

# INTERVENTION BRIEF



Multi-component Family  
Intervention to Lower  
Depression and Address Intimate  
Partner Violence (**MILAP**)

## BACKGROUND

Globally, **one in three** women face physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, significantly impacting their mental health (MH) [1].



counselors, clinical psychologists, psychiatrist, sociologists, program managers and researchers from Possible and the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC).

In Nepal, over **one-quarter** of ever-married women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) [2]. IPV substantially affects the mental well-being of women, a concern particularly pertinent in contexts like Nepal where women often reside within multigenerational households.

To address the critical intersection of mental health and IPV, we co-designed, adapted and tested the Multi-component Family Intervention to Lower Depression and Address Intimate Partner Violence (MILAP), piloting it among women of reproductive age in Dhanusa and Morang between 2021 and 2023. This brief offers an overview of MILAP's contents, target audiences and session outlines.

## TARGETED AUDIENCES

The MILAP intervention targets women, their husbands, and mothers-in-law, and comprises two components. The first component focuses on fostering mutual empowerment between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (MilDil) and the second one on enhancing relationships between women and their husbands through Behavioral Couples Therapy (BCT).

## OVERVIEW OF MILAP

Both IPV and MH problems have numerous drivers and consequences. Within MILAP, various components are dedicated to addressing these root causes. For example, MilDil focuses on skills building, enhancing connections with important relationships, and promoting resilience and empowerment.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILAP



The MILAP intervention is an iterative and collaborative process developed with the input of a team, consisting of psychosocial



MilDil sessions (last for a total of 6 hours) during which the counselor discusses topics such as gender norms, IPV, relations between MilDil.

[1] World Health Organization. Violence against Women., 2021. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>  
[2] Ministry of Health and Population. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2016. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr336/fr336.pdf>



Similarly, BCT concentrates on improving spousal relationships, fostering increased trust and caring behaviors between woman and her husband. BCT sessions last for four weeks (each session lasting an hour)



### MilDiI

The Mother-In-Law and Daughter-In-Law dyad receive four sessions as briefly outlined here.

#### 1st Session

### Understanding Cultural gender norms, roles, and Expectations (2 hours):

This covers an introduction of participants, provides an overview of MILAP, explores cultural and gender norms, establishes ground rules, includes activities on girls' norms and popular songs, discusses gender roles, and facilitates homework discussions.

#### 2nd Session

### Awareness of adverse effects of domestic violence and establishing allyship (2 hours):

This includes a recap and homework review, followed by activities exploring gender-based violence, safe marriage spaces, intergenerational support, women's leadership, and freedom of movement. It concludes with a discussion on homework.

#### 3rd - 4th session

### Brief behavioral activation (1 hour each):

These sessions focus on identifying and targeting specific behaviors contributing to a person's low mood, while also promoting increased physical activity. It includes discussions on case studies, activity planning, mood assessment, and assigning homework. The fourth session also focuses briefly on review homework assessment from first behavioural activation (BA) session and recap of first 4 sessions.

### BCT

Following the MilDiI sessions, the husband-wife dyad receives four weekly sessions of BCT, each lasting one hour.

#### 1st Session

This covers identifying challenges, committing to safety, and learning stress coping strategies, including culturally tailored deep breathing and mindfulness meditation techniques.

#### 2nd Session

In this session, the couple revisits the effectiveness of these coping skills and then focuses on improving communication between themselves.

#### 3rd Session

This includes an activity to encourage caring behaviors between partners.

#### 4th Session

The last session further delves into improving communication skills by introducing active listening skills while reviewing strategies learned in the prior session.

Last  
session

### Triad session

MILAP concludes with a final triad session (an hour) involving the woman, her husband, and mother-in-law. In this session, the counselor gives an opportunity to three of them to reflect on MILAP, review all the lessons learned, and prepare them to address challenges coming days.

### VARIOUS ACTIVITIES BUILT IN SESSIONS:



- Case Studies
- Active Listening
- Role Play
- Homework Assignment
- Practice within Session

### WHO FACILITATES THESE SESSIONS?

Psychosocial counselors with at least six months of training, employed by WOREC lead these sessions. They have received a 5-day training on MILAP and receive weekly supportive supervision from a clinical psychologist at Possible. The sessions were conducted in counseling rooms of WOREC at convenient times based on participants' suggestions.



### CONCLUSION

MILAP encompasses a variety of activities, including storytelling, active listening, role-play, and practical assignments for women, mother-in-laws, and husbands, ensuring a comprehensive approach. Its objective is to foster a supportive environment, build trust and support within the family, and aid in conflict management and anxiety alleviation during the earliest phases, thereby preventing escalation. By focusing on empowering family relationships, MILAP aims to create sustained change.



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