

# Self-defence training against gender-based violence

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The entire country was shaken to the core after three consecutive cases of rape and sexual violence came to light very recently. According to the records of Ain O Shalish Kendro, even amidst the ongoing corona pandemic, 975 rape cases were reported, among which 43 of were victims to femicide, while 12 survivors committed suicide between January to September. There were around 204 reported cases of a rape attempt. The epidemic of this unspeakable violence hits hard every time we think about it.



There is a lot to be done to reach a long-term solution to the problem. This includes law reform, stricter implementation, introducing sex education as a part of the national curriculum and many more. While these should be on top of the priority list, it is also necessary to develop a better understanding of self-defence and awareness since every tool is worth having if it can protect you from violence. Today we talk about a couple of programmes that can help you to find the right direction to go about it.

**Warrior Woman Bangladesh by KO Fight Studio**

KO Fight Studio was one of the firsts to have launched a course particularly dedicated to self-defence back in September, 2017. This two-month-long course is specially designed for women who are unable to commit to long term training. Abdullah Mohammad Hossain, founder of KO Fight Studio said, "In this programme, we mainly focus on strength building of women, increasing

stamina and endurance and working on techniques. I don't personally believe that learning a few tricks and techniques help that much because real-life situations are pretty unpredictable. You can never guess the way you can be attacked, no one can tell you the right directions to deal with the situation on that spot and your response has to come from your reflex. What we do is to help you condition the body parts through which you respond to the situation. We aim to prepare you to fight back under any circumstances."

Warrior Woman Bangladesh will be starting the course with its tenth batch from November 2020. Interested ones can go to KO Fight Studio's Facebook page to get enrolled by paying the fees via bKash. All the necessary instructions are given before the classes via a group messenger thread with all enrollees. Classes are held on Friday and Saturday, followup instructions for the rest of the week are also given via the messenger thread.

"Usually we don't admit more than 20 people in each batch. We want to expand this project and make it accessible to schools and colleges, RMG workers and women in the most remote areas of the country.

#### **WW Academy: Online self-defence courses**

Wander Woman is a community exclusively dedicated to female travel enthusiasts from Bangladesh, which formed the WW Academy in October 2019 intending to train women with the crucial

skills (self-defence, swimming and such) needed while travelling. "In 2019, we made a trip to Tanguar Haor with a group of girls from Wander Woman and were harassed by an NGO worker. Locals urged us to take file complaints to the police, but we were outnumbered by the NGO team and so didn't want to take the risk. When we got back to Dhaka, I took legal actions against the perpetrator. However, this made me wonder how women feel unsafe in any part of the country, and I decided to launch a self-defence programme under WW Academy", said Sabira Mehrin, founder of Wander Woman.

WW Academy launched a self-defence course partnering with Titans Academy, and trained 10 girls by December 2019. Later on, in 2020, the response for this project wasn't as expected, so the WW team started rethinking the model they designed. "Meanwhile, the pandemic took over, so we put the programme on hold because we weren't sure how many people would sign up for online workshops. When I came across the Begumgunj incident earlier this month, it shook me to the core. That's when it occurred to me that we could offer free self-defence classes online via WW Academy. We created a basic registration form that requires the name of the enrollee and her contact information. By the end of the day, we had around seven thousand women who registered for the course", said Sabira.

"Self-defence is not just about fighting, it's about learning techniques and tactics

to avoid certain situations, and that is something I wanted to make the women understand. I believe this a survival tactic that all of us need, regardless of our genders and ages", she added.

Titans Academy is partnering with WW Academy on this project, along with three more instructors. Every weekend there is going to be an orientation session by different instructors, with five hundred enrollees per session. WW Academy will be keeping in touch with them by launching a newsletter to get them connected with any programmes that the instructors launch in the future. To manage this huge capacity, the organisation has partnered with Adorn&Co, Alpha Catering, Edith, Romoni and Luminous Artistry by Lazina Elma.

When asked about the future plans of the WW Academy, Sabira said, "We are also planning to launch some exclusive programmes if enough people are interested and are continuously working with our partners for that. Apart from that, we want to work with pre-teens and sex education under parental supervision. We also want to work with RMG workers, slum-dwellers and people living in the rural remote areas of the country by building a community hub partnering with different NGOs. We aim to do something sustainable and reach out to more women across the country."

Organisations like Black Belt Academy, Bangladesh Karate Do and others are also offering different self-defence courses that are worth checking out.