

# PRIVATE no more



2021



Act. End violence against women.

Examining Social Norms and Youth  
Perceptions Underpinning Support Systems  
for Violence against Women and Girls

*A study across 5 States in India*

**Private No More:** Examining Social Norms and Youth Perceptions  
Underpinning Response Systems for Violence against Women and Girls

Report prepared by Oxi4uture Greens for Breakthrough.

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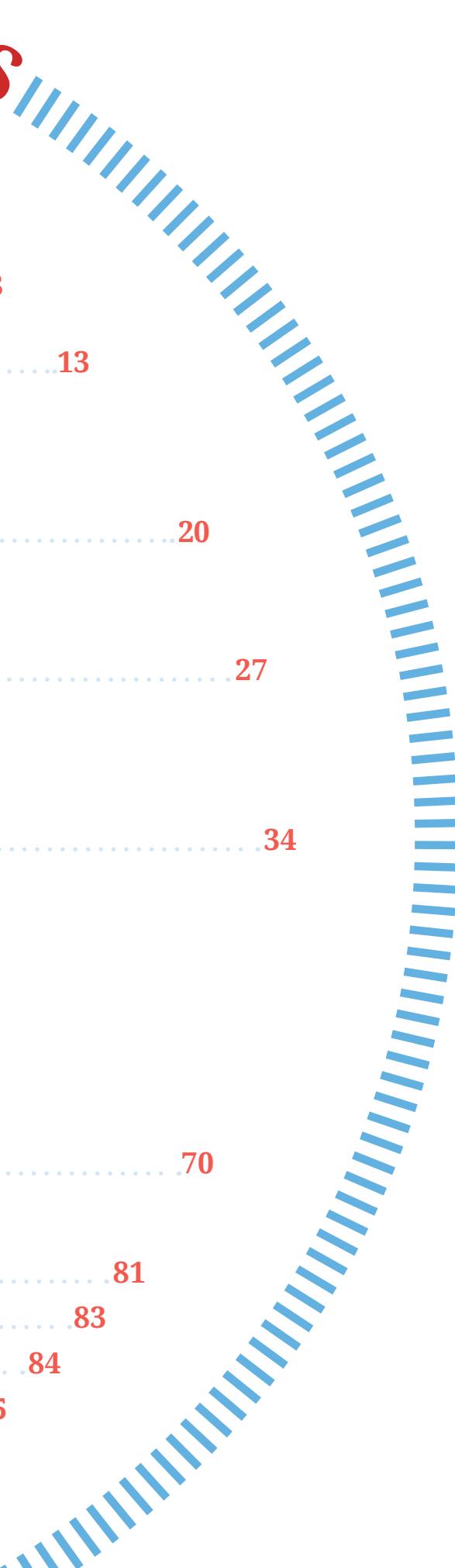
## ABOUT **BREAKTHROUGH**

Breakthrough works towards making violence and discrimination against women and girls unacceptable. We transform gender norms by working with adolescents and youth, their families and communities, as well as by using media campaigns, the arts and popular culture to build a more equal world around us.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CEFM</b>	Child, Early and Forced Marriage
<b>CMPO</b>	Child Marriage Prohibition Officers
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FIR</b>	First Information Report
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>IPC</b>	Indian Penal Code
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>NCW</b>	National Commission for Women
<b>PO</b>	Protection Officer
<b>PWDVA</b>	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SH</b>	Sexual Harassment
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UP</b>	Uttar Pradesh
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against Women and Girls

# INTRODUCTION

*“I think mostly women cannot raise their voices, as the violence they face is mostly from the members of their own family, raising their voice will be like raising it against your elders! If a woman dares to stand up against violence then the entire family will be against her.”*

*A young woman participant from Rajasthan*

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)<sup>i</sup> has often been referred to as a pandemic to impress upon people its geographical scope and the gravity of its consequences. It causes death, poverty, exploitation and abuse across all regions and cultures worldwide. While VAWG undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its survivors/ victims, it remains shrouded in a culture of silence, historically overlooked and even condoned. It manifests in psychological, sexual, emotional, physical and financial forms, some of which have gone so unquestioned that it is only in the recent past that they have gained recognition as violence.

The commonplace and everyday nature of VAWG is explained by gender inequality, which must be recognized as its root cause, wherever, whenever and however VAWG occurs. Despite its high costs (not just economic), almost every society in the world has social institutions that legitimize, obscure and deny abuse based on gender (Heise et al, 2002).

VAWG is widely being recognized as a fundamental violation of human rights, and a serious development and public health issue, owing to decades of advocacy and programming by women's movements and intersectional feminist activists worldwide. This recognition has

led to increased financial investments, several international conventions, policies and frameworks to address VAWG, including the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The

elimination of all forms of VAWG by 2030, and of all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and female genital mutilation (FGM), are two of the targets adopted under the SDGs.



## GLOBALLY

**155**  
Countries  
**Legislation  
for Domestic  
Violence**

World Bank, 2020

**192**  
Countries  
**SDG 2030  
Committed to ending  
Child Marriage**

Oxfam, 2020

**140**  
Countries  
**Legislation for Sexual  
Harassment  
In Employment**

World Bank, 2020

Despite this progress, effective advocacy, legislation and programming for violence prevention at the global level remains limited and the scale of VAWG remains high worldwide, posing great challenges for countries to be able to achieve the SDG target under current trajectories (Tavers and Wodon, 2017). While legal protection against VAWG enshrines women's rights within the law, gender based discriminations and subsequent violence persists through the patriarchal customs and traditions that are sustained by social norms within marriage practices, within familial roles and even in the very legal system designed to 'protect' them (World Bank, 2015).

Social norms<sup>ii</sup> condone and influence beliefs and behaviors associated with violence. They dictate rigid gendered roles and attitudes; police responsiveness to VAWG and judicial attitudes, as well as the

shaping of laws against violence. Advocacy strategies must address these entrenched harmful norms and patriarchal values to effectively reduce VAWG.

This presents a vital opportunity for actors working on prevention of VAWG worldwide to establish strong connections with broader feminist and women's rights movements, to build a collective support base to advocate for greater investment in evidence-based approaches which examine entrenched cultural values and structural inequalities.

# Objectives and Scope of the Study

This study is being undertaken by Breakthrough Trust<sup>iii</sup>, India, as part of an advocacy project to accelerate the prevention of VAWG. Breakthrough Trust, aims for greater coordination and collaboration across different organizations and groups committed to ending VAWG in South Asia – so that together, a demand for change can be

made. The findings from this study would be used for advocacy at South Asia level to improve support mechanisms available to address VAWG, create a shift in underlying social norms which govern VAWG in India and contribute to a common agenda put together by women's rights organizations in South Asia. The study aims to:

1

## GATHER EVIDENCE ON SOCIAL NORMS

**cultural norms and current challenges** in accessing the support systems to address VAWG across 5 states in India. 5 states in India: Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana, and Rajasthan.

2

## UNDERSTAND THE YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

**on response systems** available to address VAWG in India.

3

## CAPTURE PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

**and challenges** in providing support services to the community especially women and girls who are facing violence.

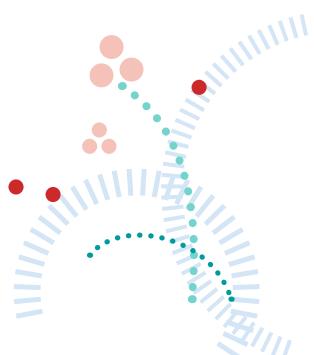
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## IDENTIFY THE GAPS

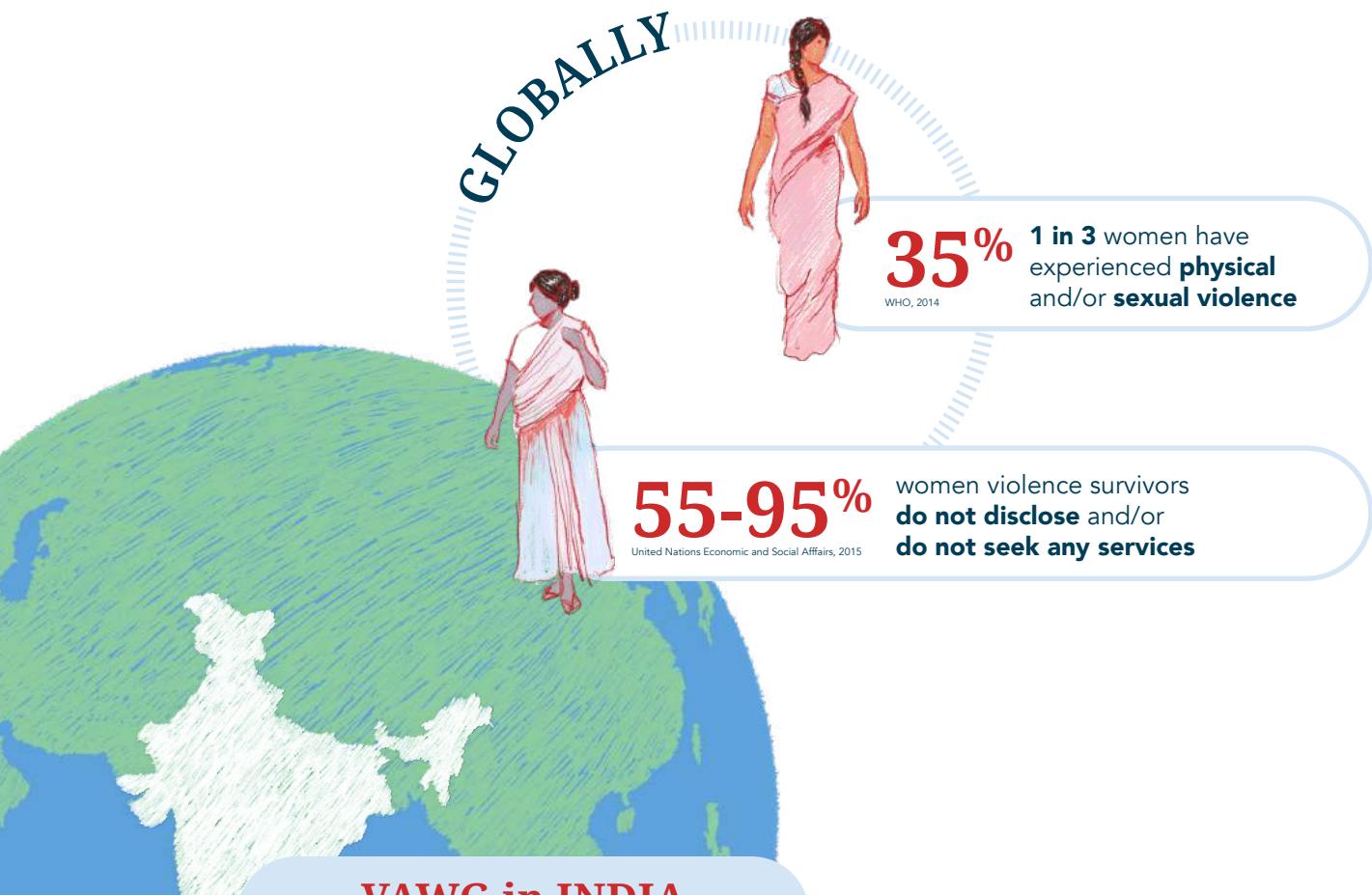
**in the systems** in order to suggest recommendations on how the **emerging information** could be **used effectively** as evidence to generate action.

India presents immense geographic and cultural diversity which is difficult to encapsulate in a single report. This study focuses on five states in India, of which four states have existing interventions driven by Breakthrough Trust. The study recognizes that India has several VAWG response/support services such as psycho-social services, legal and redressal provisions, medical services, governmental and civil society support. The scope of this study, however, is limited to nodal government officers in the criminal justice system, non-governmental organization (NGO) functionaries and mental health counsellors.

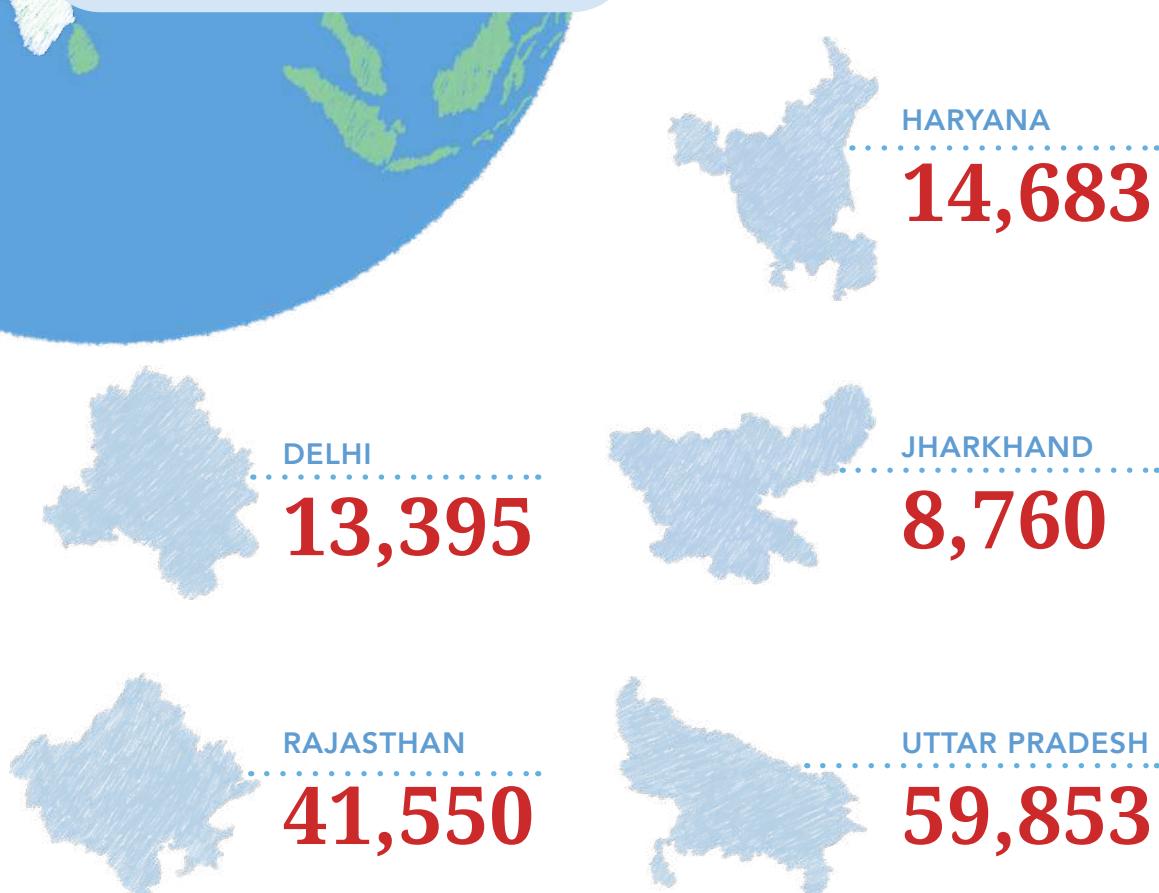
This study focuses on three forms of violence that are prevalent in India namely, Intimate Partner Violence within Marriage (referred to as Domestic Violence (DV)<sup>iv</sup> hereon), Child, Early and Forced marriage<sup>v</sup> (CEFM) and Sexual Harassment (SH) in public places.<sup>vi</sup> There is evidence to suggest that different forms of VAWG are often inter-linked and sustain each other (Bhattacharyya, 2016). Hence, this study looks at the three forms of violence which occur in both the private realms of the family and the household and the public realm, in order to present a holistic picture on underlying social norms that govern VAWG and related issues in India.



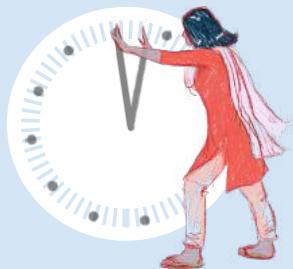
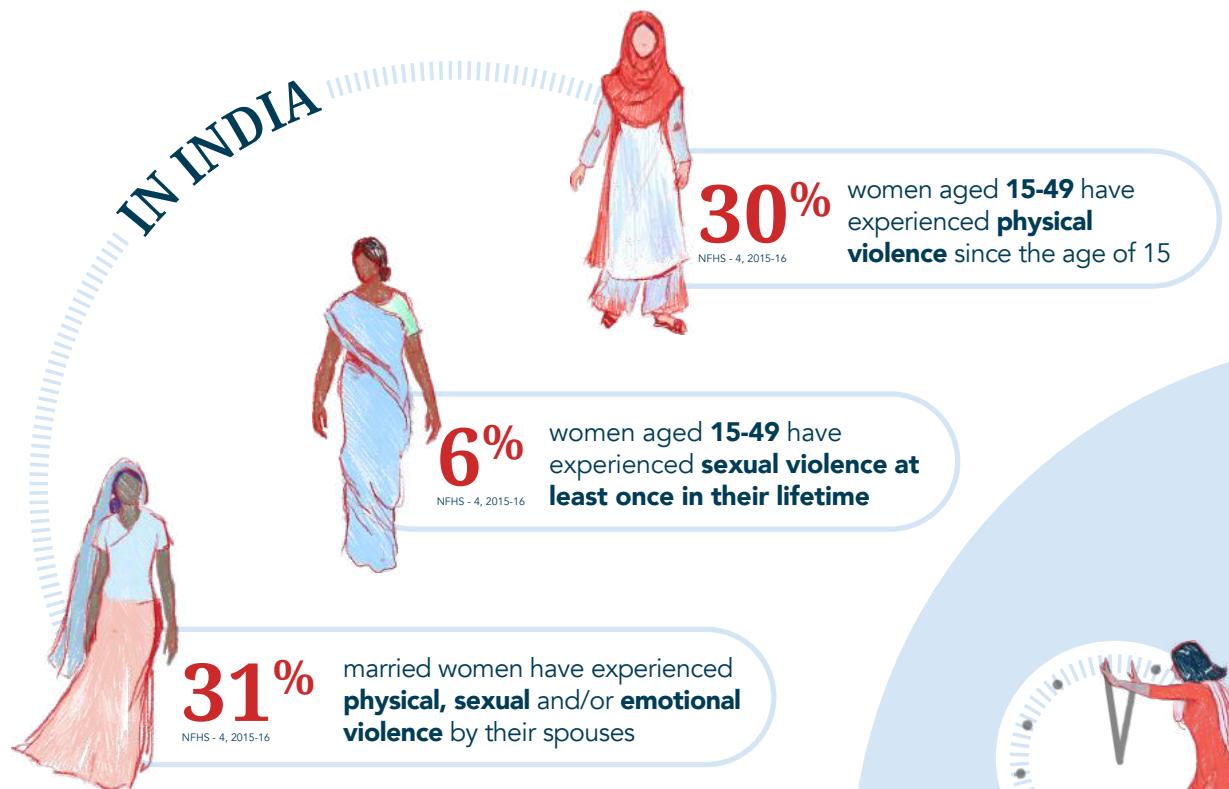
# SETTING THE CONTEXT



**VAWG in INDIA**  
Total number of reported cases in 2019



# VAWG in India



In India, a woman faces harassment in a public space every **51 min**

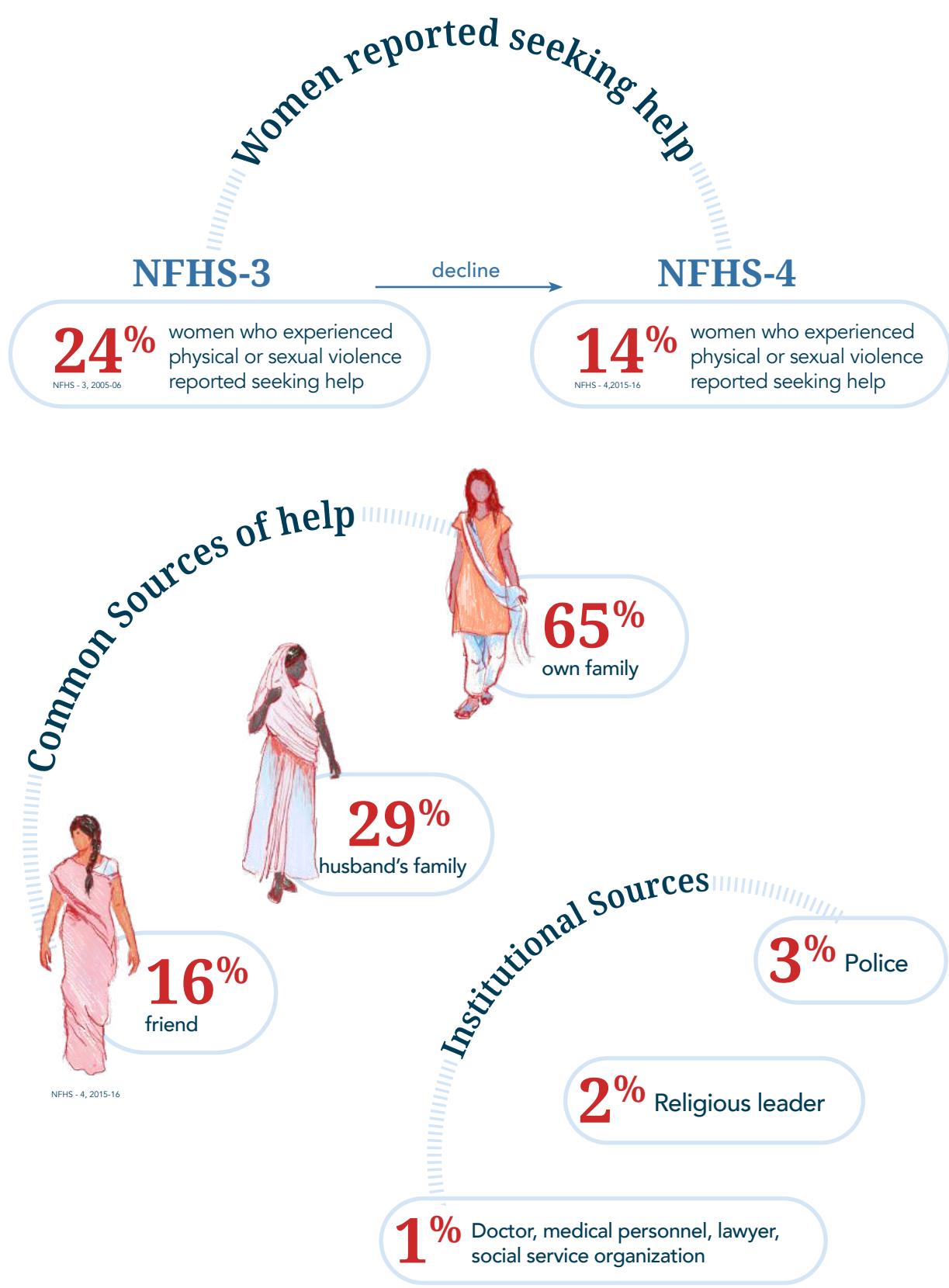
Bhattacharyya, 2013a, b, 2015



**3,78,236**      **4,05,861**

**30.9%** of cases Cruelty by husband or his relatives

**21.8%** of cases Assault on women with intent to outrage their modesty



## Intimate Partner Violence within Marriage or Domestic Violence

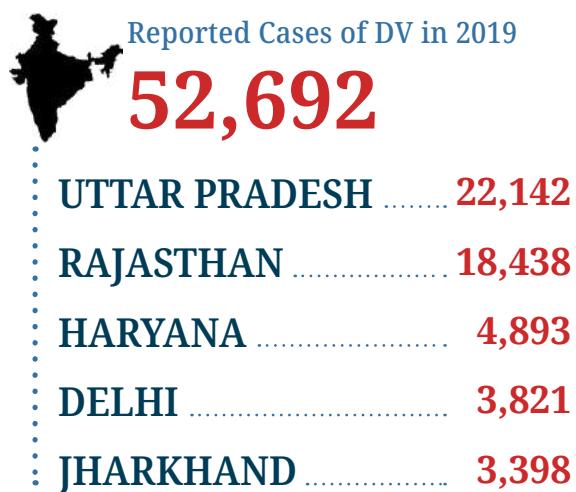
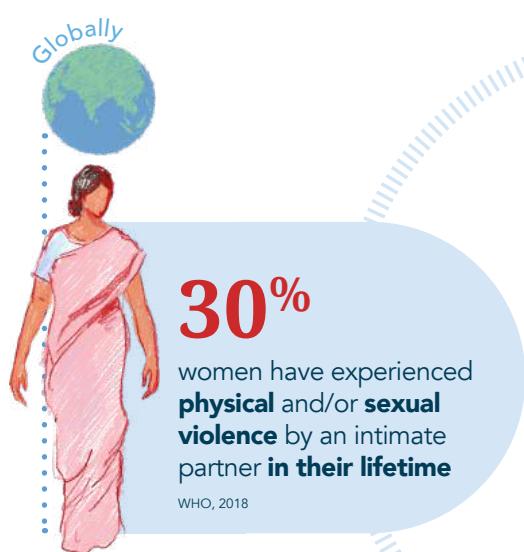
Domestic violence (DV), legally defined in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) in India, is physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and financial abuse inflicted on a person - in this case a woman who has been in a domestic relationship with the perpetrator, living in a shared space with them. The PWDVA furthers the definition by including violence inflicted by other members of the family as well. The scope of this research is limited to the domestic violence faced by women within the confines of a marriage and primarily from their spouses.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>vii</sup>, people throughout the world have been affected across a number of dimensions – in terms of access to health, education, financial resources etc. In the scenario where the pandemic has pushed people indoors in order for them to “stay safe,” the entire world has witnessed a surge in domestic violence cases, with the

gendered roles of women being a major reason for increase in the incidence of domestic violence. The United Nations is calling this increase a “shadow pandemic” (“The Shadow Pandemic:VAW during Covid-19,” n.d.).

Data from National Commission of Women (NCW) showed a spike in domestic violence complaints during the lockdown in 2020 (Arora and Kumar, 2020). The NCW received 23,722 complaints of crimes committed against women in 2020, the highest in the last six years. A total of 5,294 of these complaints were related to domestic violence. The highest number of complaints, 11,872, were received from the state of Uttar Pradesh, followed by Delhi at 2,635 and Haryana at 1,266.

**Of the several challenges posed by the national lockdown, access to support services for VAWG was one of the greatest challenges.**



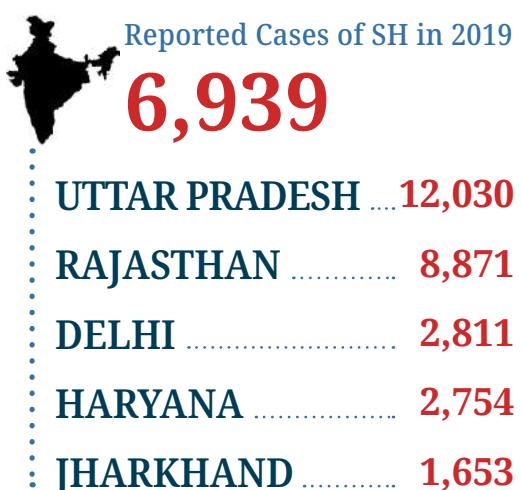
## Sexual Harassment in Public Places

Sexual harassment is inherently linked with gender stereotypes and women's oppression. Sexual harassment can occur in public spaces beyond streets, such as in schools, universities, and workplaces, on public transport, in shopping malls, or in restaurants (Madan & Nalla, 2016). In this study, the focus is limited to sexual harassment in public spaces, particularly on streets, roadsides, sidewalks, parks, and public transport and associated areas such as bus stops.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) defines sexual harassment as an assault on a woman with the intent to outrage or insult her modesty. It includes unwelcome physical contact and advances or demands or requests for sexual favors among other behaviors, such as stalking, making lewd gestures, and voyeurism.

While a rich body of data exists on DV and CEFM in India, there is a lack of

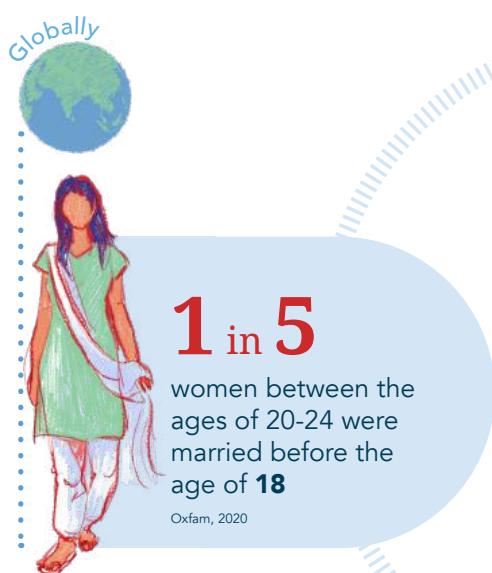
robust research and empirical studies on sexual harassment in India (Natarajan, 2016 and Bhattacharyya, 2016). Moreover, the issue is often trivialized as 'eve teasing' and is considered a 'minor nuisance' (Bhattacharyya, 2016).



## Child, Early and Forced Marriage

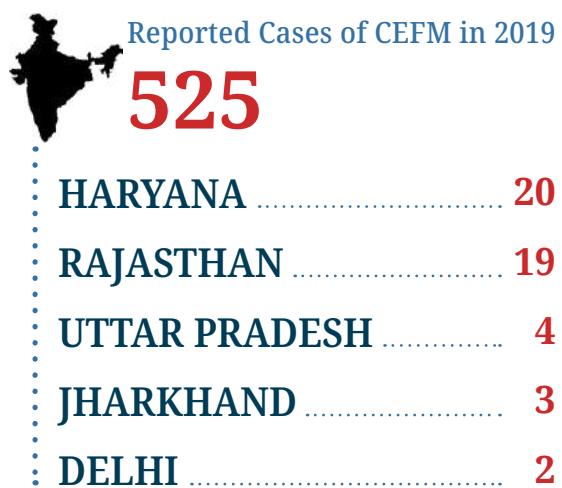
Child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) is one of the most detrimental forms of VAWG. CEFM compounds the issues of poverty, gender inequalities, intimate partner violence, and vulnerability to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) risks for child brides around the globe.

- **Child marriage** in India is defined as one where the girl is below the age of 18 years and the boy below the age of 21 years.
- **Forced marriage**, is a marriage to which one or both of the spouses did not give their free and full consent, (SRI, 2013).
- **Early marriage** is often used synonymously with child marriage, however, the phrase is used in a much broader sense. It furthers the understanding of 'child marriage' to situations wherein a girl is married as soon as she turns 18. Implying that while the legal age has been attained, the marriage was still early. Early marriage



widens the scope for factors like emotional and physical maturity and educational aspects to be considered in the terming of a marriage as 'early'. This study uses either 'early marriage' (EM) or 'early and/ or forced marriage'.

Several organizations working on the rights of children, including UNICEF, have issued alarms about the rise in CEFM due to the impact of COVID-19. Drop out from school, job losses and increased economic insecurity may force families to marry their daughters to ease financial burdens. Between March and June 2020, Childline India, an organization helping children in distress, intervened in 5,584 child marriages, (Kumar, 2021).



NCRB, 2019

# VIOLENCE PREVENTION: ADJOURNED

*“Once a woman went to the doctor and told him about her husband who used to beat her... She took her husband to see the doctor, who asked him about his reasons behind beating her. The husband said that when he returns from work, she keeps talking and makes him mad. The doctor called his wife and handed her a tablet and said that till this tablet is in your mouth; your husband won’t beat you. The wife would take one tablet after another and tried for a week. She went and thanked the doctor as things had improved at home. The doctor asked how. She said she took the tablet and the husband did not beat her. The doctor said it is your tongue that leads to the beating. If you keep your mouth shut, then things would be better in your life.”*

*From a discussion with Men in Haryana*

## Why do social norms prevail?

Historically, limitations on women's activities, legal protections, and political rights were justified by presuming women as delicate, emotional and inferior beings thereby promoting an attitude of protection as opposed to enshrining their rights as citizens. The presumed role of men as leaders and decision makers in both public and private life was another important factor in the denial of women's

rights and safety (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Pleck, 1987 as cited in Bonnie et al.)

Patriarchal social systems provide men and boys with incentives to devalue women and girls. In South Asia, despite the vast levels of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and other forms of diversity, rigid patriarchy tends to manifest, especially in India, through a range of prominent social

norms (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014).

Within familial social circles, violence is often used as an instrument to police women who stray away from the protection of 'their' men, this is related to the view of women as men's property, and the importance of controlling their sexuality and reproductive outcomes in particular. Thus, VAWG reflects and reinforces inequitable gender norms. These norms are known to affect the health and lives of girls and boys, men and women at all levels of society, and result in adverse outcomes such as emotional distress, mental health problems and

poor reproductive health. Inequitable gender norms also limit women's access to education, employment and health care and curtail their involvement in decision-making (Oxfam, 2016).

Further, these inequitable norms inform notions of masculinity and power, directly shaping individual behaviour and relationships, including the acceptability of use of violence (Oxfam, 2016; Alexander-Scott et al, 2016). The acceptance of violence, either as a method of resolving conflict or as a familiar aspect of procreation (continuing the male lineage), acts as an enormous barrier to ending VAWG.

## Social norms vs. Legislations

Since the 1970s, VAWG has been redefined as a social and legal problem, encouraging communities, criminal justice agencies, and public health organizations to take greater responsibility for intervening and preventing its occurrence. Transforming gender norms and power relations is one of the most effective ways of tackling VAWG. However, affecting shifts in norms through legislations is one of the most dominant methods used.

In general, legislations make VAWG a criminal or civil offense, they lay out punishments for perpetrators, provide protection mechanisms for survivors, mandate new institutional mechanisms and responsibilities, and order the provision of support services for survivors and their dependents (de Silva de Alwis and Klugman, 2015; World Health Organization, 2014). Specific elements of these support services

can include mental health counselling, shelter homes, telephone helplines, protection orders, special police units and courts, and legal aid or representation (UN Economic and Social Council, 2015).

The criminalization of VAWG implies a codification of women's rights at a national level, allowing for demands of accountability to be made. Laws can play a symbolic role by indicating that violent behaviors are socially unacceptable. The power of the law is often used to prohibit and deter. Studies have shown that women who live in countries with laws against domestic violence have seven percent lower odds of experiencing violence compared with women living in countries without such laws (Klugman et al., 2014).

Several feminist and restorative justice framings have expressed skepticism

over the power of legal sanctions. The law itself is a carceral and patriarchal institution and may be of little value in transforming status of women and often reinforces the very systems of oppressions it aims to dismantle (Charlesworth, 1994). There are several obstacles to its effectiveness, notably - lack of awareness, victimization perpetrated by those holding power, poor implementation and unfair legal condemnation of marginalized communities.

There are marked examples where laws have not significantly affected behavior, from prohibiting child marriage in Bangladesh, to gender biased sex selection in China and dowry in India (Klugman, 2017). This raises the more general issue of how laws interact with social norms that tolerate violence. An Oxfam study conducted in 2020 found that individual attitudes, social norms, and cultural practices that contravene the spirit and text of anti-VAWG legislation hamper their implementation.

In India, sexual harassment and marital rape are less likely to be addressed than domestic violence and non-marital rape (Richards and Haglund, 2015; World Health Organization, 2014). Rape may not be punishable if a survivor marries the perpetrator (Manjoo, 2013). There is often an over-emphasis on criminal justice approaches, leaving prevention strategies insufficient; (de Silva de Alwis and Klugman, 2015; Alexander-Scott et al., 2016). Plus, victim compensation provisions are relatively rare (World Health Organization, 2014).

While, laws can be challenged through advocacy and campaigns to bring about reform, it is tougher to change social norms that are internalized by individuals. These norms include the traditions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices that are deeply embedded in culture, and which

operate at systemic, community, as well as at individual levels. Social norms may continue to normalize violence, and not be affected by national legislation. Moreover, customary laws may not be consistent with national legislative prohibitions.

A clear example is the data from the National Family Health Survey – 3 (NFHS-3). Conducted in 2005 - 2006 in India, it revealed that 54% women and 51% men agree that it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife under some circumstances. The NFHS-4 conducted in 2014 - 2015 found that 52% of women and 42% of men believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one of seven specified circumstances. Despite a gap of 8 years, the shift in beliefs has been very low, which is dismal given that India has had a robust law around DV in place since 2006.

Ending CEFM is one of the SDGs, and supports achievement of at least eight other SDGs. In the past few years, a decline in CEFM has been visible in India, however, the pace of change is slow and results largely from deeply entrenched cultural values, attitudes and practices that are rooted in gender stereotypes and discrimination (Ghomeshi et al, 2020).

**Laws and social norms are mutually reinforcing in the fight against VAWG. Strong, well-implemented, and well-publicized laws can affect social norms in positive ways, by establishing acceptable behavior and promoting attitudes and beliefs that reject VAWG, and by mobilizing social movements (Weldon and Htun, 2013). Conversely, legal reforms are most effective when public opinion on VAWG is already changing (Alexander-Scott et al., 2016), which is possible only through a concentrated focus on shifting social norms around VAWG.**

## Shifting Norms, Uprooting VAWG

Norms powerfully shape attitudes and practices because individuals who deviate from group expectations are subject to shaming, sanctions, or disapproval by others who are important to them. Often social norms are used interchangeably or confused with attitudes and behaviours (Oxfam, 2016). The major difference is that attitudes and behaviours are mostly found at the individual level whereas social norms are collective in nature. In other words, attitudes and behaviours are closer to independent actions of individuals whereas social norms are grounded in interdependent actions of a collective. This means that working on individual attitudes and behaviour will not be sufficient to change social norms and would require a coordinated behavioural change.



Breaking away from the dominant social norms



Governing social norms

Dominant perceptions and beliefs

The social norms literature uses different terminology to refer to broadly similar constructs about what is believed to be typical and appropriate. Bicchieri (2006) introduced the terms empirical expectations (i.e. what is typical) and normative expectations (i.e. what is appropriate) whilst Cialdini et al (1990) use the terms descriptive norms (typical) for example, men believe that other men in their community commonly hit their wives if they disobey. An injunctive norms (appropriate) that a good woman should respect her husband's authority. Injunctive norms ban or discourage certain behaviours, whereas descriptive norms set an expectation that encourages others to follow.

Depending on the perspective, these norms, attitudes, and practices can be negative or positive. From a feminist and women's rights viewpoint, negative ones are those that condone, reward, or promote VAWG and gender inequality, and encourage women and girls to suffer in silence. Positive ones, by contrast, support gender equality and the elimination of VAWG.

An Oxfam study (2020), which looked at the underlying social norms for CEFM, revealed that negative norms, attitudes, and practices are affecting the implementation of laws by influencing the behaviors of both those who are supposed to implement the laws, and the general public to whom the laws apply. It revealed that in India, state actors meant to enforce the law may openly dissuade women from continuing with legal proceedings because of the dishonor they are likely to face, or may emphasize maintaining the marriage through counselling instead. Hence, social norms have a deep impact on the ways in which services are provided.

Social norms concerning stigma, blame, and guilt attributed to those subjected to violence pose a problem in India. A culture of silence restricts women and girls to report experiences of violence or to follow cases through to their legal conclusions. The social norm to not report violence to authorities is owed to the fears about social stigma, family dishonor, reprisals, losing their children and/or the economic support of their husbands, among other consequences, as well as lack of trust in authorities and confidence in the system.

A popular discourse posits the onus of poor implementation to this culture of silence as a reason for implementation gaps, with the idea being that the law cannot be implemented well if violence is not reported. Care must be taken, however, to not blame poor implementation of the law on the reluctance of women and girls to come forward. Their hesitance to report results from a combination of social norms that urge women to keep silent about violence, and implementation gaps that act as further deterrents. Unless the factors underlying women's silence are effectively addressed, women's access to legal recourse will remain restricted (Bonnie et al, 2000).

Globally there is limited evidence on what works in preventing as well as responding to violence, with a bias towards published literature from high-income countries. In recent years, the need to work on social norms has gained prominence. This is based on the understanding that possibly VAWG is a complex phenomenon for which no one factor can be held responsible. Rather, it is seen as a combination of different factors interacting within different levels of society or the 'social ecology'. The Ecological

Framework highlights the fact that in order to have effective interventions on ending VAWG, there is a need to understand how different levels interact to drive and sustain harmful behaviours.

Individual, social, material, structural factors work within this framework. Individual factors include inequitable gender attitudes condoning VAWG and mistaken factual beliefs, as well as women's agency, aspirations, and self-efficacy. Social factors include harmful social and gender norms. Material realities, include household poverty and lack of economic opportunities for women and girls and weak infrastructure. Structural forces include conflict, weak or discriminatory legal and institutional frameworks, racism, casteism rules about who can own and inherit property and gender ideologies that underpin gendered differences in power.

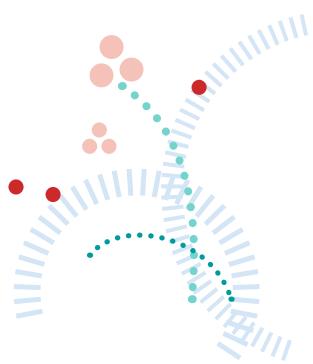
Historically, VAWG programming has focused on the individual, material or structural factors. For instance, empowerment programmes focused on expanding the aspirations of women and girls and building their agency (individual level), savings and loans groups (material), and advocacy to change discriminatory or punitive laws or introduce new laws protecting women and girls (structural). While it is important to address each of the factors, evidence shows that when social norms hold in place a certain behaviour, the behaviour is unlikely to change without addressing social motivations (WHO, 2010; Oxfam, 2020).

Emerging evidence on the effectiveness of interventions to tackle a wide range of VAWG suggests that interventions that address gender norms, behaviours and inequalities, and challenge dominant notions of masculinity linked

to controlling and aggressive behaviours are more effective at reducing VAWG. Such interventions are usually termed as 'gender transformative'<sup>viii</sup> (Alexander-Scott et al, 2016).

Social norms around gender, power and violence are adhered to by all, and so it is critical to involve all genders in a gender transformative intervention. Therefore a gender transformative approach explicitly tackles social norms around gender, power and violence, but also broader ideas, attitudes and values around male superiority and maintaining the gender binary of male and female. Rather than focusing solely on social norms, it is an integrated and multifaceted approach to tackling gender inequality and power relations.

It could be the missing link in how change happens on VAWG. A word of caution here is that working on social norm change should not be seen as the magic bullet to address the issue of VAWG. **In fact, it is a critical additional factor that needs to be addressed systematically and consistently to ensure that existing work on the other factors would bring the change that is aspired.**



# METHODOLOGY

*“She started crying mid-way, so I stopped the recording and sat with her in silence. It felt wrong to continue, I offered her some water and asked her if she would like to continue and reassured her that it’s okay if she didn’t feel comfortable.”*

Field partner from Jharkhand after an interview with a survivor

## What are we (re)searching?

Research on VAWG dominantly focuses on the occurrence of violence and poses a danger of re-traumatization of the participants, especially the women who have faced violence. With the intention to mitigate this, the research aims to capture a holistic picture of the aftermath of violence and explore potential areas for advocacy.

The following research questions were arrived at through discussions and consultations:

1. What are the perceptions of the youth between the ages of 19-35 in Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh on the support systems

to address VAWG, specifically domestic violence, early marriages and sexual harassment in public places?

2. What are some of the underlying social norms that encourage and discourage women survivors of violence to seek support/ help from the criminal justice system, family and community?
3. What are the perceptions of service providers, namely, the Police, the Protection Officers (PO), the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO), and Mental Health Counsellors upon the existing services? Moreover, what are the challenges that they face while providing services?

## Research Design and Process

The research aimed to capture the underlying social norms and the perceptions around support systems to address Domestic Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Harassment at public places which are composed of the "intangible" aspects of culture such as thoughts, feelings, beliefs and ideas. Based on the analysis, advocacy interventions would be designed to shift social norms to address VAWG. This was designed as a

formative research using a combination of primary and secondary data, employing qualitative and quantitative methodologies and triangulation to best understand these aspects and present actionable interventions. This ensured that the complexity and diversity of lives of women can be understood in a thorough and comprehensive manner.

### • A Collaborative Process

This research was a collaborative process from the conceptualization of the research questions to the collection of data. Fostering partnerships with organizations in each state was the natural path to follow, especially for

data collection. They brought with them knowledge, skills and local context which only enriched the research process. Partner organizations were identified based on their demonstrated experience and work within women's rights in India.

#### A collaborative approach warrants:

1. The **representation of ground realities** within the research design process
2. **Co-creation of knowledge** that helps women and girls themselves to change their situations and changing perceptions on whose knowledge counts or is seen as credible
3. Easy **access to local support and referral networks** for survivors and any other participant who requires it
4. A **safe means of access for partners** to travel within the research sites, especially considering the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 lockdown in India
5. Research findings that are
6. A **high possibility of enacting the intervention recommendations** and promoting social change

## Sampling

Young men and women<sup>ix</sup> between the ages of 18 and 35 were a clear participant category for this research. The research focused on the nodal officers from the criminal justice system, civil society actors and mental health professionals, based on their duties and work on the issues of domestic violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Harassment in public places. A service provider for each corresponding category of violence was considered.

For a detailed sampling criteria, please refer to Annexure 1. The total sample size was decided based on available resources, limited mobility due to COVID-19, and data saturation.

### The sample population:

- Unmarried Men and Women between the ages of 19 – 25<sup>x</sup>
- Married Men and Women between the ages of 18 – 35
- Mothers and Fathers above the age of 35
- Women survivors of violence<sup>xi</sup> above the age of 18
- NGO workers from women's rights organizations
- Police personnel
- Protection Officer (PO) as designated by the PWDVA, 2005
- Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO)
- Mental Health Counsellor from the One Stop Crisis Centre
- District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Lawyer<sup>xii</sup>

## Sampling Strategy

The research took place in the backdrop of a global pandemic and within a very limited time frame of four months. The sampling was done through non-probability methods of purposive, and convenience sampling.

The following factors guided the sample strategy:

1. Mobility, access and safety issues imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic
2. The limited time frame within which the data had to be collected
3. The sensitive nature of study. As the participants were going to be a vast range of people, including survivors of violence, it was important to reach out

to people who were easy to access and gave informed consent

4. Capturing of in-depth and vast experiences on underlying social norms and perceptions
5. The available resources, outreach and presence of the partner organizations in their respective states
6. The availability and non-availability of participants owing to personal issues, examinations withdrawal of consent

## ❖ Participant Selection for Qualitative Research .....

- **Survivors/Victims of Domestic Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Harassment in public places:** The partners selected the survivors through random sampling. A member of the research team was working out of Haryana. Due to limited knowledge on women's rights organizations working on issues of violence, the majority of the participants were selected using convenience and snowballing sampling methods.
- **Service Providers:** Nodal officers and civil society organizations were identified and approached using convenience sampling.
- **Youth and Parents:** The participants were identified through convenience sampling from within existing networks and referrals.

## ❖ Participant Selection for Quantitative Survey .....

The partners accessed educational institutions and existing networks to identify young people who were eligible

for the survey. This was further divided within the two districts in each state and on the basis of gender (men and women).

## ❖ Data Collection Tools .....

Given the different categories of participants and the three forms of violence, each tool created was unique and had to accommodate state realities. There was a careful consideration of the language to avoid reinforcing unequal power dynamics and reflections of an upper-class, upper-caste bias. These biases were tackled through numerous revisions and feedback on the tools. Each tool was translated into Hindi. One of the guiding principles during the tool creation was to ensure that the tools are not merely extractive in nature but are also educative. As the core of the tool creation, this instilled further empathy and a deeper appreciation of lived realities of women.

The following tools were used:

1. **Perception Survey Tool** – the tool was created on a data collection platform called Kobo<sup>xiii</sup>
2. Semi-structured **Focus Group Discussion Guide** with young married men, young married women and parents
3. Semi-structured **Focus Group Discussion Guide** with NGO workers
4. Structured **individual interview guide** for service providers
5. Structured individual interview guide with women survivors of violence

## Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process was time bound given the unpredictable circumstances caused by COVID-19. The process was informed throughout by the learnings from the field, sharing of knowledge by partners and providing mutual support where needed.

A robust three part training was planned for all fieldworkers who were going to be involved in the data collection process. The interactive and participatory training was conducted virtually. A pilot by all partners was also conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the tool.

### ● Tracking and Monitoring Data

Data tracking and monitoring was essential to ensure the authenticity of the data being collected. This was done virtually and coordinated by the research team.

Wherever consent was given to audio record the interview/ discussion, transcriptions and translations were needed. In addition the transcribers were also specifically instructed about the triggering nature of the conversations, to maintain verbatim quotes and avoid losing the essence of the participants' voices during translation from Hindi to English.

- Each partner was requested to share a detailed data collection schedule
- Members from the research team would randomly, virtually attend FGDs or interviews<sup>xiv</sup>
- The partners prepared referrals of NGOs and local mental health counsellors for participants, especially during the survivor interviews, in case the conversation became overwhelming for them
- The research team held de-brief calls with the field workers after every FGD and interview
- Partners were requested to share photographs from during the data collection
- Each partner utilized emails, WeTransfer or Google drive to share audios, scans of notes and consent forms. This was done regularly and tracked by the research team
- The Kobo tool included a location and timestamp feature for tracking

## ❖ **Analyzing Qualitative Data**

In this research the ecological theoretical framework was used as an analytical framework and thematic analysis was done. In addition, a deductive

approach, fieldwork observations and notes were used to further enhance the process of coding and generating themes.

## ❖ **Analyzing Quantitative Data**

The survey was designed with a progression built into it as it moved from general statements about VAWG to specific narratives in the form of case studies. There was a possibility of two strands of analyses -

1. To look at the data from an individual perspective;
2. To take an aggregate group-level analysis

From the individual perspective, the analysis explored whether there were any contradictions emerging in how a person

responded to the survey questions. At the group level, the analysis gauged the larger opinions, awareness and perceptions around VAWG and its support systems.

Cleaning the data involved removing erroneous submissions such as those with junk data, or submissions by participants who were outside the target age group of 19-25, and those submissions for which the rural-urban location could not be reliably determined. This left us with 322 responses. This data was analyzed using custom scripts written in R programming language.

## **Research Ethics**

The study was informed by feminist research ethics of informed consent, reduced harm and reflexivity.

The study was cognizant of the sensitive nature of VAWG as well as the safety concerns posed by COVID-19. The research team attempted to ensure the safety of all the participants, especially the women survivors and the field partners. Referral pathways for support were created prior to data collection, which were often utilized by the partners while talking to

the participants, especially the survivors. It was clear from the debrief conversations with the partners that everyone involved in the research process learnt and unlearnt several concepts and beliefs around VAWG, making the research process a mutual learning experience.

# FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

*“Our country is a male dominant society, women can’t behave like men, and wife cannot her raise hand on her husband. It is wrong for a husband to raise a hand on his wife, but if he apologises later it is fine! We all have to tolerate a little bit but if it gets too much then we will have to pick up sticks too.”*

Discussion with Parents from Haryana

This section summarizes the overall results and findings from the analysis in the three thematic areas (Domestic Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Harassment in public places) of the five states selected for this study. The analysis has been done based on the findings of the in-depth review of literature and primary data collection.

The findings are presented in five sections. Section 1 provides an overview of

the emerging social norms that cut across all three forms of violence, general perception and awareness around VAWG. Further, the analysis explains the implications of social norms for service provisioning and help seeking. Section 2 highlights the impact of COVID-19 and the perceptions around it. Sections 3, 4, and 5 deal with each form of violence and their related social norms, perceptions and challenges.

## Section 1

### Insights into Social Norms and Youth Perceptions around VAWG

The quantitative data was collected through a perception survey, which received 322 responses across all 5 states. The qualitative data was gathered through focus group discussions and individual interviews with the, youth, parents, and

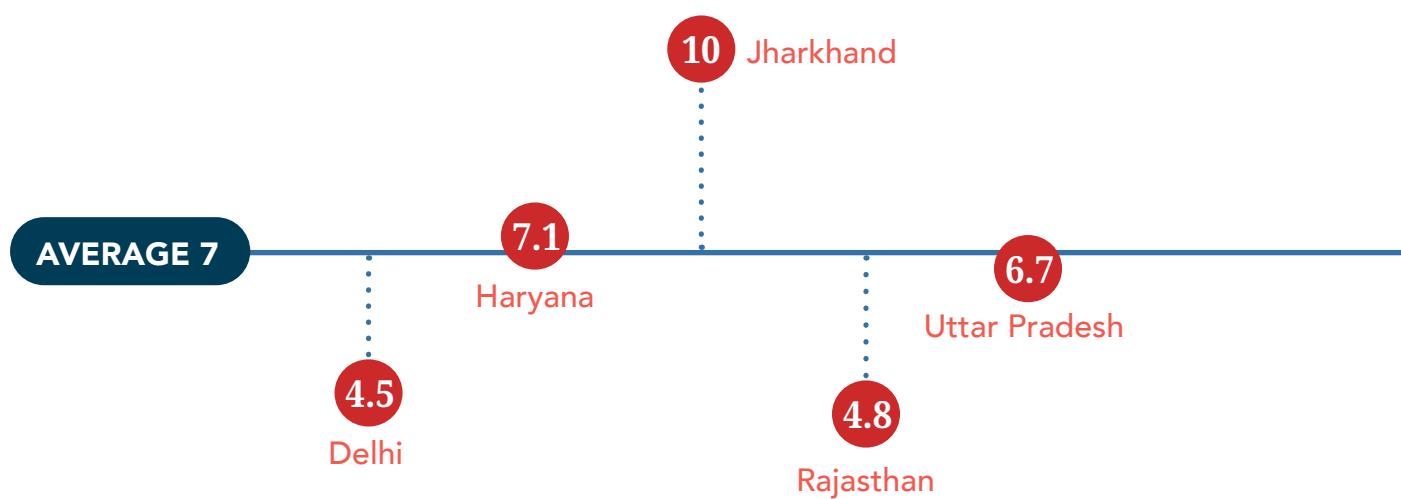
service providers and women survivors. The qualitative data covered more than 300 people across all 5 states. The findings presented below are from the primary data that was collected during the course of the research.

#### • Awareness

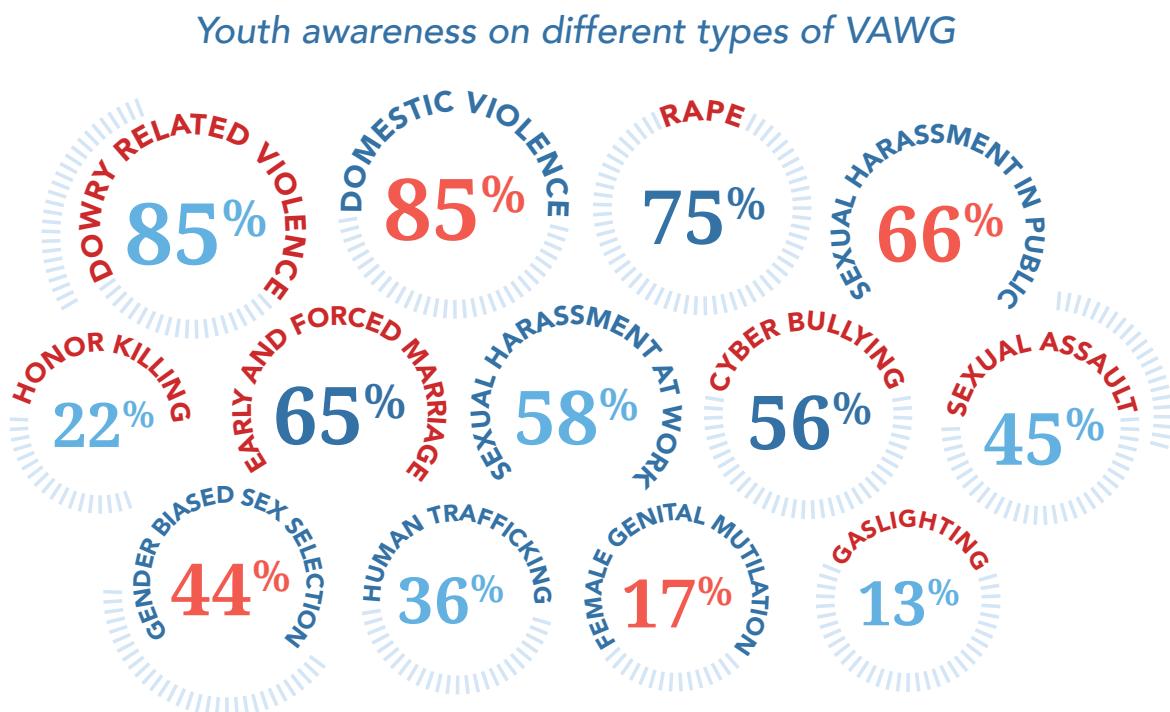
The survey presented a list of 13 types of violence faced by women and girls. Participants were required to select which type of violence they were aware of. On an average, participants reported awareness of seven types of violence.

However, participants from Jharkhand marked themselves to be aware of 10 types of violence on average. This self-reporting was below average in Delhi and Rajasthan (5 each). Meanwhile, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were close to average.

Average awareness on VAWG - state wise



- 85% of the participants of the survey were aware about domestic violence and dowry related violence.
- 75% of the participants were aware of rape as a form of violence.
- 22% of the participants were aware of honor killing.
- 13% of the participants were aware of gaslighting as a form of violence.



## ❖ Overall Recognition of Forms of Violence .....

A critical factor in acknowledging and identifying VAWG and its forms was the aspect of severity. This was evident across all participants. Violence was often recognized and even condemned only if it was "extreme" in nature. The limited awareness around psychological forms of violence across all participants stood out. Most married young men and women, parents and service providers acknowledged domestic violence, rape and murder as prevalent forms of violence. However, most young men and parents did not view early and/or forced marriages as violence. A slap, push or verbal abuse was dismissed and not acknowledged as violence by most of the young men and women, parents and service providers, barring the NGO functionaries and two mental health counsellors. The aspect of 'severity' in defining, recognizing and legitimizing violence and its impact is a matter of concern and an emerging norm,



especially within service providers. This could also be a vital reason behind why most participants were unable to recognize early and/ or forced marriages as a form of violence.

It is important to note that a critical number of the married youth and parents from Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Haryana and UP did not perceive domestic violence and sexual harassment as a criminal offense or even condemnable. It was rather considered as normal. However, in case of "extreme" violence the participants agreed that it has to be called out.

## ❖ Perceptions and Beliefs .....

An opinion poll conducted with the survey participants (youth) across states revealed that:

Percentage of participants who **do not believe**

**67%**

*“A woman brings shame to her family if she reports violence”*

Percentage of participants who **agree** that

**79%**

*“Women do not file a complaint as the justice system takes a very long time”*

**73%**

*“Women and girls often do not report cases of violence as it is very hard to gather ‘evidence’ of the incident of violence”*

**73%**

*“Women and girls do not report as the family members do not support them in this process”*

**70%**

*“Women do not report as there is a lack of information on where and how to report”*

**63%**

*“Women often do not report cases of violence as they fear being judged and shamed by the police”*

**58%**

*“Women often do not report cases of violence as it can be a very expensive process”*

**55%**

*“Women and girls often do not report cases of violence as they are worried about the punishment that the perpetrator will receive.”*

## • Key Social Norms .....

The study set out to examine the already existing social norms that underpin VAWG, support seeking behavior of women and the impact of these norms on service delivery. This study reiterated and reaffirmed several social norms discussed in earlier studies and found some key emerging social expectations which have the potential to become social norms.

Certain key social norms cut across all three forms of violence, across all states. While, these social norms appear similar on the surface, their manifestation and impact within state specific contexts cannot be ignored. These social norms are deeply entrenched in the prevailing culture and perpetuate violence, influence (enable/ dissuade) women and girls behavior on actively seeking support and impact service delivery by service providers.

### Existing Norms emerging from the narratives

- The ultimate goal for a woman is to get married
- The family/community honor resides in women and girls
- A man has the right to assert power over a woman
- A woman's freedom should be restricted
- Women instigate violence
- Alcohol is an acceptable reason for violence
- Violence is a "private matter"
- Reporting abuse is disrespectful to the family

### Emerging Social Expectations from the narratives

- There is a right time for everything when it comes to a woman
- Women and girls should be "resilient"
- Violence should be acceptable to women till a certain point
- It is in the nature of men to be violent
- The image of the "perfect" victim
- The mother is the savior as well as the perpetrator
- Parents are the first point of contact/support to address violence
- Police is the last resort to end violence; one should involve the family and community first
- Strict laws and fear of the law can fix the problem
- Education is seen as an empowering tool which enables women to access support

## ❖ Impact of Social Norms on Service Provisioning .....

Despite the high rates of VAWG, many women and girls do not seek help through support services (e.g. health, legal, psychosocial support, police). Factors preventing access to support services are complex and multifaceted. **While this study has shown that women and girls often tell someone about the violence they are experiencing, this disclosure does not necessarily mean survivor's access to institutional support services or has often meant a re-traumatization and re-victimization while accessing this support.**

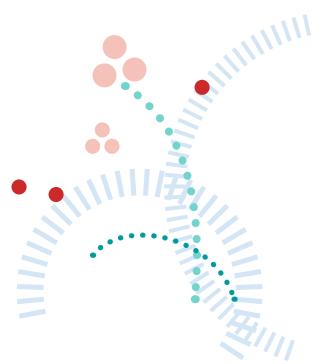
Service providers are a part of the same ecosystem and have undergone the same socializations and adhere to similar norms of gender. Most service providers are from the community – especially in the case of police officers. The existing norms mentioned above, combined with other gendered norms influence the manner in which a service provider views the victim/ survivor, the perpetrator and even the survivor/ victim's family.

A few of the service providers, who were a part of the study, mentioned that women often 'exaggerate' their cases and sometimes even withdraw cases after having sought settlements outside. Therefore, this belief around women 'exaggerating' and a myopic view about the reasons for women to withdraw cases often results in service providers not believing women, not taking their complaints seriously and further hampering the process of support and redressal.

Reporting of abuse outside the family is seen as disrespectful to the family and as an act of defiance by the woman,

hence service providers, like the police or community forums such as panchayat, often shame the woman and her family for making the 'private', public!. This in turn becomes a cycle of victim blaming wherein the survivor/ victim is traumatized even further and her fear and apprehension to disclose the incident of violence to the family is further affirmed.

Service providers understand and recognize VAWG often based on its 'severity', having grave implications upon their service delivery. Most service providers in this study attributed VAWG to "alcoholism", "poverty", "drug abuse", "male instincts", "anger" and "women themselves". However, recognizing VAWG as a manifestation of imbalance in power relations and gender inequality was visible only within the NGO functionaries. This raises critical concerns on the approach of the service provisioning to victims/ survivors, especially by government nodal officers.



## Section 2

### The Shadow Pandemic

COVID-19 and the subsequent national lockdown has resulted in increased burden of caregiving on women along with increased incidences of violence.

This study captures a preliminary picture of the impact of COVID-19 on VAWG and the perceptions of the youth and service providers around it.

#### ❖ Youth Perception .....

Several young married men across all states voiced that the cases of violence did not increase during the lockdown. While some did acknowledge that the work load increased for women, they believed that women were happy about it. Unanimously, the married youth, parents and service providers mentioned that men in their respective communities had lost employment and were forced to remain indoors.

On the other hand, majority of the young married women across all states mentioned that violence had increased during COVID-19 whether it was in the form of domestic violence or young girls being forced to marry. Some of the participants also mentioned that they had to leave their homes due to the fights. They attributed the cause of violence to alcohol and increased frustrations of men due to the restrictions imposed.

#### ❖ Service Providers .....

Service providers including NGO functionaries, unanimously agreed that reporting and incidents of VAWG had increased during the lockdown. They reasoned that VAWG occurred due to the loss of employment, increased frustrations and daily frictions and consumption of alcohol. COVID-19 impacted service provisioning as service providers were unable to go for home visits or meet with the survivors. They mentioned that women were often pressurized into sexual relationships with their husbands, who denied using contraceptives, which often resulted in unwanted pregnancies. In Delhi, service providers also mentioned regarding the difficulties in accessing abortion services in hospitals.

Further, women from marginalized caste and religious communities were rendered extremely vulnerable as they were already dealing with a financial crisis and the pandemic simply made it worse. Service providers from Delhi, Jharkhand and UP shared that verbal, emotional, economical and sexual violence had increased along with incidents of physical violence.

## Section 3

### Early Marriages: Norms, Perceptions and Services

**65%** of the youth marked themselves as aware of early and/or forced marriages as a form of violence. However, when presented with a case study (Annexure 2), which illustrated a typical form of early marriage along with the aspects of poverty and discontinued education for the girl, around **96%** of the youth identified it as a form of violence.

This indicates that for an incident of early marriage to be classified or perceived as 'violence', it must fit certain criteria of

severity and display harmful impact upon the survivor/ victim. It is also indicative that the manner in which violence is framed in may or may not invoke the empathy within the sensibilities of the youth. This aligns with the criticism that legal processes often receive from actors working within VAWG prevention, wherein the communication of the imagery of violence is so 'battered' that unless, a case does not replicate the same severity, it is deemed unworthy of institutional redressal.

#### • Reasons for Early Marriages

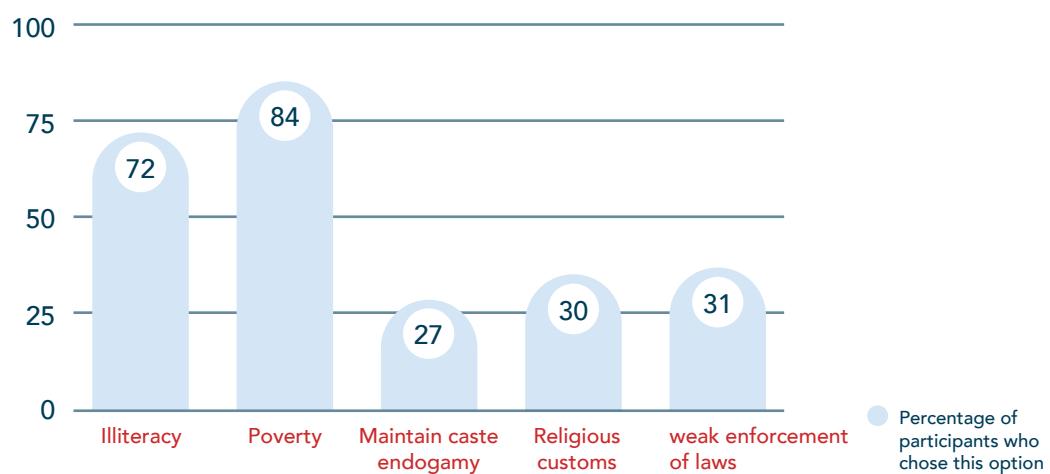
##### Dominant Youth Perception

- Poverty and Illiteracy are the main reasons behind early marriages

##### Prevailing Social Norms

- Girls are valued as wives and not individuals
- Early marriage is part of our culture
- Men can discipline a girl's behavior
- Sex or relationships before marriage as sinful and dishonorable

#### .....Youth Perception on Reasons behind Early Marriages.....



**85%** of the participants believe that poverty is the dominant reason behind the occurrence of early and forced marriages. The second being illiteracy at **73%**. The qualitative data however, painted a slightly different picture. All the participants (including the youth, parents and service providers) attributed poverty, culture and traditions as the reasons for early and forced marriage. The participants (men and parents) from Rajasthan highlighted early marriage as their cultural tradition and did not consider it as an act of violent in any way, rather expressed it as a **duty/ responsibility of a parent**.

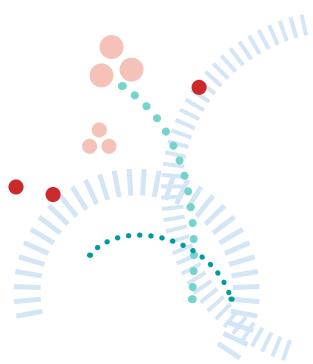
An undercurrent to the conversations was the idea of the "right time" for marriage. Most parents and men talked about marriage for a girl and how there was always a right time for it. **The right time translates into girls attaining sexual maturity that inadvertently implies controlling their sexuality and its expression by getting them married.** In addition there are also fears about girls marrying outside their caste and community. Often, this aspect of the "right time" was riddled with the apprehension that the girl will elope. This further indicates and reaffirms findings from other studies that early and/ or forced marriages are a means to maintain caste endogamy.

CMPOs, CWC members and the police personnel from Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Delhi mentioned that early marriage happens mostly in poor families where there are 3-4 daughters. It was common for two daughters to be together to save expenses. Distinct cultural practices such as *Atta Satta* or *Preeti Bhoj* play a huge role in justifying large numbers of early marriages.

Women participants from Delhi shared that parents often consider

daughters to be a burden and marriage is considered as socially desirable instrument 'to get rid of the burden'. Some women participants explained that **early marriage was a result of increased VAWG such as sexual harassment in public places.** This indicates that families are often scared of their daughters facing a certain kind of sexual harassment or abuse before marriage. Which further implies that the larger society would view their daughter as "impure". This is aggravated by the insecurity around being a 'single woman' and a lingering question of, "who will marry me then?" Another dimension to this is the dominant social norms around sex before marriage being a taboo, hence, any kind of transgression is seen as an attack on the 'honor of the family and community'. Moreover, women and girls are perceived as individuals with minimal agency and decision making powers that translates into the need for the family to control their freedom and sexuality.

Another reason that emerged was that the reason for continuing early and forced marriage especially in UP was about maintaining the age gap between spouses for easy domestication of women.



## Lalita's Story

1

Lalita\* was 17 when she got married to her husband who was 23 years old. She is now 34 years old and has three children. One day, when she was in class 12, as she was returning home from school, a classmate of hers, a boy, dropped a letter in her path. She did not pick it up and informed her cousin brother who was incidentally also walking on the same path. And after that, as she puts it, her life changed. As soon as she reached home, her father began beating her up and locked her in. She was scared and confused about what her cousin had said. Consequently, her father discontinued her education. He did not allow her to give her last exam either. And after continued maar peet (hitting) of 5-6 months, he got her marriage fixed.

"The whole situation made me feel so guilty and I felt that it was all my fault", she recounts. 15 days after her marriage, as she visited her natal home with her in-laws, one of her aunt's told her in-laws about the letter incident. And everything changed after that for her. Their behavior towards her changed and got worse, they provoked her husband against her, and as a result, he stopped talking to her. "My husband has studied till class 8 and no one else in the family is as educated as I am, this added to their hate towards me."

Lalita would often wake up as early as 3 AM to start work for the fear of increased shouting and violence by her in-laws. She blamed herself for her

condition. She was riddled with guilt and even ideated ending her life as she did not see an option out of the abuse. Her father broke all contact with her after her marriage and wanted nothing to do with her. She was constantly worried that her husband might leave her. She considered him to be a huge support as he decided to stay despite the provocations by his family, however, he physically assaulted her often.

Lalita was contacted by a local NGO as she was the only educated daughter -in-law in the village and she started paid work with them. Her husband supported as he did not have a stable income. The violence continued. Lalita shared how the community stepped in and informed her husband of how she was being treated by the family. His behavior towards her changed after her son was born. "If I hurt you then my son will also have to suffer" is what he said to Lalita.

Through her work with the local NGO, Lalita became aware about laws around domestic violence and the rights of women. Initially, she could not bring herself to share her experience, however, over a period of time she found her support in them.

\* All names have been changed

## ❖ The Paradox of Seeking Support .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

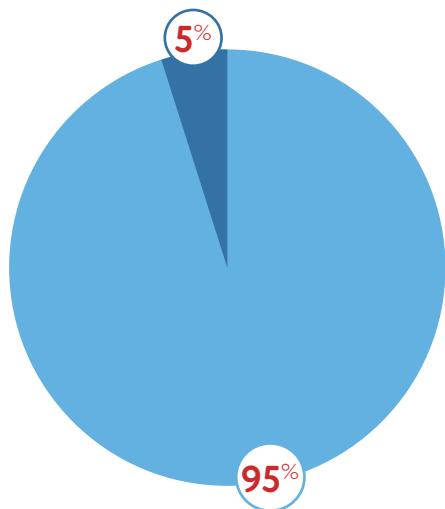
- Access to adequate education is seen as a form of support and speaking to the mother is seen as the primary form of support

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Violence is a private matter
- Reporting abuse is disrespectful
- Family is the first point of contact for support

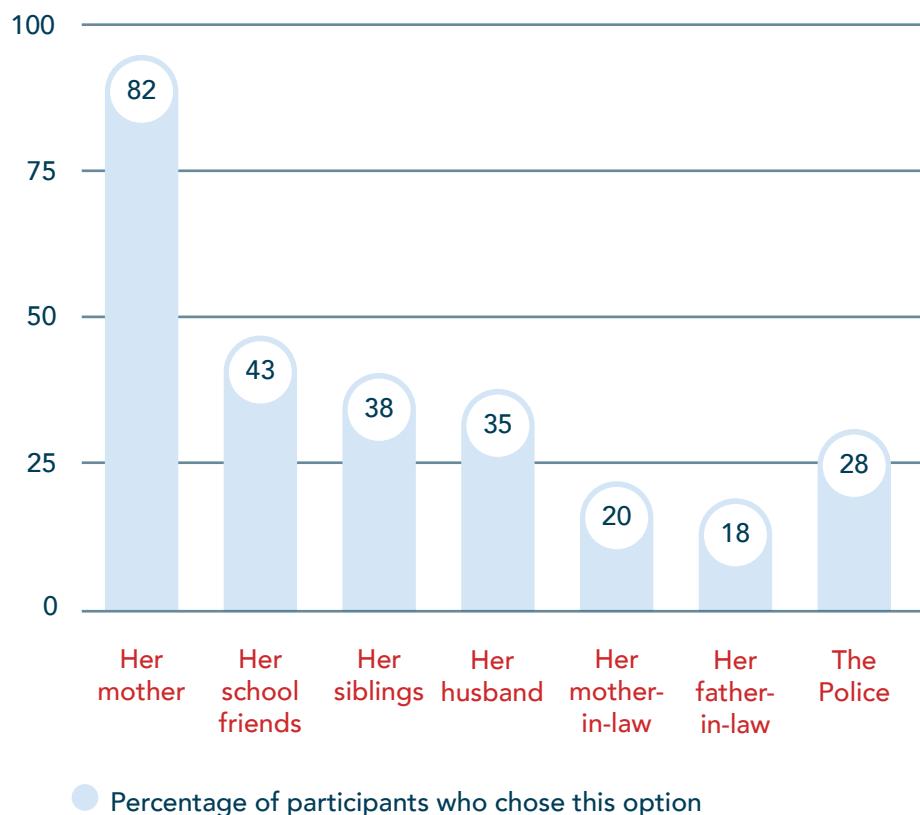
#### *Should women seek support against Early Marriage?*

- Yes
- No



Based on the case study, **95%** of the participants believed that a girl should be able to speak about her issues to someone, **83%** of the participants selected that she must speak to her mother. At the same time, when asked about who the law would hold accountable, **63%** of the participants selected her mother.

## If Reema wants to talk about this, who can she speak with?



Several inferences can be drawn from this:

- This indicates that while dominant youth perception is that women and girls do not report cases of violence due to the lack of support from the family, there might be a belief in the role of the mother for some level of support.
- This further indicates that violence should be dealt with internally, within the family and that the family, especially the mother is the first point of contact. This is further delved into by the women survivors of this study. For most of them, it was either the mother or the mother in law who was the first point of disclosure.
- The perception that the law would hold the mother accountable indicated to the idea that mothers (mother-in

-law included) are seen as enforcers of gendered norms who in turn become the face of oppression whereas they themselves may have limited autonomy, power and control within the families.

- A gap in the youth perception is visible especially in terms of familial support and reporting violence. **73% of the youth agreed that women often don't report violence as the family does not support them, in direct contrast to this, 83% of the participants believed that support should be sought from the mother.** This seems to posit an additional responsibility on the mother to play the role of the confidant and savior.

Youth perceptions around girls seeking/or not seeking help for early marriage cases:

76%

*youth believe that girls don't seek help as it brings shame to the family*

44%

*youth believe that girls fear that they will be subjected to more violence if they sought help*

38%

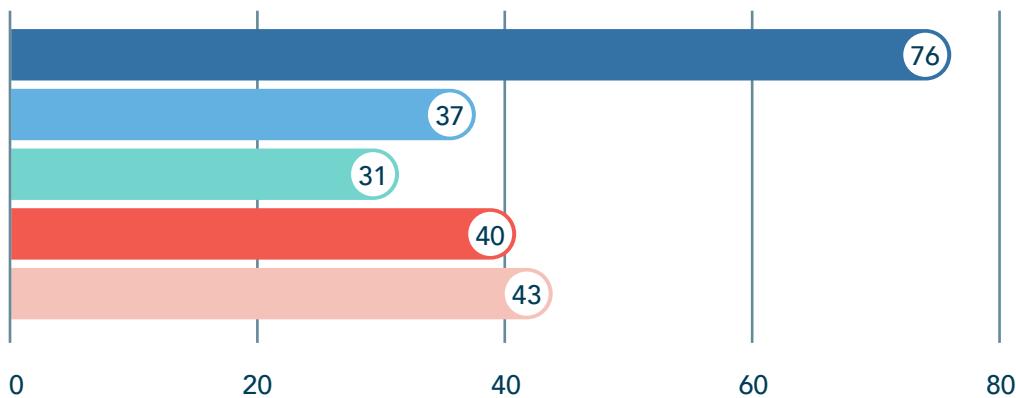
*youth believe that it is because early marriage is considered a private matter*

31%

*youth believe that girls fear being judged and mocked by the police*

#### *Youth Perception on why women don't report cases of Early Marriage*

- Don't know where to seek help from
- Brings shame to the family
- Is a private matter
- Worried about being subjected to more violence
- Police will laugh, judge or not take seriously



## ❖ Intervention and Bystander

### Dominant Youth Perception

- An outsider can intervene in the situation and as bystanders their first step would be to approach the police

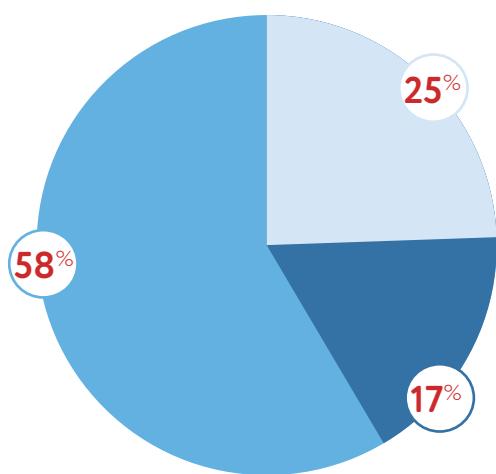
### Prevailing Social Norms

- Early Marriage is not a form of violence
- Early Marriage is a part of our culture
- Violence is a private matter

#### Can an outsider intervene in an Early Marriage?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

As opposed to the dominant norm that violence and marriage are a private and family matter, **58%** of the youth believe that an outsider can intervene in the case of an early marriage where as **24%** were unsure and **17%** said no.



## ❖ Legislations and Services .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

- A law on child marriage exists in India and a young girl should seek institutional support from the police

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Stricter laws and has reduced the incidents of early marriage
- Police does not deal with it properly

**78%** of the youth were aware of the existence of a law around child marriage in India. While **12%** of the youth were unaware and **10%** unsure. **82%** of the youth were aware of the legal age for marriage in India. Youth participants from Jharkhand believed that child marriage has drastically reduced due to stricter laws.

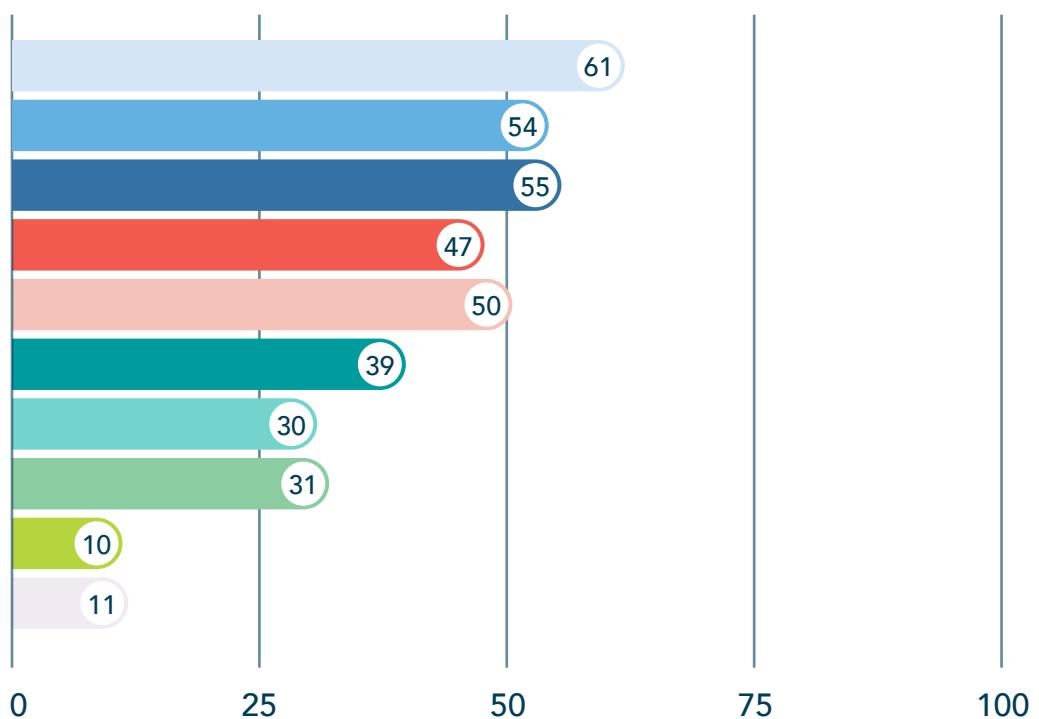
The service providers across all states - CMPOs and the Police projected that the cases of child marriage are significantly reducing with growing awareness and stricter laws and coordination between Childline, CMPO, District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) and NGOs. However, the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) member and CPMO Rajasthan particularly shared that despite a legal age of marriage the society at large flouts it, as the police does not ensure forceful implementation of the same.

Survivors of Early Marriage who participated in this study were unaware of the Child Marriage Act, or the presence

of services to prohibit early marriage at the Block level at the time of their marriage. Some of them remain unaware of where to go in case they came across another girl getting married. Most of them considered **the police as the first point of formal redressal even though they do not entirely trust them**. **62%** of the youth participants also believed that a young victim of early marriage should approach **the police for institutional support**. It was clear from the survivor's narratives, that the support extended by the local NGOs helped them seek redressal in the cases of domestic violence and empowered them to recognize violence. In addition, 48% of the youth believe that an NGO worker can be approached for institutional help.

## Who can a young victim of early marriage approach for institutional support?

- Child marriage prohibition officer
- Child protection officer
- Child line helpline
- Lawyer
- Anganwadi worker
- ASHA worker
- NGO worker
- Her mother
- Counsellor
- Police



## ❖ **Interlinkages between Early Marriage, Sexual Harassment and Domestic Violence**

The connection between domestic violence and early marriage is a developing conversation, the interlinkages between sexual assault and harassment occurring outside the house and the violence occurring inside the house must be further explored. Participants (young women, survivors and parents) shared that the fear of elopement and increased violence against women is pushing parents to marry their daughters at a younger age. This stems from the prevailing social norm of controlling women's sexuality and agency.

From the narratives of the survivors

a disturbing trend of early and forced marriages associated with physical, sexual and emotional violence was found. Most women across states revealed that the abuse they experienced was not just from the husbands but, also from the husband's immediate and wider family. Several studies point to the fact that young wives' low status in their marital households can subject them to long hours of labour, social isolation, physical, sexual, and emotional violence, the risks related to early pregnancy, and having little say over anything that affects them (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

### **Overall Dominant Youth Perception around Early Marriage**

- Poverty and Illiteracy are the root causes of early marriage in India
- A law on child marriage exists in India
- A young girl should be able to seek institutional support from the police
- An outsider can intervene in the incident of an early marriage
- As bystanders most youth would approach the police for intervention
- The mother is seen as the primary form of support
- Access to adequate education should be available to young girls as a supportive measure

### **Overall Prevailing Social Norms driving Early Marriage**

- Early Marriage is a part of our culture
- Early Marriage is not a form of violence
- Divorce is shameful
- Violence is a private matter
- Family is the first point of contact for support
- Men can discipline a girl's behavior
- Girls are valued as wives and not individuals
- There is a right time for marriage for girls
- Sex or relationships before marriage as sinful and dishonorable
- Reporting abuse is disrespectful
- Stricter laws have reduced the incidents of early marriage
- Police does not deal with cases of early marriage properly

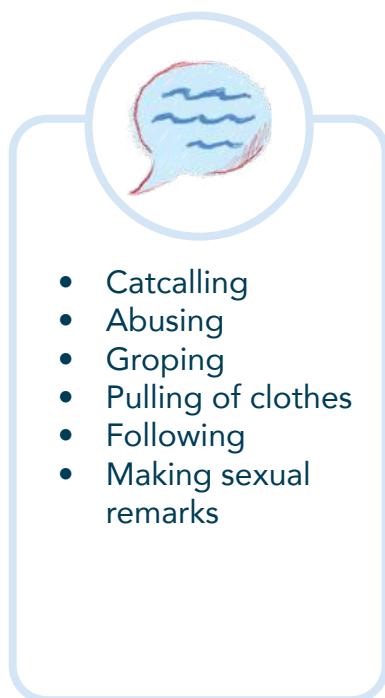
## Section 4

### Sexual Harassment in Public Places: Norms, Perceptions and Services

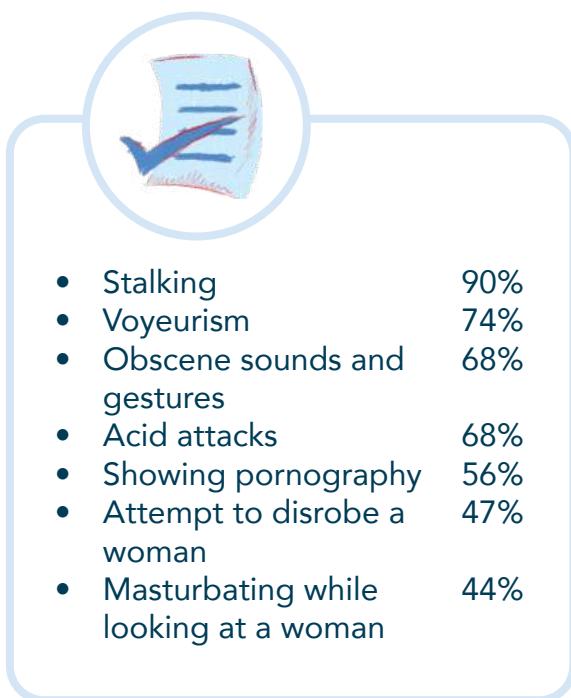
**66%** of the youth recognized sexual harassment in public places as a form of violence when asked directly. However, when presented with a case study (Annexure 2) example, the number rose to **86%**.

This is linked to the aspect of 'severity' in defining and recognizing violence. Sexual harassment in public places was unanimously recognized as a problem mostly young girls and women face.

#### Young Women identified Sexual Harassment as



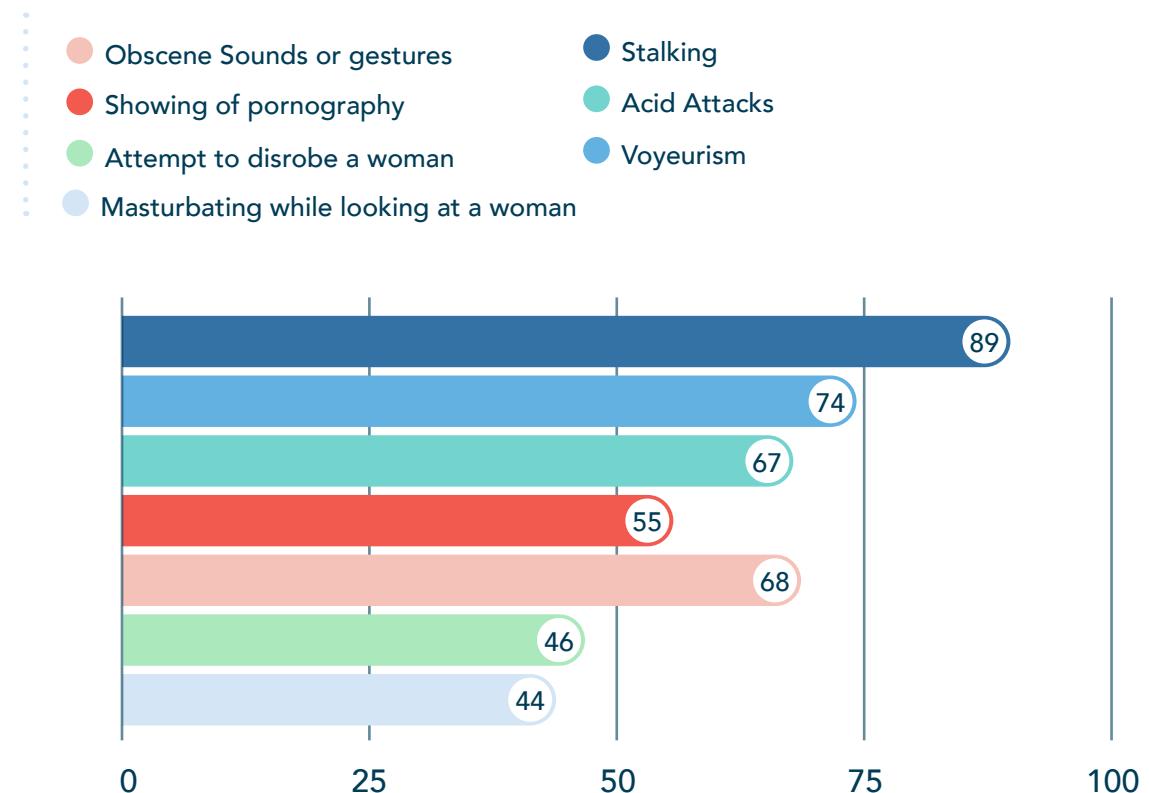
#### Overall Youth understanding of Sexual Harassment



Unless it became 'stalking or a physical violation' it was not considered serious. The normalization and denial of 'daily' sexual harassment was a visible feature in many of the young men's narratives. This was particularly seen in Haryana, Rajasthan

and UP. Even the service providers such as Police, Lawyers, Counselors, and NGO functionaries agreed to it being a universal phenomenon and considered it a frequent occurrence with young girls and women venturing in public spaces.

## Identifying Sexual Harassment in Public Places



## Reasons for Sexual Harassment in Public Places

### Dominant Youth Perception

- Sexual harassment in public places does not occur due to the clothes that girls wear

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Women and girls incite boys to sexually harass them with the clothes that they wear
- Women should accept "minor" instances of violence
- Women and girls accessing public spaces in the night invite sexual harassment
- There is a right time for girls to go out
- Men are only acting on the "impulses"

Percentage  
of youth who  
**disagreed that**

**59%**

*“Sexual harassment in public places occurs due to multiple reasons. Including the kinds of clothes that girls wear, the amount of make-up they wear and because they deliberately go out in the night”*

Young men and women shared that sexual harassment at public places is an inevitable reality that most girls/women face once they step outside. Majority of the participants were of the view that although sexual harassment is committed by boys/men, the onus of protection and evading any kind attention in public spaces falls on the women.

Women and girls, from a young age, are taught to live with such 'minor' incidents of harassment; while getting habituated to deep-rooted patriarchy, even the older women in the family often end up ignoring it and expect their younger generation to do the same. In a similar fashion all the participants shared that they ignored the harassment till it 'went out of hand', in fact all the participants dealt with it at a personal level either by ignoring it or confronting their harasser.

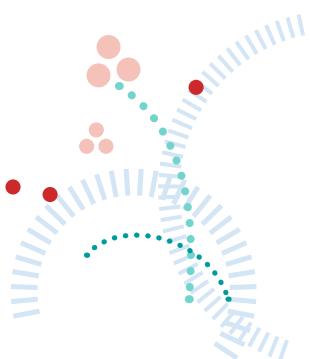
Mobility and clothes of girls/women was considered to be the reason for sexual harassment in public places by the services providers like the police and DLSA lawyers, men and parents mostly from UP, Haryana and Rajasthan. Barring one women's group in Jharkhand rest of the young women participants ascribed sexual harassment to the same reason. However, the survivor narratives painted a different picture.

Attitudes towards women's clothing emerge as expected behavioral norms to be followed by women/ girls in order to

avoid unwanted male gaze. Preference for modest attire might reflect preoccupations with *izzat* (honour) and fear of honour-related violence. Such attitudes may also indicate support for the idea that women dressed "inappropriately" somehow deserve shame or assault.

Many police personnel and DLSA lawyers also pointed to the rise of technology and the misguided youth as crucial reasons behind sexual harassment. Majority of the participants across states were of the view that it's important to control women's clothing and bodies.

Perpetrators are however, devoid of any responsibility of sexual harassment and merely seen as acting on their 'male impulses' on being 'provoked' while there is blatant victim blaming. Nevertheless, one counsellor from UP pointed out that sexual harassment in public places is a product of the "dirty" mindset of a few men and highlighted the need to change the mindset.



## ❖ The Paradox of Seeking Support .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

- Women and girls should be able to speak about sexual harassment that they face
- The mother is seen as the person women and girls should speak to

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Matters of violence should be dealt with in the family
- Reporting violence brings shame to the family

Based on the case study, **93%** of the youth believe that a woman should be able to speak to someone, **83%** expect it to be the mother.

### *Women should be able to speak too*



Specifically, family members were consistently pointed to as the support system to turn to if one is being victimized. The parents of both the survivor/victim and harasser were considered to be the most appropriate for providing instrumental support; they were considered to have the most power to confront the perpetrator and provide solutions addressing immediate and long-term concerns. Turning to institutional support systems for help only in cases of "severe" and "out of hand" sexual harassment.

All barring one participant from Jharkhand, shared the experience with their natal and marital family though with a lot of skepticism. According to them they feared judgment and backlash from their families after reporting the incident. This hesitation to share or report sexual harassment by survivors was something that even the service providers like police personnel, counselors and NGO functionaries agreed to. The youth participants revealed that most of the times girls/women share their experiences with their peers instead of parents. Most parents agreed to the same yet pointed out that in case of disclosure, parents tend to resolve the issue by either reporting it to the perpetrator's family or to the community forums like Panchayats.

**60%** of the survey participants believed that women are often unable to share their experiences with anyone as they feel "ashamed". **58%** believed that it is because of the fear of restriction on mobility by parents, **43%** thought that it's because nobody will believe the victim/survivor while **27%** believed that women and girls might not think it is that big a deal to even talk about.

All the participant discussions revealed that women and girls "feel

scared" or are "fearful of their parents reaction" or are "scared about what the consequences will be" in case they disclose the incident to their family. This leads to a pertinent emerging "expected behavior" from women and girls especially when disclosing violence. Service providers themselves shared that women generally feel scared. This perception, which is rooted in the reality of women's experiences, can also shape the expectations by the larger society, which is, that when disclosing incidents of violence, women and girls must be fearful and scared.

This can lead to harmful consequences for help seeking behavior of women who are not perceived to be "scared" or "fearful". This leads to the construction of an image of the "perfect victim". Which means that the perfect victim will have undergone a "severe" form of violence and only then will she be reporting it and while reporting/ disclosing it she will have to be afraid/ submissive in her manner.

The survivors of this study reported when the harassment escalated to more physical attacks such as 'snatching duppattas' and stalking which would eventually reach their parents thus, they decided to disclose it to their parents. According to most of the participants violence is reported when things spiral out of control and/or when it becomes too severe. In fact, many young women participants pointed out that large majority of the women who have experienced "trivial" sexual harassment have never told anyone about it and only a few have ever sought help.

## Garima's Story

2

Garima\* is a 19 year old girl who has studied till Class 10. She is married, has a child, and lives in a joint family set up, with the parents and sister of her husband. She considers her life 'normal' but also acknowledges the immense restrictions on her mobility. She is barely allowed to go out, and only during the day but never after sunset. Friends and leisure is not a regular phenomenon, though her mother in-law invites her friends to their house if needed, orders food in to avoid hotels and facing drunkards.

Garima survived sexual harassment and aggravated sexual assault and was forcibly married to her perpetrator. She lost her parents early in life so she shifted to live with her maternal uncle and aunt. Her aunt was not supportive of her education on here mama's expenses.

This is when a guy (now her husband) started stalking her. Constantly following and making lewd comments. His friends supported and cheered for him and no one helped Garima when this teasing escalated to being physical. When a local woman tried to intervene, she was threatened and was challenged to complain to the village head at her own expense. Garima was too sacred to report the matter even to her family, fearing the loss of her mobility and education. She spoke to a few friends who advised her

to run away to escape the clutches of the harasser.

Once she was caught off guard at the community well and was dragged to a desolate place, but escaped shouting for help. This incident made her go into a shell. A little after this incident she shifted her paternal uncle and aunt who instead being her support system sexually assaulted her. Her sexual harasser followed her and raped her at multiple occasions. On one such occasion he was caught by her sister-in-law who took her to a community institution Sarna Samiti. In a travesty of justice, Sarna Samiti reached out to panchayat who then reported it to the police and Garima was married to her assaulter.

*"Police made him to marry me. In fact, the police arranged court marriage for us"* she stated. She did not protest as she feared for her future. Garima acknowledges that the fear, the shame and social stigma kept her from reporting her ordeal.

\* All names have been changed

## ❖ Legalities and Services .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

- General support must be sought from the police and that a woman can file a complaint for sexual harassment in public places

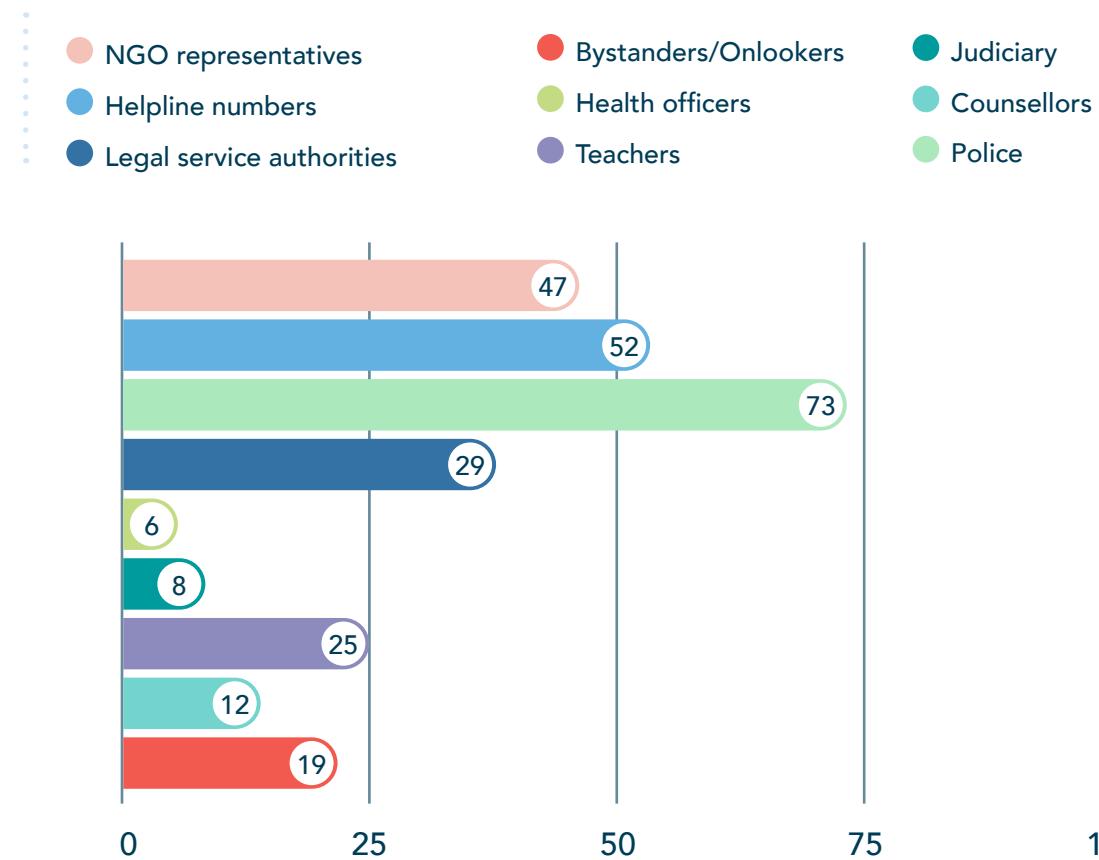
### Prevailing Social Norms

- Don't trust the police
- Approach the police only in a severe case
- Sexual Harassment should be dealt with internally, within the family

A dominant youth perception exists that women and girls often don't report abuse due to the reactions by the police (63%). However, based on the case study, 73% of the youth believe that

a woman should approach the police for institutional support and 55% believed that the police would register the complaint, while, 20% did not and 25% were unsure.

### Perception on Institutional Support for Sexual Harassment



**65% of the participants were aware that there are laws around sexual harassment in public places.**

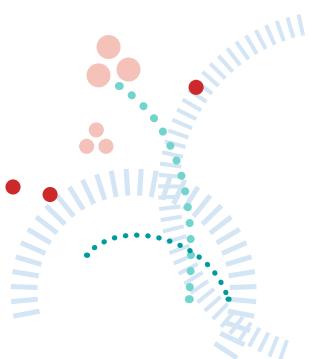
According to the survivors, their families reportedly acted on their complaint, however, this was riddled with consequences for them. It resulted in restrictions on their mobility and social interactions. One of the survivors from Jharkhand shared that she was too scared to report the incident of repeated rape at home as she stayed with her uncle and aunt.

According to a DLSA lawyer and a counselor, reporting of sexual assault cases has increased in comparison to the past, as the fear of public shame has decreased to some extent and families are taking legal action as required. Another reason cited for this is, increase in legal awareness among the community and emergence of committees like, the Child Protection unit; Women Police Station (Mahila thana), one stop centers, that promote legal awareness among the community. According to many other nodal service providers such as the POs and Police the awareness is better in Haryana, Delhi and Jharkhand particularly in the urban areas.

Barring one survivor from UP none of the participants were aware about a helpline or any other support services to report violence. The "Panchayat" and the "Sarpanch" were considered to be the next best option to seek support after the parents, as they were seen to have the power to 'counsel and warn the perpetrator and his family'. Support from the police is only sought, if the violence does not stop or if there is an aggravated attack such as attempt to rape or forcible physical touching.

However, with respect to reporting even if a woman manages to complain, what follows is further victimization at the hands of the legal system, with her truth being challenged constantly. To this effect, the participants shared that the police often delays the filing of the First Information Report (FIR) or reacts in a way that encourages the harasser. The whole process of reporting and action thereafter is not victim-centric. All the participants across, unanimously highlighted the hesitation in sharing details of the case with the police as they are insensitive and resist filing the FIR, especially if the victim is from an economically or socially marginalized community like the muslim and the dalit community. Moreover, the police sometimes pressurizes the survivor/victim's family to "settle" or "compromise," especially if the perpetrator is from a powerful community.

The norms around social control over women are complex, extending from what they wear, to their presence in public spaces, to private behavior, often reinforced by women themselves, and justified by concepts ranging from "honour" to behaviors associated with a "good woman". The social norms posit the onus of instigation of violence as well as the protection from the said violence, on the women themselves.



## Overall Dominant Youth Perception on Sexual Harassment in Public Places

- Sexual harassment in public places does not occur due to the clothes that girls wear.
- Women and girls should be able to speak about sexual harassment that they face.
- The mother is seen as the person women and girls should speak to.
- Institutional support must be sought from the police.

## Overall Prevailing Social Norms on Sexual Harassment in Public Places

- There is a right time for girls to go out
- Women and girls accessing public spaces in the night invite sexual harassment
- Women and girls incite boys to sexually harass them with the clothes that they wear
- Men are only acting on the “impulses”
- Women should accept “minor” instances of violence
- Reporting violence brings shame to the family
- Matters of violence should be dealt with in the family
- Don’t trust the police
- Approach the police only in a severe case

## Section 5

# Domestic Violence: Norms, Perceptions and Services

**85%** of the youth recognized domestic violence as a form of violence when asked directly. And, when presented with a case study (Annexure 2), **88%** of the youth identified domestic violence as a form of violence. This shift in perception was not stark.

**54%** youth disagreed with the statement that "Husbands often don't mean to hit their wives. They are often under a lot of pressure. If a man apologizes for hitting his wife, it is not domestic violence" whereas **43%** youth agreed.

## • Reasons for Domestic Violence .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

- The husband is responsible for domestic violence and there is a shared blame for its occurrence.

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Domestic violence is caused by external provocations of alcohol or interference from other people
- Women are the caregivers of the family
- Women invite domestic violence by not behaving as expected of them
- Domestic Violence is a form of disciplining women

Based on the case study, **84%** youth believed that the husband is responsible for domestic violence; **29%** held the mother-in-law responsible; **28%** held the father-in-law responsible and **18%** believed it is the woman herself who is responsible. It is pertinent to note that out of the **18%** who held the woman responsible, **58%** were men, **42%** were women.

The participants (young men, women and parents) believed that being a dutiful wife by not arguing with the husband; properly looking after the house

and children; and seeking permission to go out are perhaps essential roles which when not fulfilled, invite physical violence (verbal and mental violence is mostly not taken into account). Moreover, young women attributed the occurrence of domestic violence to the inability to bear children. A discussion with fathers from Rajasthan, brought out an imagery that is used to describe women in their local context. This was of the "stepney" women. "Stepney" refers to a spare wheel, often found at the back of cars or scooters. The imagery is of a woman who seems to have multiple

sexual relationships, and which is why the husband would beat her up, otherwise the husband is viewed as a rational man. Men are considered to always have a legitimate reason for having to hit their wives.

A general trend of externalizing the cause of violence is visible across participants. Most young women blamed the in-laws especially the mother-in-law for provoking physical violence at the hands of the husband than attributing the responsibility of his abusive behavior to him. Several women's studies scholars have written on the relationship between the Indian mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law which is known to be fraught due to unequal power dynamics between them.

This further feeds into a very common phrase prevalent in India, "aurat hi aurat ki dushman hoti hai" (a woman is a woman's worst enemy).

From the survivor's narratives, the most common reasons that emerged across states were dowry, alcoholism, interference and provocation by in laws followed by extra marital relations of the husband. Other reasons included drug use, marital rape, and birth of a girl child, two women; one from Jharkhand and the other from Delhi, stated that there was no particular reason for violence and anything done or said by them would result in extreme violence.

## • The Paradox of Seeking Support .....

### Dominant Youth Perception

- Women should be able to disclose their experiences of domestic violence and the mother is perceived to be the person who a woman should be able to talk to

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Domestic violence is a normal aspect of married life
- Domestic violence should be tolerated by women and women should learn to live with it
- Domestic violence should be dealt with, within the family
- Son preference
- Punishment from the family on disclosing violence to anyone other than the family
- After marriage, the marital home is the girls family

Percentage of youth who believed that

93%

*Women should be able to speak to someone about their experience*

83%

*Women should speak to their mother*

It is important to note here, that prevalent perceptions and social norms dictate that the mother is a confidant as well as the pillar that keeps the family structure together. This norm collides with yet another prevalent norm surrounding the significance of the marital home for the daughter. The marital home is considered to be the new and the 'real' family of the woman. This collision is in alignment with the findings of this study, where women have found the mother-in-law to be the first point of disclosure, versus their own mother as the current youth perception indicates.

The survivor narratives emphasized on the first disclosure was to the mother in law. Who asked the women to 'tolerate'; or impressed upon them that 'there is nothing new in what's happening and everyone goes through the same'. In one particular narrative, the mother in law suggested that the daughter in law should start living with the younger son if she was not happy with the elder son. The resistance and lack of support from the in laws was highlighted in the narratives, including encouraging or condoning violence from their partners. There was, however, one exception here where a woman from Jharkhand shared that her mother in law was the primary support.

Most survivors sought help from their parents with most of them sharing

their ordeal with their mothers. In fact, one woman shared that it took her some time to realize that she is a victim of violence and it was her own mother who pointed it out. Other people who were considered for support are friends and immediate neighbors.

Whenever children were involved, especially after the woman had disclosed/reported the violence, while the daughter was sent away with the mother, in case of a son, the marital family would either pressurize the woman for a divorce threatening to take away the son or kept the son while asking her to leave. A crucial social norm visible here is the son preference which is prevalent in India.

Although, most women domestic violence survivors participating in the research were living with their natal family, a few shared that their natal families were not supportive of them reporting violence at an institutional level. The common norm governing this lack of support is that marriage defines the status of women in society and the ones failing to protect or maintain their position in the institution are looked down upon. Thus, to preserve the institution and maintain the status quo of power, the natal families instill values and behavior, which push girls and women to endure any form of abuse. Survivors described their experience of

having to move between their natal and marital home, sometimes for months or even years. The process of negotiation would involve the woman receiving social pressure from the husband and his family to do as they desired.

This was worse for women from Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and Delhi, who had chosen their own partners. Parents from Jharkhand seemed approving of the girls choosing their own partners and supporting them in case there was any abuse or violence reported in their marriages. However, all the women shared that despite the family intervention the abuse never stopped and in fact, for some women (Rajasthan, UP and Haryana) it became more severe. The women shared that they were initially hesitant to share about the violence fearing a backlash and lack of support from the families.

According to the service providers across states, women prefer to first approach their family when reporting about violence. Other forms of support sought by women experiencing violence from the institutions were help lines such as 1091, 112 (in UP) and 1098. Panchayats or 'samaaj' is the next level of community intervention that is sought in case of abandonment/ dissertation by the husband and in cases of continued violence. However, these bodies operate on the principle of saving the marriage and sending the woman back to the same site of abuse after either warning the erring party and/ or counselling the women to 'adjust and give it time'.

The intervention at the community level involves negotiations and brokering peace between the couple. Survivors experienced a lot of social pressure, to reconcile with their abusive husband,

return to the marital home, and stay in the marriage, from their natal and marital family. In addition, the ingrained fear of community rebuke and ridicule on "highlighting family matters in public" and being blamed for 'failing' to remain married and fulfill normative marital obligations often leave women with limited options for support.



## Gauravi's Story

3

Gauravi Devi now 35 years old, got married when she was only in class 7. All of 14 years she was married to a 17-year-old boy in a traditional and arranged marriage. She reminisces that she was just a small girl who followed what her parents said, clueless about support she could seek to stop her marriage.

She believes she has had a happy married life with no fights with her husband. Though owed to her immaturity she had a tough time when she came to her new family home. The lack of experience in household chores made her in-laws angry and they would taunt, scold and burden her with more work. The verbal and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband's parents and sister was a 'torture'. The numerous restrictions on her clothing and mobility, coupled with the expectations of following the traditions and codes of conduct without any consideration of her young age bothered her. From the traditional veil to touching the feet of elders and going barefooted to fetch water were meted with passive bystander like behavior by her husband. Even her own mother advised her to bear what she thought was a common occurrence in many households. With no support from her natal family, Gauravi, continued to bear everything to save her relationship with her husband and for the wellbeing of her children.

Unfortunately, her life took another cruel turn when she lost her husband soon and this made her dependent on her marital family. Regressive restrictions were put on her attire, food, mobility finances, and the burden of raising the children all by herself came as a part of being a widow from Rajasthan.

Even when she thought about remarrying she faced severe rebuke from her in-laws. She was not allowed to speak to men and was threatened that if she remarried her children would be taken away. She wanted to approach the police but the fear of losing her children kept her from doing so.

Gauravi never approached anyone for help as she believes that family is the primary sources of disclosure and support for any women. The societal pressures and the lack of know-how, along with the deep sense of mistrust on the police and judicial system was evident in the fact that all forms of domestic abuse and violence was borne in silence!

\* All names have been changed

## ❖ Legalities and Services .....

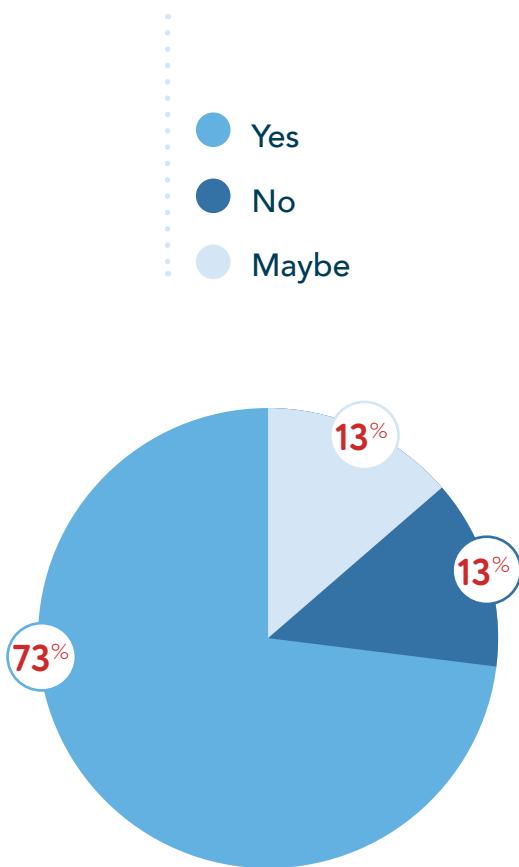
### Dominant Youth Perception

- Domestic violence should be reported to the police and women should have access to legal recourse

### Prevailing Social Norms

- Women do not complain as domestic violence is considered a private matter
- Women should tolerate violence for the sake of their children and family
- Police should be the last resort
- The best solution for domestic violence is reconciliation

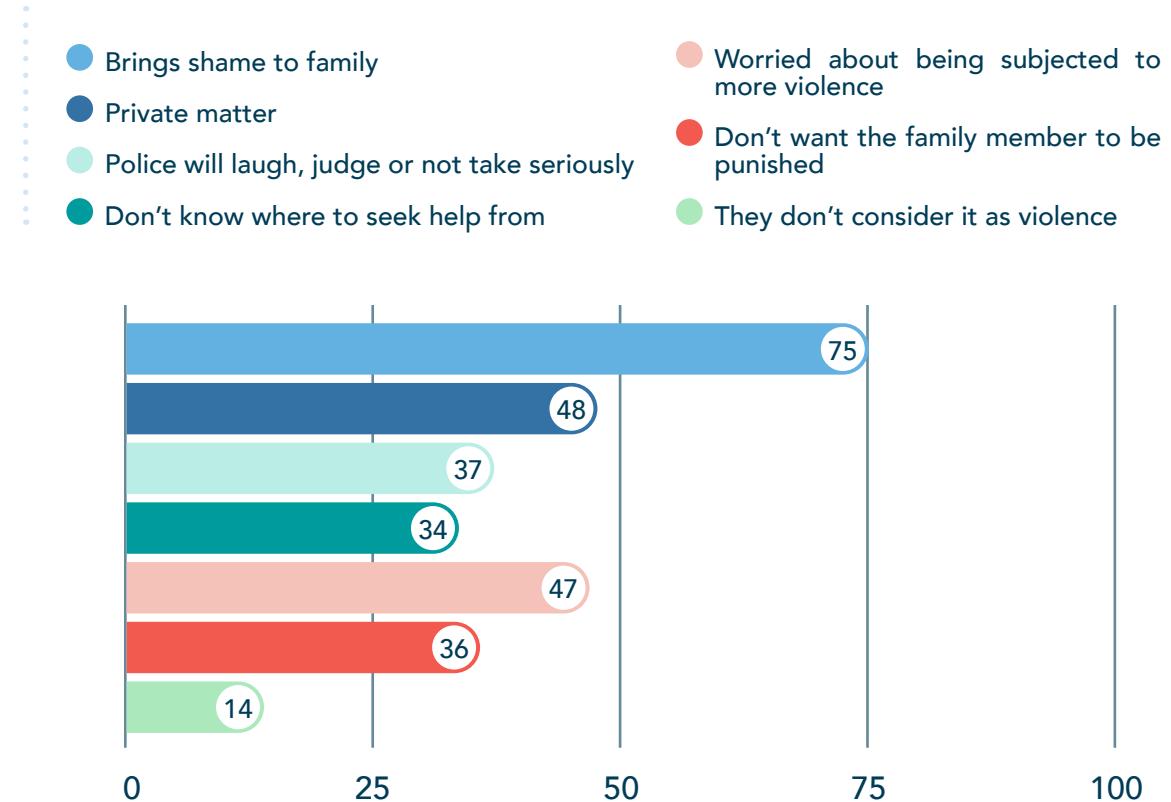
#### Youth Awareness on the DV law



**73%** youth were aware of the existence of laws on domestic violence. **85%** youth believed that domestic violence should be reported to the police followed by **55%** youth believing that women should approach NGOs, while **45%** felt that women should approach the family.

**75%** youth believed that women don't report domestic violence for the fear of bringing shame to their families, **48%** attributed it to it being a private matter, and **47%** believed that women fear additional violence post reporting. Moreover, **37%** youth believed that women fear the judgement by the police and **34%** believed that women are unaware of the support services to seek help.

## Youth Perceptions on why women don't report DV



In addition to the stigmatization around divorce, children were the driving force behind women's decisions to either stay in or leave the abusive home. The urge to protect their children was some women's impetus for either separating from or reconciling with the abusive husband. However, for some women it was also the continued violence despite many reconciliatory efforts or the increase in severity of violence that led them to finally leave the marital home. Most service providers, young women and men and parents also highlighted that women endure years of abuse and don't report it.

Without the ability to sustain themselves economically, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships. They also fear the consequences of reporting violence and declare an unwillingness

to subject themselves to the shame of being identified as "battered" women. In addition, there is a lack of awareness about health and legal services help lines and other legal mechanisms to address violence.

Although, a direct link between "formal" education and help seeking behavior could not be ascertained, the participants with higher levels of "formal" education were found to be aware and confident about approaching institutional services compared to other women. Being educated does not imply that women will automatically seek help, however education empowers women with the confidence and the necessary tools to try to defend themselves. Nonetheless, all the women expressed the desire to live a dignified violence free life.

Percentage of youth who **believed** that

85%

*Women should have access to legal recourse*

40%

*Women should have access to mental health counselling*

39%

*family counselling is necessary as a form of support for domestic violence*

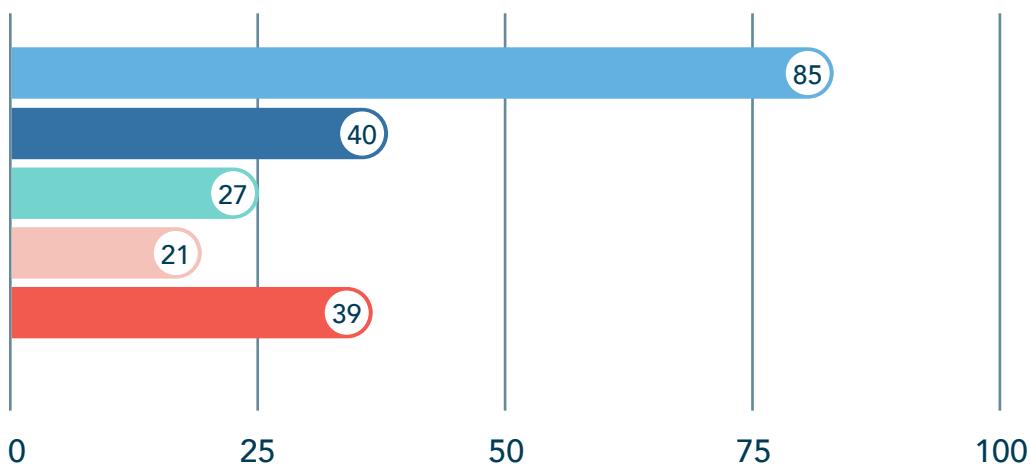
Many service providers across states, with the exception of the NGO functionaries discussed about women "exaggerating small family fights" thereby, violating the code of privacy and making the private, public. It was further revealed that women access shelters, crisis helplines, law enforcement, and health care providers based on the severity of violence. In the case of higher severity and incidence, institutional support is sought.

Few of the women and parents from Delhi, Jharkhand and UP were aware about institutional sources such as Mahila Thanas, Crime against Women cells, One Stop Centers and the laws pertaining to domestic violence in general. In fact, the survivors from UP, Delhi and Jharkhand had sought NGO and Mahila Panchayat intervention in their matters pertaining to violence. Some other forms of support for women as identified by NGO functionaries were Anganwadi workers, ASHA and mostly local NGOs.

### Youth Perceptions on Support Systems needed for DV

- Legal support for filing a case
- Mental health counselling
- Adequate healthcare services

- Rehabilitation services
- Family counselling



Police was the last and final resort for most women across states. The apprehension and fear of approaching the police emerged from the survivor narratives, especially from states like UP, Haryana and Rajasthan. Majority highlighted the lack of support from the Police and how they tend to 'counsel' both parties siding often with the abuser's families, and that very few are willing to even register a complaint. A few women from UP and Delhi mentioned that they had to persistently follow up with the police or involve an NGO to file an FIR.

A few counsellors highlighted that 'services/facilities for women exist but there is a lack of effective implementation.' Protection officers across all districts hold additional charges and are overburdened with responsibilities. Moreover, service providers pointed to the issues of the quality of services in one stop centers/shelter homes such as the quality of food and living conditions for women. They urged for better maintenance by government departments.

### Overall Dominant Youth Perception on Domestic Violence

- The husband is responsible for domestic violence and there is a shared blame for its occurrence.
- Women should be able to disclose their experiences of domestic violence
- The mother is perceived to be the first person who a woman should be able to talk to
- Women should have access to legal recourse
- Domestic violence should be reported to the police

### Overall Prevailing Social Norms on Domestic Violence

- Son preference/ boys are valued more
- Women are the caregivers of the family
- After marriage, the marital home is the girl's family
- Domestic violence is a normal aspect of married life
- Domestic Violence is a form of disciplining women
- Domestic violence is caused by external provocations of alcohol or interference from other people
- Women invite domestic violence by not behaving as expected of them
- Domestic violence should be tolerated by women and women should learn to live with it
- Women should tolerate violence for the sake of their children and family
- Divorce is shameful
- Domestic violence should be dealt with, within the family
- Punishment from the family on disclosing violence to anyone other than the family
- Women do not complain as domestic violence is considered a private matter
- Police should be the last resort
- The best solution for domestic violence is reconciliation

# THE WAY FORWARD

*“Don’t bear it. The more you bear the more severe it will get...and the more difficult it will be for you to come out of it. Nip it in the bud or you will get habituated to it.”*

*A Survivor of Domestic Violence, Jharkhand*

Emerging strategies for intervention and prevention call for collaboration across all groups. Studies suggest that a multicomponent, integrated interventions strategy is more effective than single ones in preventing violence against women and girls, such that interventions are supported and reinforced from multiple sources. A recent overview of different approaches (Oxfam, 2016) aimed at shifting social norms to prevent violence highlighted that most interventions with evidence of success operate at multiple levels and employ multiple strategies. It is likely that

interventions need to engage over the short, medium and long-term.

The Ecological Framework, used as an analytical framework in this study, highlights that in order to have effective and sustainable interventions on ending VAWG, there is a need to understand how different levels interact to drive and sustain harmful behaviors. To create lasting change, gendered power relations must shift across the entire ecology. The studies conducted by DFID (2016); Oxfam (2016) and What Works (2019) have informed the following guiding principles for programming on social norms.

#### **Framework for Social Norm Change (Oxfam, 2016; DFID, 2016)**

- Change dominant social expectations regarding a particular behavior
- Publicize changes in attitudes, norms and expectations
- Catalyze and reinforce new norms and behaviors

## Guiding Principles for Programming on Social Norms

Several strategies and interventions can be designed to shift social norms. These can range from capacity building programs to door to door advocacy initiatives. Programs should be explicitly designed with the social norms theory in

mind, and have mechanisms to measure changes in social norms as distinct from changes in individual attitudes and behaviors. They can be guided by the following principles to ensure effective implementation and success.



## 1

## INTERSECTIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL

An approach which is rooted in the realities of the communities and culture, within which discriminatory social norms need to be shifted is crucial. Each community is unique with unique social sanctions, these must be centered during the program design phase. An intersectional lens is indispensable, especially in the context of India, wherein issues of caste, religion, class, gender, disability, ethnicity, language, geographical location, sexuality combine in ways which make the issue of VAWG even more difficult to eradicate.

## 2

## GENDER INCLUSIVE

Programs must be gender inclusive, gender transformative and gender responsive. Marginalized gender identities and women must occupy spaces of leadership and planning within programs. Moreover, engaging men and boys is critical to sustain change in social norms. This being said, programs must be queer affirmative as well.

## 3

## COMMUNITY LED AND COLLABORATIVE

Social norms are sustained through the community and hence programs must be cognizant of fostering collaborations across community led organizations, activists, youth and social influencers that have the potential to catalyze transformative change. Programs must empower communities to lead the change themselves and provide the necessary resources to do so.

## 4

## MULTI-SECTORAL AND INTEGRATED

Programs must be multi-faceted to address the dynamic nature of VAWG. Programs must aim to shift social norms at the individual, social, material and structural levels and hence must have an integrated approach which combined services across the legal, psycho-social, medical, financial and rehabilitative spectrum.

## 5

## RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

Deeply entrenched social norms influence the beliefs and self-image of people, especially young women and men. Men are made to believe that they are entitled to women's bodies and women are made to believe that this entitlement should not be contested. Social norms must be shifted through an approach which emphasizes the rights of people, based in the principles of agency, autonomy and equality. Moreover, this approach must incorporate self-affirming and pleasure-affirmative values.

## 6

## REDUCED HARM PRINCIPLE

There are various risks associated with social norms programming. Shifting social norms around reporting violence may direct individuals into poorly-resourced services. Or those challenging norms in the early stages of change may be at risk from stigma and discrimination from the family and community members. Hence, mechanisms to assess and address risks are important in any program and the principle of reducing harm at all stages must be followed.

## Recommendations

Given below are a few recommendations to strengthen systems and individual capacities on shifting social norms and effectively addressing VAWG. The suggestions given below have been derived from the findings of study and are not a comprehensive list. It is pertinent for strategies and interventions to be context specific. Geographical diversity, as visible in India, presents a unique set of issues, social norms and cultures. Hence, the manifestation of these social

norms, cultural sanctions and community priorities differ. For instance, while all states in this study saw the occurrence of early marriages, Rajasthan emphasized on cultural practices whereas, Haryana and Jharkhand emphasized on poverty, dowry and girls eloping as major reasons behind early marriage. Therefore, programs must take into account state specific realities which will shape the goals, processes and outcomes of any program aimed at shifting social norms around VAWG.

### Programs on Social Norms

- Shift Social Norms around Support Seeking:** The line between the public and private sphere is an important factor in determining how cases of violence should be addressed and reported. Support seeking at all levels is riddled with consequent restrictions for women. Hence, strategies must aim to shift social norms around seeking support, providing support and the very nature of violence itself. VAWG must be positioned as a matter of public concern, and should be seen as an issue of the community. Promoting norms around disclosure and addressing VAWG as a social responsibility can prove to be effective.
- Technology for Change** presents a huge potential for raising awareness, mobilizing action and shared problem solving on a scale that was limited by geography. The connective power of social media and online platforms can

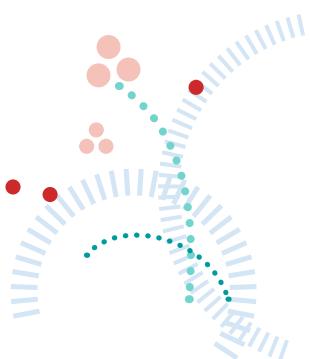
inspire, initiate and facilitate finding solutions to gender-based violence. However, caution must be exercised when utilizing social media and virtual platforms for various reasons. Virtual spaces are often fraught with violence themselves and marginalized identities are often targeted. Access to virtual spaces in India is biased towards privileged sections in society. Lastly, technology is governed by local social norms which posit it as a great evil that is misguiding the youth and girls.

- Changing Perceptions:** Stigma around disclosure of violence and reporting needs to be addressed. Younger men believe that women lodge 'false' complaints and the police supports them while on the flipside, most women find the police being 'unhelpful' and biased towards the powerful and 'richer' party and are subjected to shame at their hands as well. Advocacy

on perception change is necessary.

4. **Awareness on VAWG:** Advocacy and awareness programs must take into account the framing of VAWG in all their communications. Messages around VAWG must be clear and should avoid being vague. For instance, in this study, the proportion of youth that recognized early marriages as violence increased drastically when presented with a direct case study. Moreover, awareness programs must dispel the silence and stigma which recognizes VAWG only when it is perceived to be "severe". The recurring nature of VAWG must also centre all discourses along with advocacy on reducing "tolerance" by women. Messages such as tolerance from the community and family leads to more violence can be highlighted.
5. **Urgent Social Norms to be addressed:** Programs should tackle norms related to purity, family honor, son preference and the reproductive functions that women and girls are perceived to have. These norms underpin and exacerbate most other discriminatory gendered norms which disempower women and impact their support seeking behavior. Bystander trainings and advocacy on continued education are a few examples which can affect positive social norm change.
6. **Working with Men and Boys:** Strategic alliances must be forged with men based on the shared agenda of ending VAWG. Rigid norms around masculinity must be dismantled and the concept must be redefined in collaboration with

young men. Recognizing men and boys as equal stakeholders to ending VAWG is necessary and impressing upon them the impact of victim blaming and shaming is crucial. Programs however, must be cautious of not inculcating a protectionist attitude towards addressing violence.





## Strengthen Institutional Support

These are support systems that are institutionalized at government, non-government, national, and international levels that respond to VAWG and are perceived as the formal systems of support.

1. Evidence suggests that siloed approaches to violence can lead to inaccessibility and complexity for people seeking help (RDS – Office for Criminal Justice Reform, 2008). A multi-sectoral response which integrates psycho-social-legal, rehabilitative and medical services are required as per the specific requirements of victims/ survivors. It is necessary to have access to safety, social support, economic security, housing, and legal protection. **Thus, an effective coordination between programs and service providers is a must. Smooth and expedited intra and inter department coordination between Police-counsellors-CMPO/ POs-DLSA, other government nodal agencies, officers and civil society organizations is crucial.**
2. Reduce the burden of responsibilities and case management by recruiting trained personnel to implement programs. It was found that in several states the PO also held the post of the CMPO. **A clarity on the roles and responsibilities is crucial for effective service delivery.**
3. The study found a proportionate youth, including the survivors, who were unaware of the services available at the local level. **Awareness programs and campaigns must be aimed at increasing knowledge and**

**understanding around the different roles of service providers and how they can be easily accessed.**

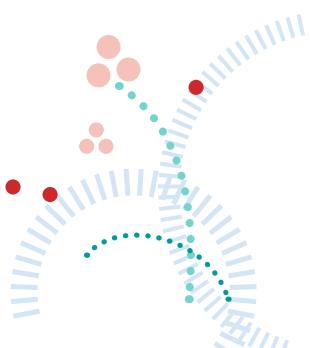
4. **Capacity building of service providers through an intersectional and trauma informed lens is necessary.** While training programs exist and most service providers expressed their satisfaction with the same, capacity building must be a continued program with in-built mechanisms to measure and evaluate shifts in attitudes, beliefs and social norms.
5. **Direct sensitivity programs at police personnel.** The police must be equipped with support to deal with community pressures and sensitized on issues of VAWG. These can be further achieved through collaborations between local civil society organizations which provide support to survivors/ victims.
6. The study found that women often withdrew charges as they sought settlements outside the ambit of the law. **Mechanisms that allow for follow-ups would be beneficial in such cases.** For instance, mental health counsellors and case workers can reach out to the women to check-in. **This shifts the focus from punitive action to holistic action.**
7. One Stop Centres must be strengthened in terms of coordination among the various relevant departments and ministries, and increase public awareness. Moreover, the scheme needs to be integrated with existing crisis-intervention centers that were already providing services to women or have been built on good practices from

models developed in various parts of the country. Existing social services such as the special cells in police stations and the family counselling courts and several other civil society initiatives have been working on addressing VAWG for decades. Apart from strengthening them further, their experiences and learnings must be incorporated within new policies and schemes.

8. Evidence suggests that the driving force behind disclosure is the severity of violence; this tends to determine whether or not women seek help when they are abused. Institutional services were approached in 'severe' cases such as dowry, death, and rape. Hence, **institutional support must be strengthened to deal with all forms and kinds of violence and the social norms around "severity" must be dispelled.**

9. **Women's participation and representation in all civic and public forums is integral to strengthening institutional support.** This shapes the public opinion and decision making on violence against women within spaces which are traditionally dominated by men.

10. It was found that women in the current study were unable to report a case due to missing identification documents that are snatched by the family or they don't have access to these documents. To address this, the need for these documents at the level of filing a complaint must be dispensed with. In addition, programs aimed at providing relevant documents to women must be set up at a district level.





## Strengthen Community Systems

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Women's perceptions of how and when their community would assist them, affects help-seeking behaviors as they are most likely to turn to support systems within their communities. Social norms significantly influence how support for survivors/ victims is perceived by the victim, the perpetrator, and the community.

1. **Family focused Programs:** The study highlighted the significant perceptions, norms, social expectations and roles of the mother and even the mother-in-law. They are seen as the primary support for survivors/ victims in disclosure, in addressing violence, and in perpetuating it. Hence, programs aimed at them should not just empower them but also include them in decision making and leadership capacities. This can be done by employing positive behavior modelling by illustrating stories which defy the norm. Further, the programs must be cognizant of the several burdens that mothers have to bear and ensure that these are not reiterated within programming. To this effect, the family (natal as well as marital), including the father and siblings must be involved in interventions on awareness, bystander training and support training to address VAWG.
2. The study found that women (or rather their families) approached community mechanisms like the Sarpanch or the Panchayat for support. Therefore, advocacy and interventions aimed at local leaders and groups are crucial. Further, capacity building programs must be specifically tailored to these community leaders, groups and forums.

**Community based outreach programs and support services have proven to be a sustainable solution in addressing VAWG through a restorative lens.**

3. The study found that women struggled with dealing and reporting violence. According to them, they had only two options. One, they report it and bring shame to their family and being isolated and the second was to end their lives. This perfectly illustrates the need for a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach. **Local civil society organizations, specifically women's rights organizations must be engaged in spreading awareness around support systems to address VAWG.** This must be combined with sensitivity programs aimed at ending the culture of silence, blame and shame.



## Affecting Material Change

Economic (material) realities of women, communities, and institutions have a deep impact on social norms programming.

1. Grassroots organizations and collectives are the most effective in relaying services but are also underfunded. **While building partnerships with them is crucial, advocacy on funding and allocation of grants to them is integral.** Large, international organizations and influential social actors can lend their support to them in amplifying their work and demanding for funds.
2. **Investments in the infrastructure and logistical support for services are extremely important.** The study found that women were unable to seek institutional support as the police station or the crisis centre were situated far away. To mitigate this, PCR vans must be made available at district levels. Service providers shared that there is a severe lack of beds in shelters and the quality of services is deteriorating. Many women do not have alternative places to live. Hence, rehabilitative services must be accelerated through proper funding.
3. Survivors in the study discussed the inability to move out of abusive homes as they were economically dependent upon their families or partners. **Programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women, not just through skilling but through financial interim reliefs must be designed.** Livelihood schemes which focus on empowerment of women by skilling them on traditional modes of work must shift their course to non-traditional

livelihoods like driving, machinery repair and so on.

4. **Joint advocacy is the need of the hour, to demand for an increase in national budgetary allocations for programming on awareness and prevention of VAWG.** A recent study by Oxfam (2021) on Gender Budgeting and financing for VAW in India, requested that the national government must increase the fund allocations for women specific VAWG programmes and schemes to INR 11,000 crores annually in an incremental manner, while also removing bottlenecks which prevent these funds to be effectively utilized. In order to meet this demand, collective action across organizations and states will prove to be instrumental.

# Conclusion

The importance of shifting norms around VAWG cannot be understated. Laws or judicial activism alone, cannot bring about lasting changes in an ancient social fabric such as India's. Enforcement agencies and institutions remain steeped in gender biases and norms. Further, the social norms that restrict women's mobility, control their sexuality, access to resources, and help-seeking behaviors and are rooted in economic and social interests and unequal power relationships. Identifying the challenges and barriers to seeking support are crucial in the determination of effective strategies to provide support and address VAWG.

It is important to see the influence of patriarchal gender norms and cultural values that are supportive of VAWG and are embraced by young Indian women and men as well. Narratives from the study demonstrated that traditional concepts of women as primary caregivers, their "sacrificial" nature, and the concept of gender differences continue to be emphasized within families, community spaces and institutions. However, the stories of agency, assertions and negotiation within these spaces cannot be ignored. Women for years have dealt with instances of injustice and violence, however it is their power to tolerate these injustices that are highlighted. The narrative must shift to focus on the resilience that is at play when they seek support, take the decision to not tolerate violence anymore and cause rifts in the status quo. These narratives will pave the path to building new social norms and expectations.

It is clear that access to support, seeking support and receiving support are all different and are governed by the very

same social norms that encourage violence against women and girls to persist. These norms further impact the provisioning of services and support and have become a huge barrier in eradicating violence. The VAWG prevention field, which is slowly, but surely growing worldwide, must be cognizant that violence manifests in different forms and ways and persists through the diverse patriarchal cultures across the world. Each form of violence has underpinning social norms, which theoretically can be tied to patriarchy, however, lived realities highlight that they differ depending upon their context. Therefore, require a specific and contextual approach.

VAWG prevention in India has a long history rooted in its women's movements. These efforts must be sustained through a collective and unified VAWG prevention advocacy agenda, not just at the national level but also at an international level. Norms and structures that are stubborn in maintaining violence as a private matter have to be dealt with the ideals of social justice by building communities of care that nurture spaces for healing and growth.



# ANNEXURE 1

The following sampling criteria were used during the course of the study.

## ••• Focus Group Discussion | **Young Married Women, Young Married Men and Parents**

FGDs were conducted with three different groups. They were as follows:

- Young Recently Married Women (Age 18 – 35)
- Young Recently Married Men (Age 18 – 35)
- Parents (Mothers and Fathers) (Above the age of 35)

The criterion for selecting parents was that they should be having adolescents or older children. The FGD with parents was done in two sub-groups of mothers and fathers separately. Around 8 – 12 participants were required for one FGD. For mothers and fathers, 3 – 6 participants in each sub-group were selected. The discussion was held for a period of 45 minutes to 90 minutes. The FGD with parents was conducted in a rural area, and the FGD with young, recently married women and men was conducted in urban as well as rural areas.

## ••• Focus Group Discussion | **NGO Workers**

NGO service providers were selected based on their experience of working in NGOs on issues of violence against women. The group consisted of field workers, service providers like counsellors/ helpline operators, researchers, team leads and so on. Around 8 – 12 participants were required for one FGD and discussion was to be held for a period of 45 minutes to 90 minutes. It was ensured that different workers from different NGOs were present. They all had worked upon any or all of the following:

- Domestic Violence
- Early and Forced Marriages
- Sexual Harassment in Public Places.

### ••• In-depth Interview | **Service Providers**

Through consultation and participation, the study reached out to people who were to be selected, based on set criteria. The participants for this interview were service providers to address violence against women. They provided services specifically to address domestic violence, early and forced marriages and sexual harassment in public spaces. They were from the same district, with the partner organizations undertaking data collection from other participants. This tool was designed for:

- Protection Officers
- Counsellor (One Stop Centre)
- Police officer
- Child Marriage Prohibition Officer

### ••• In-depth Interview | **Survivors of EM/DV/SH**

Through consultation and participation, the study reached out to people who were to be selected (based on their exposure/non exposure to the programme) based on gender, age and the experience of any specific vulnerabilities. The criterion for selecting the participants for this interview was that they had been survivors of domestic violence. Them having filed a police case was not mandatory. It was taken care of, that they should be comfortable in sharing their story and don't feel coerced. One interview was conducted with a girl/ woman who had faced sexual harassment in a public place and one interview was with a woman who had been forced into an early marriage in each state.



## ANNEXURE 2

The following case studies were used in the survey tool.

### Cast Study 1 | **Early and/or Forced Marriage**

Reema lived with her mother and 5 other siblings. She never knew her father as he had died when she was very young. It was up to Reema's mother to provide for the family by working several jobs. But Reema knew that she had to marry soon as her mother couldn't afford to keep her anymore. And if she refused to marry, she was worried that she would bring shame to her family in the community. On her 12th birthday, Reema got married to Asim who was 35 years old. Although she was promised that her education will not be stopped, she dropped out of school to take care of her husband and to work small jobs to earn enough to eat. Reema hated her situation but did not know what to do.

### Case Study 2 | **Sexual Harassment in Public Places**

Rita decided to take an auto from her house to a friend's house. The driver started playing songs on the radio that made her uncomfortable. She also noticed that he was adjusting the mirrors and staring at her through them. Since she was half-way already and would not find another auto, she kept quiet and looked outside the rest of the way. She didn't tell anyone what had happened. She was not sure if she should talk to her family or friends about what happened.

### Case Study 3 | **Domestic Violence**

Shanti was married to a man who was opposite to her but she loved him because that is what she has been told to keep the marriage alive and going. In her 5 years of marriage, she has noticed a change in her husband's behaviour. Since he had lost his business, he had blamed her for the loss. One evening when he was blaming her again, she told him not to do it as she had no part to play. But he got angry and slapped her. The next morning, he apologized and said he didn't mean to do it, he'd never do it again and how sorry he was for it. He said it was because of her, that he was screaming and shouting, and it was just to keep her quiet so that the neighbours wouldn't hear. That was the first time he hit her, but ever since the argument, the intensity of similar behaviour has increased.

## ENDNOTES

i. Violence against women and girls is often used interchangeably with Gender-based violence. However, for the purpose of this research, VAWG is used to denote violence that is specifically targeted at women and girls. GBV is used to refer to violence which is based on the understanding that gender does not exist in binaries of women and men. It is an effort to break out of the biological framing of gender. This research follows the UN definition of VAW. "Violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

ii. From a social psychology point of view social norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a valued reference group. They can be defined as a rule of behaviour that people in a group conform to because they believe: (a) most other people in the group do conform to it; and (b) most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it. Therefore, social norms are informal rules derived from social systems that prescribe what behavior are expected, allowed, or sanctioned in particular circumstances. These beliefs shape mutual expectations about appropriate behaviours within the group, and in turn the actual behaviour of groups of individuals. As a result, these behaviours are said to be 'inter-dependent'.

iii. Breakthrough is leading the Generation Equality Taskforce in India and is also part of the advisory group of the Prevention Collective put together by Apolitical, Wellspring Foundation and the Equality Institute.

iv. IPV within Marriage or DV – explain the scope of DV and mention what you mean by DV in this research

v. Child, early and forced marriages are all interrelated but distinct terms, and they have been combined in every way possible: early and forced marriage; child and forced marriage; early child marriage; and child, early and forced marriage. CEFM in this research is to be read as an inclusive term rather than an intersectional one. Early marriage has been said by the UN General Assembly to include child marriage, and has been associated in many contexts with marriage under 18 years of age, an inclusive reading of 'early and forced marriage' or 'early marriage' will be used throughout this study.

vi. The definitions of each form of violence has been borrowed from the existing laws in India. Sexual harassment has traditionally been associated solely with labor-related offences and defined as occurring only within an unequal power relations. Laws do not,

however, necessarily reflect the full breadth of the problem. Women and girls experience a wide range of behaviors as sexual harassment, including behavior that is unwanted but not necessarily unlawful.

vii. COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide in the beginning of 2020. On 24 March 2020, the Government of India (GoI) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days as a preventive measure. Negligence regarding the second wave made India one of the worst affected countries during the pandemic, the lockdown and the situation ended up creating massive disruption in service delivery and access.

viii. Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) are programs and interventions that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women in communities, and address power inequities between persons of different genders. GTA create an enabling environment for gender transformation by going beyond just including women as participants. GTA are part of a continuum of gender integration, or the integration of gender issues into all aspects of program and policy conceptualization, development, implementation and evaluation. (Source: Health Communication Capacity Collaborative)

ix. Breakthrough primarily works with the youth. However, 'youth' represents a large a sample which needed to be narrowed down. Specific identity markers based on caste, religion, disability, education and so on were not crucial to the sample. It was crucial to glean an overall youth perception to understand how recommendations can be designed.

x. The youth was divided into two groups – married and unmarried. The unmarried group had people between the ages of 19 – 25. The perception survey was carried out with the sample population as this is the primary beneficiary and target group that BT works with.

xi. Survivors of domestic violence, early marriage and sexual harassment in public places

xii. A DLSA lawyer was added to the list during the course of data collection as the other service providers were not available in the area

xiii. KoBoToolbox is a suite of tools for field data collection for use in challenging environments. It is a free and open-source suite of tools for data collection and analysis.

xiv. Informed consent was taken from the participants. The field worker disclosed that a team member will be attending through a call prior to starting an interview or discussion.

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# RESEARCH PARTNERS

## ACTION INDIA

Since its inception in 1976, Action India has envisioned an equitable society governed by democratic institutions. For us democracy in its true sense includes peoples' participation, planning bottom up with continued vigilance on civil and political rights. Action India acts as a catalyst for social change, empowering women, children and youth to achieve equality, equity and the right to live with dignity and self-esteem.



## ASTITVA

Astitva Samajik Sansthan works in Uttar Pradesh on thematic areas like - Ending Violence against Women & Girls, Prevention of Child Marriages, Gender Equality, Women & girls' social & economic empowerment, SRHR and Education. We aim to ensure proper education, security & dignity of exploited communities & advocate for an equal rights - based society. Our efforts are towards uplifting marginalized communities.



## OXI4UTURE GREENS

Oxi4uture Greens Pvt. Ltd. (O4G), established in 2016, is a social initiative striving to solve social problems using innovative methods and techniques. We work across various issues and their intersections such as Human Rights including Gender and Child Rights, Health, Education, Environment, Agriculture and Disaster Reduction.



## VIKALP SANSTHAN

Vikalp Sansthan is a not-for profit organization and has worked in rural Rajasthan since 2003 with the aim to reduce gender-based violence against women. Vikalp Sansthan has focused to bring analytical attitudinal change among youth with the help of adopting four fold strategies (community awareness, make stakeholders accountable, help women and girl survivors and advocacy) under which several programs and campaigns have been introduced and resulted stoppage of more than 20,000 child marriages, more than 30,000 girls have been re-enrolled and are pursuing their higher education and more than 6,000 survivor women have been legally helped to live violence free lives.



## YUVA

Youths Union for Voluntary Action (YUVA), based out of Jharkhand, strikes out strategic alliances with a vision to accomplishing the SDGs by tapping into youth energy, innovation and creativity. We wish to optimally utilize the potential of the youth for the development of an open access society. YUVA joins hands with stakeholders to prevent our youth from giving into violence and terrorism by providing them better options through strengthening and empowering them.



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**Act.** End violence against women.

