

Institution: University of Lincoln		
Unit of Assessment: 20 – Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Improving Understanding of and Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 onwards		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): SUNDARI Anitha	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Gender, Violence and Work	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 4 Jan 10 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017 onwards		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Professor Anitha's research on the nature, impact and remedies to different forms of violence against women and girls has led to direct demonstrable impact through: a. Changes to national policy via change to the definition of domestic violence used by the family justice system in England & Wales. b. Changes to international policy via shaping the content of the Tunis Declaration's legislative recommendations on the draft Arab Convention on Combating Violence Against Women. c. Change to professional understanding and transformations in service delivery. d. Change to public awareness and recognition of transnational marriage abandonment through extensive media coverage of her research.		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Professor Anitha has researched and published widely on violence against women and girls (VAWG) including forced marriage [3.1], domestic violence [3.2, 3.3], dowry-related abuse [3.4], and transnational marriage abandonment (TMA) [3.5]. Anitha's research has led to a recognition and understanding of previously undocumented forms of violence and abuse such as transnational marriage abandonment (TMA) and dowry-abuse across transnational spaces [3.4, 3.5] and generated new knowledge on problems such as forced marriage. This research has improved our understanding of the nature and impact of VAWG and gaps in current policy and practice and led to new or more effective responses; it has also broadened the conceptual lens utilized to understand such violence beyond relationship/family to the broader structural factors including state policy. Her British Academy funded research (2013-2016) was the first systematic study on the problem of 'transnational marriage abandonment' (a term she coined). This refers to the abandonment of wives across national borders by men to deprive them of financial and settlement rights and evade the criminal justice process for domestic violence. Abandonment within the context of marriage has hitherto not been regarded as a form of domestic violence. However, this research argued for the first time that within the transnational context, abandonment constitutes a form of violence as it is intended to deprive women of their residence and financial rights arising from their marriage and is enabled by gender-blind transnational formal-legal frameworks which enable men resident in the West to abuse marriage migrant women with impunity.		

This study documented the nature and consequences of TMA whereby:

- a. in the context of ongoing domestic violence, a marriage migrant may be deceived/coerced into returning to her country of origin and abandoned there;
- b. a bride may be left behind in her home country awaiting sponsorship-only to be ousted from her marital home without any financial settlement for herself or any children, following a period of abuse from in-laws.

Based on life-history interviews with 57 abandoned wives in India, and interviews with 21 practitioners, this research documents for the first time, the nature and patterns of abuse and abandonment in transnational marriages in the UK and India. The findings suggest that by strategically abandoning their wives in their home country, transnationally mobile men deprive their wives of their financial rights such as an equitable settlement upon divorce, child custody and recovery of dowry.

As a consequence of this research, TMA is beginning to be recognised in academic, practice and policy communities as a form of coercive and controlling behaviour that needs to be addressed in policy and law. Apart from publications in academic journals, Anitha has been invited to contribute the first-ever chapter on TMA in the forthcoming Routledge Handbook on Domestic Abuse.

Anitha's research on forced marriage [3.1], domestic violence faced by women with insecure immigration status [3.2] and economic abuse [3.3] including dowry abuse [3.4] has improved understanding and informed policy and service responses to these forms of VAWG.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Anitha, S. and Gill, A. (2015) A moral panic? The problematisation of forced marriage in British newspaper reporting, *Violence Against Women* 21 (9): 1123-1144.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077801215590671>
- 3.2 Anitha, S. (2011) Legislating gender inequalities: The nature and patterns of domestic violence experienced by South Asian women with insecure immigration status in the UK, *Violence Against Women* 17 (10): 1260-1285.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801211424571>
- 3.3 Anitha, S. (2019) Understanding economic abuse through an intersectional lens: Financial abuse, control and exploitation of women's productive and reproductive labor. *Violence Against women*
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218824050>
- 3.4 Anitha, S., Yalamarty, H. and Roy, Y. (2018) Changing nature and emerging patterns of domestic violence in global contexts: Dowry abuse and the transnational abandonment of wives in India, *Women's Studies International Forum* 69: 67-75.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2018.05.005>
- 3.5 Anitha, S. and Roy, A. and Yalamarty, H. (2018) Gender, migration and exclusionary citizenship regimes: Conceptualising transnational abandonment of wives as a form of violence against women. *Violence Against Women* 24(7):747-774.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217720693>
- 3.6 Jahangir, S., Anitha, S., Patel, P. and Handa, R. (2016) Emerging issues for international family law Part 2: Possibilities and challenges to providing effective legal remedies in cases of transnational marriage abandonment. *Family Law Journal* 46(11): 1352-56. Available on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Anitha's research [3.1-6] has addressed and closed a number of gaps in our understanding of and policy/practice responses to VAWG, in national and transnational arenas.

There has been direct and demonstrable impact through:

- changes to national policy;
- changes to international policy;
- change to professional understanding and service delivery;
- change to public awareness.

The beneficiaries have been survivors of VAWG, frontline practitioners, policy makers and the general public in the UK and Middle East.

Changes to national policy:

Following her research, Anitha set up a working group (with Southall Black Sisters and lawyers) to respond to TMA as a legal problem for the first time in the UK. The President of the Family Division of the High Court of England & Wales [5.1] invited Anitha to present the research evidence and provide training for judges on the issue of TMA at the 2017 'President's conference'. The working group was invited to suggest changes to the Practice Direction 12j (PD12j) which sets out what the Family/High Court is required to do in family proceedings where there is domestic violence [5.1].

As a direct result of the research [see 5.1], the definition of domestic abuse within the PD12j was expanded in 2017 to include: "dowry-related abuse and transnational marriage abandonment; [where] "abandonment" refers to the practice whereby a husband [...] deliberately abandons or 'strands' his foreign national wife abroad [...] in order to prevent her from asserting matrimonial and/or residence rights in England and Wales." This significant change—which follows verbatim the recommendation given by Anitha's working group—is the first recognition of TMA as a form of domestic abuse in the law anywhere in the West.

A legal precedent was established when the Court of Appeal (A(Children) Re [2019] EWCA Civ74) set out a guide to the law on TMA [5.2-para 70-78]. The significance of this change has been noted by law firms [5.3], as judicial remedies and Legal Aid is now available to survivors of TMA for the first time.

According to Sulema Jahangir, an international family solicitor: "...TMA is widespread but has sadly attracted little attention from policymakers. Dr Anitha's research is ground-breaking, detailed and extremely useful [...] has been instrumental in shaping legal remedies." [5.4], an assessment that has been reiterated in various blogs by law firms [5.5].

Alongside instrumental changes via change in law, this research has stimulated policy debates and recognition of TMA in the UK and beyond, where none existed earlier, through: written parliamentary questions in House of Lords on government actions in relation to TMA; references to this research on TMA in Australian Senate report on dowry abuse; UK Home Affairs Select Committee Report on Domestic Abuse, UK's Shadow Report to CEDAW, Fawcett Society's Sex discrimination law review and New Zealand Law Society's Council brief [5.6].

Changes to international policymaking:

Based on her ongoing research on VAWG, Anitha was invited to contribute to a summit of the Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries who met to draft the Arab Convention to Combat Violence against Women, the first in the region. As a direct result of Anitha's contributions, Coalition members amended their Tunis Declaration [5.7] to broaden their existing definition of violence to "ensure the protection of the rights of all victims". This change incorporates categories of victims hitherto excluded, e.g., child brides and women with unregistered marriages. Anitha was subsequently invited to write the introduction to the forthcoming 'Report

on the status of violence against women' by the Coalition of Women MPs to further policy responses to VAWG within the Arab League of Nations.

Improving professional understanding and transforming service delivery:

Since 2017, Anitha has delivered training to over 600 frontline practitioners in England & Wales—including social workers, police, domestic violence and health practitioners on domestic violence, TMA, forced marriage and dowry abuse. Positive feedback identified enhanced knowledge: “improved understanding of forced marriage, honour-based abuse and transnational abuse” and “improved confidence in working with survivors”; new knowledge to inform practice: “will ‘identify warning/signs/red flags’”; and planned wider dissemination to fellow practitioners “will set up practice session to discuss topic more widely” [5.8].

Improving public understanding:

Anitha's research has attracted considerable media coverage which has raised public awareness and understanding of this hitherto little-known problem. BBC Victoria Derbyshire programme based on this research has received 3.1 million views on YouTube [5.9]. A news item on the TMA research was among 10 most read on BBC News; and other media coverage included the Times, Times of India, New York Times and the Sun [5.9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Evidence trail of change in law as a direct result of Anitha's research.
- 5.2 Court of Appeal judgement on A(Children) Re [2019] EWCA Civ74 (see para 70-78).
- 5.3 An article barrister Marie Crawford on the significance of The Court of Appeal Judgment which drew upon PD12J.
- 5.4 Testimony from an international family solicitor who represented victim of domestic violence in the landmark A(Children) Re [2019] EWCA Civ74 and other TMA cases.
- 5.5 Law firms' blogs about the significance of the TMA research.
- 5.6 Evidence of recognition of TMA in national and international policy debates.
- 5.7 Testimony from WFD that 'as a result of Anitha's contribution' resolution 4 (of 9) was incorporated in the Tunis Declaration; and the text of the Tunis Declaration.
- 5.8 Evaluation of training events for practitioners.
- 5.9 Media (YouTube) - screenshot on BBC programme on YouTube with viewership statistics of 3.1 million; and other media coverage of Anitha's research.