

**DISABLED WOMEN'S NETWORK (DAWN)
RÉSEAU D'ACTION DE FEMMES HANDICAPÉES (RAFH)
CANADA**


Violence, Gender and Disability: Deepening our Understanding

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Ban Ki Moon states in The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011

“.....the report shows that we still have a long way to go in empowering women and girls, promoting sustainable development, and protecting the most vulnerable from the devastating effects of multiple crises, be they conflicts, natural disasters or volatility in prices for food and energy.....Progress tends to bypass those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are otherwise disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability or ethnicity.”




Under Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Women and Girls with disabilities are the only group in the Convention who have specific articles to address the severity of the profound discrimination against us.

The profound discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities is mentioned time and time again

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Millennium Development Goals
- Beijing 15
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Out of the Shadows: Sexual Violence against Children with Disabilities.

A critical issue, yet in Canada...

- We need proper demographic questions to elicit data about disability, gender, transgender and sexual orientation and ethnicity, from Statistics Canada
- Census information must include gender-disaggregated data and data collection by region are fundamental.

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- The long form census, HALS and PALS surveys were instrumental in helping us to identify prevalence and needs of people within the disability community.
 - But these have been discontinued, and ...

Women with disabilities disappeared from Canadian Statistics !



The newest Statistical Profile of Women in Canada (2011) attempts to erase women with disabilities where the previous report (2006) provided rich and invaluable data.

Who we are?

- We are women, people first and foremost.
- The disability movement does not adhere to the “medical model” for understanding the experience of disability.
- Which focuses on the individual’s deviation from “normal”
- Rather than acknowledging ⇒ Society’s lack of accommodation limit advantage and access.
- The problem is not the impairment, but rather “disability” arises from the barriers to equal participation

Careful not to Label



We're women first...

- Useful to understand the general categories of types of disabilities, so that we can name and address barriers.
- But we have to understand these categories in the context of systemic barriers, and;
- We need to recognize everyone's individuality;
- Finally understand that these are broad categories that are not mutually exclusive.

Types of Disabilities

- Mobility and Agility Impairments
- Vision Impairments
- Hearing Impairments
- Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder
- Psychosocial (or Mental Health, Psychiatric)
- Speech Impairments or Limited Verbal Communication
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Episodic Disabilities
- Traumatic Brain Injury and Acquired Brain Injury
- Invisible Disabilities
- Multiple Disabilities

Next sections draw on findings from



The Canadian Women's Foundation enlisted DAWN/RAFH Canada to assist CWF in identifying what types of interventions should be supported by the CWF for women with disabilities.

The findings ...

The Experience of Abuse ...

- Psychological & Verbal
- Financial
- Sexual
- Physical
- Systems abuse
- Conjugal/Spousal Abuse
- Racism and Ableism
- Denial of Services
- Discrimination on the basis of their disability
- Destruction of Property
- Cyber Bullying

Psychological & Verbal Abuse

- Name calling & bullying;
- Telling women that they are worthless;
- Telling women that they are incapable of doing anything meaningful: i.e. work or go to school.
- Telling women that their disability limits what they can do and dream of;
- Criticizing their cooking or parenting;
- Controlling every aspect of their life, i.e. what they can eat, where they can go, who they can talk to

Psychological & Verbal Abuse

- Not acknowledging or appreciating women's contributions;
- Threatening to withhold primary care supports;
- Threatening physical harm;
- Demanding and aggressive behaviour;
- Insulting and degrading language;
- Yelling and throwing of objects;
- Laughing at women; and
- Telling women that they were unattractive and undesirable.

Financial Abuse

- Caregivers taking their Disability Social Assistance support cheques;
- Controlling their bank accounts;
- Limiting access to women's own money;
- Telling women what they can and cannot do with their own money;
- Stealing from them in their homes;
- Paid caregivers using women's money for their own personal needs and pleasures;

Abuse by the System

- Caregivers taking their Disability Social Assistance support cheques;
- Rude and disrespectful treatment by health care professionals and hospital personnel.
- Refusal to provide medical services needed.
- Rude and disrespectful services from shelter workers and social workers.
- Unwillingness to provide service and support.
- Rude and disrespectful treatment by the police and legal system.
- Unwillingness to help women and minimizing of abuse.

Physical Abuse

- Extreme physical violence.
- Violence results in disability, particularly brain injuries.
- Physical abuse is ongoing.
- Some women fight back in self-defence.
The alternative to not fighting back is potentially death.
- Physical violence witnessed by children.

Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse by those in positions of authority.
- Child sexual abuse.
- Often abusers were family members
- Date rape
- Gang rape
- Violent rape by male partners.
- Inappropriate touching by caregivers when washing, bathing, and dressing women.

Racism

- ❑ Described as “emotional violence” in employment.
- ❑ Racist treatment by health professionals when trying to get help.
- ❑ Racist treatment by shelter workers.
- ❑ Racism experienced from counsellors or service providers in violence against women organizations.

Denial of Services and/or Inappropriate Treatment by Caregivers

- Forced to live in inaccessible homes.
- Withholding of primary care.
- Denial of assistance to use the washroom.
- Rough bathing and washing.
- Male caregivers being sent to provide primary care for women.
- Caregivers control women's choices, money, and when and where they can go.

Discrimination on the basis of their disability

- Refused service at a shelter because they had a mental health disability, or couldn't be accommodated.
- Refused counselling because of mental health disability.
- Denied employment, housing, access to childcare because of their disability.

Destruction of Property

- Destroyed furniture in woman's apartment.
- Broke down door.
- Smashed car windows.
- Damaged hearing aid and other assistive devices.

Cyber Bullying

- ❑ Through email, instant messaging, Internet chat rooms, and electronic gadgets like camera cell phones, cyber bullies forward and spread hurtful images and/or messages.
- ❑ Bullies use this technology to harass victims at all hours, in wide circles, at warp speed.
- ❑ Cyber sexual abuse

Who are the abusers?

- ⇒ Health Care Providers - Increased risk due to reliance on health care system.
- ⇒ More than one caregiver in their lives, more opportunities for abuse.
- ⇒ When the violence is not sexual, offender is more likely to be a woman

Most likely offenders in order ...



- Mother or father
- Caregivers, both male and female
- Health care service providers (including institutional and residential staff)
- Husbands, boyfriends, partners (including same sex)
- Other family relatives
- Transit drivers, attendant care workers or interpreters (seek these employment opportunities)

Quotes on Abuse

“When I was new to the country, a woman told me that because of my disability it would be impossible for me to find a job.”

“My boyfriend told me I was ugly and I was lucky that he was with me.”

Quotes on Abuse

My boyfriend raped me and cracked my head on a bed while raping me.

I don't know how many times when I was child, I was approached by my friend's - who were non-native – by their fathers. Because I was different, a 'squaw', a little prostitute.

Quotes on Abuse

The specialist took out a copy of National Geographic and showed me a picture and said 'Do you know how lucky you are to be in this country? You are complaining about a headache... this is suffering, you are not suffering. There was a time when everything was good, safe, before I came to Canada. I didn't know what sexual abuse was before I came here. I felt like telling him that.

Women with a brain injury

Impact

- ⇒ Abuse leads to disability, i.e. physical (brain injuries) or mental health disabilities
- ⇒ Fearful of going out
- ⇒ Very low self esteem
- ⇒ Isolation
- ⇒ Alcoholism
- ⇒ Enter into other destructive relationships or behaviour

What stood in the way?

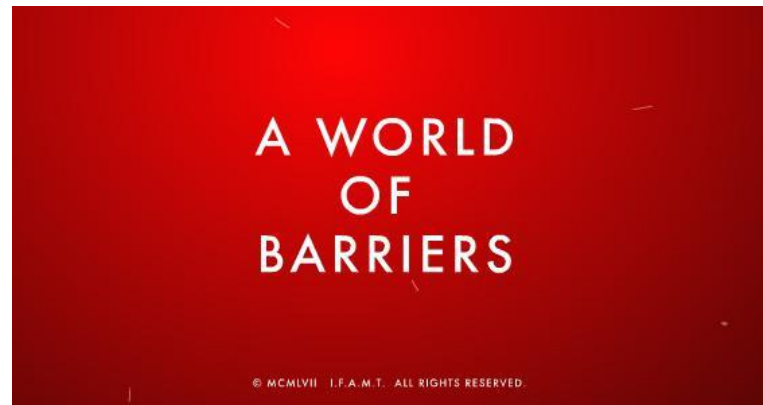
Not believed ... By police, family, counsellors, shelter workers, lawyers, doctors, nurses , social worker, co-workers

Lack of awareness of what abuse is.

Lack of money.

Don't know where to go or who can help.

Dependency on abuser.



What didn't help

- ✘ Not being believed by police, family, counsellors, hospital staff.
- ✘ Lack of money - can't afford to leave.
- ✘ Lack of housing options.
- ✘ Insensitivity, uncaring, and hurtful health and social service workers and those who work in the shelters:
 - ⇒ Sexism
 - ⇒ Racism
 - ⇒ Classism
 - ⇒ Ableism.



And the intersection of each.

What helped

Someone in a helping role, who ...

- ✓ Listened.
- ✓ Treated you with respect.
- ✓ Didn't question or doubt what was being said.
- ✓ Was kind.
- ✓ Got to know them as an individual.
- ✓ Helped develop individual plans based on a woman's specific individual dreams for, employment, housing, child care needs, etc.

What helped

- ✓ Help with getting paperwork and finances in place.
- ✓ Opening up to friends.
- ✓ Getting connected to the larger community , through volunteering, activism, the arts, recreational activities.

Some differences that were noted

Ethno-racial women – stronger sense of being abused by the system. Many experiences of racism and ableism. The abuse has occurred since they have been in Canada.

Women with Mental Health Issues – didn't realize that they were experiencing abuse, multiple disabilities, strong need for trauma therapy.

Women with Episodic Disabilities – pronounced violence, many barriers to leaving , reported much abused by the system.

Some differences that were noted

Women with intellectual disabilities– reported many incidences of financial abuse by caregivers, abusive parents, and sexual abuse more frequently.

Women
were very poor.

Francophone women – reported verbal abuse from family, abuse by caregivers, fear to disclose due to need for support from abusive caregivers.

Some differences that were noted

First Nations/Métis Women:

- ⇒ Thinking abuse was just the way things were growing up
- ⇒ Never heard of services for abuse women or people with disabilities, particularly on reserve.
- ⇒ Professionals didn't understand what life was like for aboriginal people.
- ⇒ Really stressed the need for culturally aware, sensitive - the importance of peer and aboriginal-specific supports.

What would have helped

Sensitive Skilled Counsellors who . . .

- ✓ Work within the context of an anti-oppression framework.
- ✓ Understand the systemic and personal experiences of disability.
- ✓ Who are trained in dealing with trauma.
- ✓ Who are good listeners, are centred on the woman, non judgemental, gentle, and kind.

What would have helped?

- ✓ Financial security.
- ✓ Abuse awareness education.
- ✓ Community involvement and connection.
- ✓ Women working collectively to stop abuse.
- ✓ Women are supported to work on individual holistic life plans.
- ✓ Importance of empowerment and self advocacy.

Recommendations

- ❖ Women do not want to be consulted anymore – they want concrete actions.
- ❖ Create groups where women could meet regularly and talk about abuse “*it is liberating*”
- ❖ Alternative therapies and artistic projects to help women tell their stories.

Recommendations

- ❑ Skilled, disability sensitive, free counselling services.
- ❑ Safety protocol and protection process when a woman leaves.
- ❑ Temporary money in place until a woman gets her life in order.
- ❑ Women centred short and long term planning.

Recommendations

- ❖ Systems analysis to identify where women with disabilities are not being appropriately supported.
- ❖ Sensitivity Training and Awareness Raising re. the issues for abused women with disabilities is needed for all the key sectors involved with VAW.

Community Development Strategy

Local Community

Small towns to large urban cities



Province & Territories

In each of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories



Canada

How it works



The community safety audit process



Local Audit Teams will engage in a step by step process for community organizations, cross sectors to identify:

- The places where women with disabilities and Deaf women are vulnerable;
- When and how abuse may be occurring.

This 8 Step Audit Approach Examines ...



⇒ the gap between what women experience

⇒ and what agencies aim to provide


⇒ how that gap is produced.

On the individual level Women's Working Group process:

- ✓ Support workers are given tools to gather all pertinent background information to support women with disabilities.
- ✓ Women from that same community are supported in developing realistic short and long term plans.
- ✓ The framework for these plans matches individual needs and wants with what is actually available.
- ✓ Plans are built around individual women's needs and wants

Working with women ...

- ✓ Shares relevant information/resources and offers a process for women to arrive at self identified strategies;
- ✓ Uses specific local information on supports, planning tools, exercises, and checklists.



All to help women get the type of
flexible and individualized
support/intervention that they need,
by learning about and working
with the supports that are available in
their community

Local Level Community Capacity Building Process

What do we need?

A Tool Kit that includes:

1. Sector specific training modules;
2. Instructions on implementing the Community Audit; and
3. A process for person-centred and collective planning with women with disabilities and Deaf women (and men) who are experiencing violence and/or are vulnerable to violence.

to...

This process supports women to...

- ✓ Identify their individual needs & means of addressing those needs;
- ✓ To organize as a group and lead this process; and
- ✓ To organize key community players to best respond to their needs.

The Tool Kit will contain Instructions & Facilitator Notes

The Tool Kit outlines a process for both organizing and delivering :

- ✓ The Awareness Forum;
- ✓ The Women/Men Workshops;
- ✓ Sector-specific Training; and
- ✓ How to conduct a Local Community Safety Audit

Tool Kit Modules

1. Sensitivity Training for the Justice sector
2. Training on the Model for Supported Credibility – Justice sector
3. Sensitivity Training for the VAW sector
4. Sensitivity Training for the Health & Social Services sector (includes disability services, immigrant settlement, etc.)
5. Sensitivity Training for the Education sector
6. Sensitivity Training for Senior's Services/Programs
7. Workshop for Women with Disabilities and Deaf women
8. Workshop for Men with Disabilities and Deaf men
9. Workshop for Older Women with Disabilities and Deaf women
10. Workshop for Older Men with Disabilities and Deaf men
11. Workshop for Family Caregivers of Older People with Intellectual Disabilities
12. How to conduct a Safety Audit in your organization

Why will this strategy work?

- ❑ Reaches a lot of people!
- ❑ Builds the foundation needed to root this community capacity building approach in local communities.
- ❑ Women will begin to be treated and seen not as “*clients*” or “*consumers of services*” but citizens of a community who are clear about what needs to be done in order for them to feel supported and make real changes in their lives.

Why will this strategy work?

- ❑ Outreach process that identifies isolated women;
- ❑ Research that gathered and developed community-specific inventories of local resources, programs, policies, and community information that would support women with disabilities;
- ❑ Women will be empowered as the leaders of this process;

More on outreach

- ✓ The outreach process really understands how to reach people where they are;
- ✓ The outreach process is delivered by organizations and partners that have relationships in local communities thus are trusted;
- ✓ The outreach process understood diversity and how to make the process sensitive and accessible to all segments of the target population.

Why will this strategy work?

- ❑ Information on supports in both the violence against women and disability sectors is brought together, in the context of other groups (i.e. Immigrant settlement, LGBTQT, youth, seniors, etc...)
- ❑ The Information on supports that will be presented in an accessible, straight forward, uncomplicated manner.

Successful because it works on many levels

- ⇒ Identifies individual solutions;
- ⇒ Identifies collective group solutions;
- ⇒ Identifies and engages the broader local community to examine themselves and respond to those specific individual and group needs;
- ⇒ Identifies broader policy & program solutions for advocates/relevant advocacy groups to pursue.

Why will it be successful?

Due to key components of the design and approach including;

- ✓ It will be designed and developed by women with the support of facilitators;
- ✓ It will be piloted extensively – thus women will engage in the change process, while at the same time the tool kit will be continually revised and improved upon.

Why is it successful?

The effectiveness of the tool kit resource & strategy :

- ✓ Workshop to women will be easy to deliver;
- ✓ Flexible and individualized;
- ✓ Customized to meet the needs of each individual, P/T, and each individual local community;
- ✓ Local organizers will be skilled women with disabilities and Deaf women.
- ✓ Women will get the support they need to participate.

BASED ON A SIMILAR PROJECT WE KNOW ...

Uniform and exceptionally positive evaluation results indicating;

- Gains in knowledge about their rights and entitlements;
- Exposed to the range of options;
- Identified strategies for change;
- Acquired a better sense of what they need, rather than having to fit into what the system offers;
- Importance of a collective identity for social change.



THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSION

The process empowers the group who has been marginalized to self facilitate towards better articulation of their needs and the development of strategies that will mobilize and also empower the various sectors towards an effective community and broader societal response.



MORE ON THE JUSTICE SECTOR

- The justice sector plays a key role in the prevention and response to violence for women with disabilities and Deaf women.
- This strategy will address the specific barriers to accessing the information and services that are required for abused women with disabilities and Deaf women to receive fair and equal treatment in society as a whole and specifically as they attempt to access the justice system.



FINDINGS RELATED TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Before seeking assistance:

- Not aware that what they are experiencing is abuse
- Barriers to seeking help including communication barriers, unaware of where to go, inaccessible services
- Fear of the police, especially immigrant women who have a fear based on policing in their home countries
- Lack of knowledge of the process and role of the police
- Unaware of their rights, i.e. fear of losing children, being deported, losing supports, etc.



WHEN ABUSED WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND DEAF WOMEN DO SEEK HELP

Police contact

- Services are not accessible i.e., victim witness, police stations, etc.
- Not being believed by police
- Mistreatment by the police
- Racist and classist treatment intersecting with discrimination based on their disability (ableism)
- Difficulties in communicating the abuse
- Lack of supports and accommodations in the criminal justice process upon entry



When abused women with disabilities and Deaf women do seek help

In the courts

- Question of women's capacity to tell the truth and/or understand the process
- Lack of accommodations and supports in the courts in order for fair and equal participation

Public Legal Education and Information Tools

- Awareness and sensitivity training on the issue of abuse for WWD/DW as it pertains to police and the courts.
- Information on what is considered abuse, their rights and an explanation of the process and procedures in the criminal justice system, i.e. what women can expect and women will learn what types of supports to ask for to increase their access to justice.

Stage 2: Audit & Workshops

Work with police and the courts :

- Justice system analysis (community safety audit process) to identify where women with disabilities are not being appropriately supported by identifying the gap between what women experience and what services aim to provide
- A Model for Supported Credibility in the justice system – This workshop would be delivered by the Canadian Association for Community Living
- Justice specific sensitivity training, i.e. for police, legal counsel, judges

MORE ON THE MODEL FOR SUPPORTED CREDIBILITY

Takes its directive from the UN Declaration and the Canadian judicial system's objectives, by developing tools and resources to be used by those key players in the criminal justice system whose job it is to determine the credibility of witnesses, i.e. police, lawyers, crown attorneys and judges.



To-date no applied research that has led to the production of tools that can assist key players in the justice system to provide the kind of accommodations that people with intellectual and other cognitive and/or mental disabilities need in order to participate in an equitable manner.



DAWN-RAFH CANADA & THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE

- First World Conference of Women's Shelters, Edmonton, AB, (September 2008)
- Traumatic Brain Injury Workshops - BIAC National Conference, Montreal, QC (July 2008)
- TBI/ABI International Workshop and Working Group formation, Montreal, QC (November 2010)
- Deaf Women's Conference, Vancouver, BC (2007)
- Deaf Women's Leadership Project, Montreal, QC (2009)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Status of Women Canada - *Bridging the Gaps Women's Community Fund through 2007-2008 resulting in the National Accessibility and Accommodation Survey (NAAS) and other publications linked to Mothering, Poverty and Housing (2009)*;
- Canadian Women's Foundation - Violence Prevention Review (January 2011), Key informants and conducted pan Canadian Focus Groups;
- YWCA Canada Annual Rose Campaign 2009-2010



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Members of the Office for Disability Issues/HRSDC Canada Fact Finding Working Group on Older People with Disabilities and Abuse - 2009-2010
- Contracted with Réseau International Francophone Vivre en Liberté (RIFVEL) of Quebec by the Office for Disability Issues/HRSDC Canada - to review the tools in a resource entitled the SOS Abus Kit for its applicability in addressing the issue of violence in the lives of women with disabilities (September – December 2010)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Silent Voices Conference –Education, Intervention, and Prevention of Abuse of People with Disabilities - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan - October 2010
- Release of new Fact Sheets on Violence, Poverty and Housing in English and French, (November 2010)
- CRI-VIFF – Violence Against Women Conference, Symposium presentation together with La Maison des femmes sourdes de Montréal, Montreal, QC (June 2011)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- National Victims of Crime Awareness (NVCA) week 2011 –develop an awareness campaign, launched through Abilities.ca during NVCA week, (blog, twitter and Facebook messaging strategy entitled: COMMUNICARE,). Included in the Spring-Summer 2011 Issue of Abilities Magazine
- Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and DAWN-RAFH Canada served as Interveners in a case heard by the Supreme Court of Canada - access to justice for sexual assault complainants with intellectual disabilities – decision pending (April 2011)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Training Workshop for women with disabilities in Leadership – Montreal Quebec (May 2011);
- Active members of the 'Comité des 12 jours d'action pour l'élimination de la violence envers les femmes' Québec (2008, 2009, 2010) ;
- Governor General's Conference, Together for Women's Security (September 2010)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- DAWN-RAFH Canada – Provincial Roundtable on Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women, Montreal, QC (July 2010)
- Presentations to Parliamentary Committees (HUMA, SWC) Government of Canada (2007, 2009, 2010)
- Traumatic Brain Injury Focus Group - BIAC National Conference, Charlottetown, P.E.I. Canada – (August 2011)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Canadian Women's Foundation – DAWN-RAFH and the Canadian Association for Community Living strategy: A local-level community development strategy for preventing, responding, and eliminating violence in the lives of women with disabilities and Deaf women (August 2011 to March 31, 2012)



ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- ❑ National Disability Authority Annual Conference
October 2011 Dublin Ireland – Our partner in this strategy , the Canadian Association for Community Living has been invited to Ireland to present DAWN-RAFH/CACL's strategy at their international conference. We were the only Canadian representatives that have been invited to attend.
- ❑ Presentation to Sue O'Sullivan, Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime Office and Victims Fund – Justice Canada – September 16, 2011



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

- Ottawa Crime Prevention Bureau – Presentation on the impact of violence against women with disAbilities and Deaf women (November 2011)
- 12 jours d'action pour l'élimination de la violence envers les femmes' (November 2011)
- Second World Conference of Women' Shelters, Washington, DC, (February 2012)



LAST WORDS TO THE WOMEN

When you have a disability, you need assistance for things of daily living. Most of us accept a lot of things because we need assistance. We accept too many unacceptable things.

Most of the time, the people who harmed us are also the people who helped us...



LAST WORDS TO THE WOMEN

We are failing women each and every day. Depends on our disability some can articulate and others can't. First I was abused and then I was traumatized by the system...I don't think that it would have taken me long to leave if what I really needed was there to help me to a better place. ..



LAST WORDS TO THE WOMEN

You have to be your own advocate.
What I am endeavouring to do, is bring
our voices to the podium. Our voice
has been broken because it has been
given to others
who don't really get it.



LAST WORDS TO THE WOMEN

Bottom line, I want you to get to know me. If you lack the sensitivity and composure to acknowledge that I am a broken woman, you can not help me.



LAST WORDS TO THE WOMEN

I want to see some kind of recognition that you're on my side, working for me, helping me to get to a better place...





Thank you!

Questions & Discussion

