down, offer them a glass of water, and listen to them properly, then that in itself can address a great deal of their worry. It is through the trainings that we understood how our behaviour can further add to the victimization experienced by survivors of violence”.

There are three key components to the training:

Module	Issues explored
Self-awareness	Self-awareness; identity; personality; self-analysis; self-esteem; impact of childhood messages; power; personal attitudes and prejudice
Life skills	Interpersonal communication skills; attitudes and behaviours; stress management; anger management; leadership
Social awareness	Defining an ideal society; human rights; gender justice; violence against women and children; custodial violence; Islamic perspectives about these issues; International human rights conventions (UDHR , CEDAW , CRC , etc.)

Although Rozan’s objective is to make police officers more receptive to gender issues, facilitators spend two-thirds of the time focusing on overall self-awareness and life skills, with only the last part of training explicitly focused on gender issues and violence against women.

Monitoring and evaluation

Rozan has developed a range of monitoring and evaluation systems for different phases of the programme, including support for an [external evaluation](#) in 2011. The first two phases of the programme focused on one-off trainings. Impact during these phases was assessed through self-reporting by trainees. Trainings were evaluated through pre-and post-workshop questionnaires, as well as follow-up questionnaires completed six months after the training. Post workshop questionnaires aimed to gather feedback about the [individual components](#) of the training and the [training module](#) as a whole as well as changes in [knowledge, attitudes and practices](#) related to various aspects of the training workshops. Follow-up questionnaires were used to determine transfer of knowledge into practice.

In phases three and four, where activities have focused on Training of Trainers, Rozan undertakes monitoring and support visits to the Police Training Colleges and Schools two to three months after training has been provided. The aim is to identify progress, challenges and further needs. During these visits, Rozan staff meet with instructors, senior management and the trainees themselves (who complete a feedback form). Staff also observe a training session, and provide feedback to the trainers. After a year, a refresher course is provided. This aims to:

- Analyze the successes and difficulties faced by the police instructors in teaching the Attitudinal Change Module in their respective police training institutes.
- Provide instructors an opportunity to practice Module topics which they have found difficult.
- Help participants identify effective teaching methods to in classroom settings in the light of their own experience.

The process

Phase 1. One-off trainings. This phase of the programme focused on providing single trainings to new and serving police officers at the Police Training College Sihala. Following an internal programme evaluation, Rozan concluded it needed to integrate its training module into the mainstream police training curriculum.

“We realized that we couldn’t get to everyone, nor could we do trainings forever. It was ultimately the responsibility of the police to take ownership and establish an internal mechanism to ensure that everyone received this training.” (Rozan Managing Director)

Phase 2. MoU with the National Police Academy. In 2002, Rozan approached the [National Police Academy](#) - the national training centre for the senior officers of civilian police agencies in Islamabad - and began to offer one-off training sessions there. In 2004, Rozan and the National Police Academy signed a three-year [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to provide training and capacity building. Rozan also began advocating the Academy leadership to integrate their training module into the main curriculum. They encountered a great deal of resistance, particularly regarding the gender component and concerns around terminology, with gender frequently associated with women’s issues.

Evolving gender discourses

Over the 11-year period implementing the Rabta programme, Rozan staff have noted increased familiarity with gender discourses – from both the police leadership and trainees. At the same time, limited political will to address gender issues remains a challenge. Engagement with the issue is often critical and negative, and there have not been great changes in attitudes – of either the trainees or police leadership. The poor relationship between non-governmental organizations advocating for women’s rights and police and perceptions of their financial or other association with foreign donors further creates resistance.

Language remains a key issue and Rozan continues to receive requests to change the terminology – using ‘gender justice’ or ‘vulnerable groups’ over violence against women. Substantively, there remain challenges related to discussing issues traditionally resolved by the elders of family and community, and kept hidden from the public. Despite the legal framework and awareness-raising, participants, even at the level of Assistant Police Superintendents, continue to debate whether domestic violence is a private or public matter, if it is ever justified and whether police should intervene (Rabta 2009-10 Annual Report).

Phase 3. Module integration into the National Police Academy training curriculum. By 2005, as a result of the CEDAW process and civil society advocacy, gender issues were high on the political agenda. Public sector institutions were becoming more familiar with discourses and language related to gender, and subsequently more open to the issue. In 2005, government ministers instructed the National Police Academy to bring changes within the police, and make the curriculum more gender-sensitive. The Academy approached Rozan and in 2006, their Attitudinal Change Module (including gender component) was approved as a part of the main curriculum for new recruits and serving officers.

The key challenge was how to implement trainings on such a large scale. Rozan began by training trainers from police training colleges and schools across the country. In 2006, 66 male trainers were invited to the National Police Academy with the expectation that that they would carry out further training sessions upon return to their respective schools and colleges. However, limited political will at the senior level resulted in a lack of incentives, monitoring and evaluation for the follow-up by trainers. Rozan’s own monitoring found that, six months later, out of 21 schools and colleges, only five had implemented the modules. In most cases, the trainers had either been transferred or did not apply the new module.

Phase 4. Phased strategy of orientation and targeted training for provincial-level trainers. As a result of their experiences, Rozan revised their implementation strategy in 2007. Instead of centralized training, they began to implement a longer-term, phased approach at the provincial level. This strategy has been implemented in two of Pakistan's four provinces – Punjab and Sindh. Rozan meet with Heads of Training at the provincial level, and - with their support – visit all police training colleges and schools in the province to provide a one-day orientation to all three types of trainers - Law, Weapons, and Drill trainers. Rozan concluded that this wider sensitization would be more effective than simply training a smaller selection of trainers, who would struggle to implement changes without broader support. The orientation phase aims to create a larger pool of trainers. Depending on levels of commitment and awareness, 25 to 30 trainers are selected from this pool to undertake the attitudinal change training. From that training, four to five of the most suitable and committed trainers are selected to undertake Training of Trainers (i.e. instruction on how to teach the earlier five-day module). The model allows Rozan to control the selection of trainers based on their level of interest, sensitivity to the issues, education, skills, etc., and enhances the likelihood that trainers will deliver the module when they return to their colleges and schools.

Lessons learned

Changes in the overall political context can create important opportunities for change. The primary concerns of the police leadership in approaching Rozan to conduct trainings related to improving interpersonal skills and attitudes amongst police personnel. Rozan saw the request as an opportunity to address the additional problem of abusive or insensitive treatment of female survivors by some police personnel, which discourages women from reporting abuse. Rabta's success in achieving institutionalization of the training module was also, in part, the result of a change in political leadership; and the pressure created on the government through reporting requirements on its international commitments to gender.

Rozan continues to encourage discussion of gender issues and violence against women at the national and regional level, and contributes to debates among civil society organizations about the importance of working with the police. In October 2010, Rozan organized a regional conference on 'Gender and Policing', which aimed to provide a forum for researchers and practitioners to share experiences and lessons learned. Key messages that emerged included that effective legislation and increasing the numbers of female officers are key to addressing gender-based violence.

Adopting a context-sensitive, phased approach to training is critical to the successful engagement of police. Training should be context-specific and aim to understand the cultural and social factors that might influence participants. The participants' familiarity with gender discourses, prior gender training experiences, and the institutional context within which they will be expected to operate should also be assessed. This context should inform the curriculum and training methods used. The attitudinal change model, which works on wider issues of self-awareness, personality, men and masculinities, appears to be successful in enabling participants, who might become defensive using a more direct approach, to talk about the gender issues they face, to gradually open up during the workshop and to engage in a way that is conducive to constructive discussion and change.

Taking a long-term perspective allows training programmes to tailor activities to the changing context. The Rabta programme has evolved gradually over time, and activities have developed incrementally through reflection of lessons learned. This includes consideration of participant feedback, Rozan's own vision and understanding of its role and scope in the process, the changing political environment and evolving gender discourses.

Transferring ownership of gender sensitization to the National Police Academy was critical to ensuring that gender issues did not remain peripheral, although gender mainstreaming must also be integrated across the curriculum. Organizational commitment to gender issues has meant that internal mechanisms ensure implementation of trainings. Rozan’s training of internal police staff through ‘training-of-trainers’ enhances institutional capacity on gender, and creates a bank of institutional gender trainers familiar with the internal environment. However, the Attitudinal Change Module (with its gender component) is still treated as a stand-alone training module, and gender training and violence against women awareness are not yet incorporated across all training that officers receive. This also perpetuates a contradiction between the Attitudinal Change Module’s message on the status of women, and what is taught through the legislation modules (i.e. a woman’s testimony is considered half as credible as a man’s).

The wider institutional environment can deeply impact the sustainability of attitudinal change. Through monitoring, Rozan has found that, about six months after the training, there is a general decline in terms of knowledge and sensitivity amongst officers. Reasons for this include: one-off training; lack of long-term contact with the Trainers; a non-supportive culture within police stations and security institutions generally; senior officer influence; lack of female officers; and infrastructure/ environmental constraints within local facilities. Training sessions should be followed with further capacity building, for example refresher courses, support on specific gender issues, and/ or technical courses, such as interviewing techniques.

Training alone cannot transform the police. Structural issues affect the extent to which police can respond effectively to gender issues.

The Rabta training is only one part of wider efforts to achieve greater police responsiveness to gender-based violence in Pakistan, which must include institutional and structural

“Gender training must be part of a larger programme to make the police force more gender-responsive. This requires addressing the overall culture of the police system, making the working environment more sensitive to the needs of women police officers, ensuring fairer distribution of resources across the lower and higher cadres, instituting accountability mechanisms, and developing public complaints and oversight mechanisms”.

Rozan Director

reforms. A comprehensive and explicit approach to gender-responsive practices is also needed at a structural and institutional level (e.g. to change current laws and procedures that may not support greater gender sensitivity). One former trainee commented: *“there is only so much the police can do if women rights aren’t protected within the system – by law. Certainly, since the 2007 Women’s Protection Bill was passed, the police take women’s complaints much more seriously”.*

Reform-minded individuals can create opportunities for changes in often closed security institutions and systems. The Rabta programme benefited from the vision of a senior police official, who knew Rozan’s work through his networks. Development actors should aim to identify and cultivate relationships with such individuals, and engage them to bring about targeted and sustained change. They should also aim to win senior management support for gender training and ensure that senior managers also receive gender training. However, efforts should not be too focused on individuals, as there is a risk that achievements can be lost when individuals transfer or leave their role within the institution.

Sources: Seema Khan, 2011 in collaboration with Mr. Babar Bashir, Rozan Director; all quotes from Rozan staff and programme participants are from interviews conducted for the preparation of this case study in November 2010.